LANCASTER UNIVERSITY

Concepts of the Global in Contemporary Culture:

Figuring the Totality

Joel Evans (BA, MA)

Submitted for the award of a PhD in English

September, 2016

This thesis is my own work and has not been submitted in substantially the same form for the award of a higher education degree elsewhere.

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by

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This thesis approaches a selection of contemporary literary, filmic, and philosophical works from the point of view of a now well-established field of concern – namely, the global. It takes into account a broadly Western view of the global, prioritises Anglophone cultural production, and looks at a range of authors and directors, such as Margaret Atwood, Iain Banks, Neil Blomkamp, David Cronenberg, Mark Danielewski, Gilles Deleuze, Don DeLillo, Félix Guattari, Michael Hardt, Kazuo Ishiguro, Fredric Jameson, Charlie Kaufman, Patrick Keiller, David Lynch, Antonio Negri, Peter Sloterdijk, Ali Smith, and Bernard Stiegler. The project locates prominent and significant *concepts* of the global in contemporary culture, which offers a break from current studies which either focus purely on ways in which texts represent the current form of so-called globalisation, or ways in which texts, and traits of texts, circulate across the globe. The overarching argument of the thesis is that, through conceptualisations of the global, we witness a return to figurations of the *totality* in contemporary culture. There is not just one way of conceptualising the global today, however, and to register this four main modes of conceptualisation are identified. These are: the immanent; the transcendent; the contingent; and the beyond-measure. The political, philosophical, and aesthetic implications of conceptualising the global in each way are assessed throughout. During the course of the thesis, two additional ways of figuring the human totality are discovered. These come under what is called in general terms the 'Global Brain', and are dubbed individually the 'Idealist Brain' and the 'Unhuman Brain'. With the Idealist Brian, we uncover a longstanding vision of the global, which has again become present in contemporary culture. This is a view of the Earth as the ultimate place of the global, with the privileging of the human sensorium being at the heart of this. What the Unhuman Brain figures is a scenario whereby the human is traversed by the inhuman at the level of totality. The identification of this new strain of the Global Brain has all sorts of implications, not least being the fact that it puts into question the Earth's status as the site of the global, and its close ties with the human subject.

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List of Abbreviations

The following is a list of abbreviations used for texts which are cited more extensively than others. The abbreviations appear in brackets in the main text following citations, along with the page number.

BOD – Will Self, *The Book of Dave* (London: Penguin, 2006)

C – Don DeLillo, *Cosmopolis* (London: Picador, 2011)

HOL – Mark Danielewski, *House of Leaves* (London and New York: Doubleday, 2001)

TA – Ali Smith, *The Accidental* (London: Penguin, 2006)

TBF – Ali Smith, *There but for the* (London and New York: Hamish Hamilton, 2011)

TU – Kazuo Ishiguro, *The Unconsoled* (London: Faber and Faber, 2005)

Acknowledgements and Declarations

Shorter versions of Chapter 2 and Chapter 4 have been published/accepted for publication in substantially different form in *New Review of Film and Television Studies* (Taylor and Francis) and *Textual Practice* (Taylor and Francis), respectively:

-Joel Evans, ‘Figuring the Global: On Charlie Kaufman’s *Synecdoche, New York*’, *New Review of Film and Television Studies*, 12.4 (2014), 321-338.

-Joel Evans, ‘Ali Smith’s Necessary-Contingent, or Navigating the Global’, *Textual Practice* (forthcoming).

A Note on Referencing

The thesis follows all the conventions of the MHRA style guide, bar two exceptions. The first is that, for brevity and clarity, full page ranges for journal articles and chapters from edited collections are provided in the bibliography, and not in the main text. For the same reasons, dates of access for websites are all provided only in the bibliography.

Introduction

> The earth, far from being a sphere, is 'sausage-shaped'
>
> Flann O'Brien, *The Third Policeman*

Whilst the above assertion – made by the fictional philosopher de Selby in Flann O'Brien's *The Third Policeman* (1967) – is patently, and intentionally absurd, it nevertheless proves instructive in outlining the purpose and aims of this thesis. De Selby arrives at this conclusion by claiming, first, that there are only two possible directions of travel across the Earth. One can either go north or south, but in the end this makes little difference as (if travelling in a straight line), one will eventually arrive back at the starting point, having somehow, therefore, travelled in both directions. The same point, by this logic, holds for travelling either east or west. Only two possible directions are available then: either west-east, or north-south. However, the very fact that circumnavigations of the Earth always end at their point of departure suggests a lack of *any* varied or distinct direction. This leads de Selby to make the wildly audacious claim that there is, in fact, a hidden direction when it comes to possible circumnavigations of the Earth. If, in other words, one always ends up running on what we might describe as a giant sausage-shaped treadmill when moving around the Earth, then to discover this hidden direction would be to find a way to move horizontally along the length of the sausage. Apparently, if this were achieved, 'a world of entirely new sensation and experience would be open to humanity'.[1]

[1] Flann O'Brien, *The Third Policeman* (London and New York: Harper Perennial, 2007), pp. 97-98.

To express this somewhat complex series of observations, then, de Selby fashions a concept of the Earth: the sausage-Earth. This is just one among a series of concepts of the global which we will encounter in this thesis. Whilst O'Brien's text was written in the late 1930s (and published later on), the discussion here is focused on the contemporary world, more specifically from the 1990s onwards. Two and a half decades' worth of concepts, then, all to be located primarily in a selection of literary, filmic and philosophical works, which all come from a Western context, and predominantly hail from the Anglophone parts of the globe. One of the underlying claims running throughout this hunt for concepts is that – despite the sheer mass of authors who suggest otherwise – there is not *one* predominant or correct way of conceptualising the global in the contemporary conjuncture, but, in fact, a series of interrelated ways of doing so.[2] This is attested to not only by the various ways in which the global is conceptualised within globalisation theory, but also by a whole range of other theoretical and philosophical material. We will also see this claim ring true in an equally broad range of contemporary literature and cinema, including works by figures such as Margaret Atwood, Iain Banks, Neill Blomkamp, Douglas Coupland, David Cronenberg, Mark Danielewski, Don DeLillo, Kazuo Ishiguro, Charlie Kaufmann, Patrick Keiller, David Lynch, Will Self, and Ali Smith. This being said, this thesis does categorise various concepts of the global via four main headings, or master-concepts. These are: the immanent; the transcendent; the contingent; and the beyond-measure. These, we will suggest, are the four general ways of conceptualising the global in contemporary culture.

[2] I am thinking of a whole range of different writers and positions here, many of which will become apparent throughout the thesis. The best (initial) example, however, is the discourse of globalisation. Much of the material on this is overly polemical: one picks a position (say, that we now live in a 'borderless world') and holds forth on it as if this is an unquestionable fact, and the only viable way of conceptualising the current condition of the globe. This is, partly, what has lead John Urry to suggest that 'although hundreds of books and articles have been written on the "global", it has been insufficiently theorized'. Urry, then, distinguishes between five major strains of globalisation theory. John Urry, *Global Complexity* (Oxford and Malden, MA: Polity, 2003), pp. 3, 13. Whilst this discussion follows a similar line of thought to Urry's in relation to the under-theorisation of the global, it is not solely focused on globalisation. Rather, globalisation is here viewed as just one (convoluted) way of conceptualising the global, as discussed further down.

Each chapter in the thesis is dedicated to one of these four master-concepts, and each chapter will in a general sense assess the political, philosophical and artistic implications of conceptualising the global in a certain way.

So, to continue with the example above, de Selby's concept of the Earth is also a concept of the global, in a specific sense. Firstly, the Earth here is in one sense all-encompassing, in that one is never able to leave, never able to access the hidden dimension in which a different route might be taken, a route, that is, which allows one to travel the length of the sausage. But this hidden dimension also imbues the Earth with a noumenal quality, a feeling that we can never really have full access to the planet which we inhabit, that we can never grasp Earth in itself as a *totality*. This, in turn, is linked to a feeling of the absurd, which is presented not only in its crude sense through the image of the sausage, but also through the protagonist being taken in and out of various bureaucratic institutions, and being subjected to a host of bizarre scenarios for no forthcoming or ultimate reason.[3] We are left as a result with a feeling that something is always being hidden in the body politic and the various institutions of which this is comprised. This is evidently a particularly modernist theme, the nearest correlate within literature being Kafka's gripping explorations of the absurd, the bureaucratic, and the hidden. Both the absurd quality with which the Earth is imbued and its noumenal quality, then, link in with the more grounded aspects of the novel, which in turn connect with the broader political, economic and cultural climate in which O'Brien was writing. The political, the philosophical, and the aesthetic are all linked together here through the way in which the global is being conceptualised, and this is something which we will see demonstrated throughout this thesis, in many different ways.

Let us briefly define the key terms here, before moving on to a more thorough explication of the debates which this thesis enters into, both when it comes to the notion of the global within

[3] O'Brien, pp. 93-111.

contemporary culture and in a wider sense. We will call global anything which is seen to be all-encompassing, any figure, that is, which seeks to articulate or contain everything that *is*. In many cases, this is carried out with reference to the Earth, or the globe itself, but as we shall see the global and the globe are not *a priori* tied together. We will call a concept anything which seeks to articulate a series of complex states, relations and becomings in a shorthand, philosophical way, and which in turn affects the way we think about and react to these elements.

The Return of the Totality

To turn to the subtitle of the thesis, another way of defining what the global means here is to say that it concerns a figuration of the totality. But totality is a rather loaded term, one which has of late gone out of favour, and so it bears some further explanation, before moving on to link this in with the more general terrain of scholarship which deals with the global in contemporary culture. As Martin Jay has shown, the history of the concept of totality is a long one, from the various permutations of *holon* (*όλον*) in Ancient Greek philosophy, right the way through to Romantic philosophies like Jean-Jacques Rousseau's, up to the various musings of German Idealism, and the grand philosophical project of G. W. F. Hegel.[4] Whilst this is the case, the concept of totality is most at home within the Marxist discourse, and Jay provides a history of the ways in which this has been thought within the Marxist canon, from Georg Lukács (whom we will have recourse to a few times throughout the thesis) to Jean-Paul Sartre, to Jürgen Habermas. Karl Marx himself, of course, is the progenitor of all these attempts to decide what the totality is, and how one ought to (if, indeed, one can) think it. We will be seeing one way in which Marx thought the totality a little later on, but suffice it to say now that Marx considered the totality, in

[4] Martin Jay, *Marxism and Totality: The Adventures of a Concept from Lukács to Habermas* (Cambridge: Polity, 1984), pp. 25-60.

the main, to be the aggregate of human relations and endeavours, in both their base and superstructural form.[5]

More immediately relevant for our discussion are some of the contemporary writings on the totality, which more often than not come directly from a Marxist perspective. Fredric Jameson is perhaps the most prominent theorist who has grappled with the concept of the totality in recent years. In general, Jameson views the totality either as something to which we do not have sufficient access and means of figuring, or something which is thoroughly obscured by some other figure which resembles the totality of human relations and production, and yet distorts them. This is most famously articulated in the work on postmodernism, which we will be looking at up-close in Chapter 1. A similar example comes from the paper on 'cognitive mapping'. According to Jameson, since what he calls (after Lenin) the imperial stage of capitalism there is an increasing incongruence between the individual and the network of social relations of which they form a part, to the point at which, were the individual to be in London, 'the truth of that experience no longer coincides with the place in which it takes place. The truth of that limited daily experience of London lies, rather, in India, or Jamaica or Hong Kong'.[6] One is unable to grasp the totality of conditions which structure experience, and this is something which for Jameson is evident predominantly in the aesthetic world, and has continued to be all the more so within our own, global or late stage of capitalism, as we will see in more detail in Chapter 1. In response to this, Jameson invents the idea of an aesthetics of cognitive mapping, one which gives credence to 'the realm of social structure, that is to say, in our historical

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[5] See, for example, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology*, trans. S. Ryazanskaya (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1968), p. 50.

[6] Fredric Jameson, 'Cognitive Mapping', in *The Jameson Reader*, ed. Michael Hardt and Kathi Weeks (Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), p. 278.

moment, to the totality of class relations on a global [...] scale'.[7] The project of cognitive mapping, then, would be one which seeks to re-establish our lost connection with the totality. To take an example in which the totality is obscured, and yet referred to, Jameson's work on cinema is illustrative. Here, the author is able to make the claim that the postmodern conspiracy plot in film, with its infinite web of confusions between characters, motives, and allegiances is in fact 'an *analogon* of and a stand-in for the overdetermination of the computer', a claim which begins to allow us to grasp a 'deeper truth of the world system itself', with its complex and unfathomable web of communications networks and technologies.[8] In other words, totality is overlaid, or obscured by conspiracy in the films which Jameson explores here.

Jameson's work is ambiguous in its attitude toward the totality, in that it both calls for a re-engagement and assessment of aesthetic production on the basis of this, whilst simultaneously claiming that access to the very thing is always in some way out of reach. Indeed, this attitude is taken to its extreme point in a recent book (inspired by Jameson's writings on the totality) by Alberto Toscano and Jeff Kinkle. Here, it is claimed, after having looked at a whole range of contemporary aesthetic artefacts which seem to engage in a project of cognitive mapping, that the latter is not really possible in the Jamesonian sense. As the two put it:

> Overview, especially when it comes to capital, is a fantasy – if a very effective, and often destructive one. Because we can't extricate ourselves from our positions in a totality that is such through its unevenness and antagonism, there is in the end something reactionary about the notion of a metalanguage that could capture, that could represent capitalism as such.[9]

Whilst this is not the perspective from which Toscano and Kinkle write, one cannot help but be reminded here of a related scepticism when it comes to the totality, and that is what Jean-

[7] Ibid., p. 283.
[8] Fredric Jameson, *The Geopolitical Aesthetic: Cinema and Space in the World System* (Bloomington and London: Indiana UP, 1992), p. 16.
[9] Alberto Toscano and Jeff Kinkle, *Cartographies of the Absolute* (Alresford: Zero Books, 2014), pp. 241-242.

François Lyotard summed up so well in his identification of one of the defining features of the postmodern as an incredulity toward meta-narratives.[10] Indeed, the various discourses of the postmodern, as Steven Connor writes, pursue relentlessly 'the dissolution of every kind of totalizing narrative which claims to govern the whole complex field of social activity and representation'.[11]

At this point, we ought to lay the cards on the table, and state exactly what the approach toward the totality is here, which also entails an articulation of the overarching argument of the thesis itself. The contention will be that the totality has returned in contemporary culture, and that the main way this is achieved is through conceptualising the global. Thus, the four general ways of conceptualising the global which we will identify all suggest a break from the restrictive discourse of the postmodern, with its distaste for overarching metalanguages and metanarratives. But the approach to the totality here is different to that of Jameson's emblematic contributions. Rather than seeing the totality as something which is ultimately elusive, we find within the annals of contemporary culture various *different* ways of figuring the totality, all of which have their own aesthetic, philosophical, and political problems and contradictions. The task here, then, will be to assess these problems and contradictions, and to see how they relate to contemporary culture in a broad sense, rather than in some way suggesting that they either fail to represent or opaquely figure the capitalist world-system. This is not to say that concepts of the global do not relate to this world-system. Instead, we simply acknowledge here that there is no one way to accurately figure the totality, and that to suggest as much equates to ignoring the specificity and

[10] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Brian Massumi (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1986), p. xxiv.

[11] Steven Connor, *Postmodernist Culture: An Introduction to Theories of the Contemporary* (Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), p. 8. See also Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988), p. 215. For another contemporary, although quite different aversion to the totality – this time based on a preference for transcendence and the infinite – see Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1979).

implications inherent in certain cultural forms, whilst simultaneously promoting a static vision of what the totality looks, or ought to look like. In other words, the difference from Jameson's approach to the totality here is that a) we do not seek to relate the figurations of the totality in contemporary culture to a fixed model, regardless of whether or not one exists in actuality and b) we do not accept the representative schema on which much of his analysis is based (more on this further down). So, whilst Jameson's work in this instance is highly influential for the thesis, we also break away from the definition of the totality which he offers, and his overall method.

Moving on to the more general terrain of the study of the global within contemporary culture, we encounter some further methodological points of difference from our own. Whilst we will see some more of these throughout the thesis, it is worth giving a snap-shot here. As the main focus will be on relating literary and filmic works to philosophical and political discourses, a brief assessment of work on the former two elements is needed here. So, for example, within literary studies there is Bernard Schoene's *The Cosmopolitan Novel* (2009), in which the author's stated aim is to read examples of British literature which display a 'cosmopolitan outlook', to shift literary study away from 'national concerns', and instead focus on fiction as 'a response to new economic and socio-cultural formations within the world as a whole'.[12] Or, there is James Annesley's *Fictions of Globalization* (2006), which seeks to 'find ways in which it might be possible to read contemporary fiction in terms that add to knowledge about, and understanding of [globalization's] discourses'.[13] For this thesis, it is not a matter of locating ways in which texts respond to economic aspects of globalisation, or even for that matter seeing how literary or

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[12] Bernard Schoene, *The Cosmopolitan Novel* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2011), pp. 16, 32. See also Nico Israel, 'Globalization and Contemporary Literature', *Literature Compass*, 1 (2004), <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1741-4113.2004.00104.x/full>; and Peter Childs, *Contemporary Novelists: British Fiction Since 1970* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 277.

[13] James Annesley, *Fictions of Globalization: Consumption, the Market and the Contemporary American Novel* (London and New York: Continuum), p. 6.

filmic works enhance our understanding of the discourses of globalisation.[14] Rather, what we seek to articulate here is the way in which literary and filmic texts *produce* concepts of the global themselves, and how these might relate in a broad sense to ways of conceptualising the global in other frames of discourse. Further, for this project it is not really a matter of relating texts to globalisation per se, which, as we shall see, as a discourse itself contains various different ways of conceptualising the global, which can be brought under a few different categories.

When it comes to studies of cinema, the differences in approach between this project and others is more stark. As a recent survey of 'transnational' approaches to cinema suggests, there are three main modes of investigation present in such analyses: 'the national/transnational binary', in which what is of concern is 'the movement of films and film-makers across national borders'; 'the transnational as a regional phenomenon', where the national or region is seen as a site for the intermingling of culture and identity; and studies of 'postcolonial cinemas', which seek to challenge Western-centric normativity.[15] Again, here none of these aspects are the primary concern. Instead, we will always start by trying to identify the way in which the spatial relations in film, and literature, lead us to a concept of the global. Following this, the movement of commodities across the globe, or the regional as a microcosm of the global, or even the challenging of Western normativity may well become a concern, but this is only in light of the concepts which the work gives rise to, concepts which form our primary concern.

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[14] Another shade to these two positions would be what Katherine Stanton has referred to as the task of the literary critic to 'analyse not only how the cultural materials we study have been produced by globalizing trends [...], but also how they have subjected those trends to scrutiny'. Katherine Stanton, *Cosmopolitan Fictions: Ethics, Politics and Global Change in the Works of Kazuo Ishiguro, Michael Ondaatje, Jamaica Kincaid, and J. M. Coetzee* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 1. Whilst all of these positions are in some sense viable, the aim of this project is to turn things on their head; to see, in other words, how literary and filmic works themselves *produce* the global, as opposed to merely responding to it, helping us understand it, or scrutinizing it.

[15] Will Higbee and Song Hwee Lim, 'Concepts of Transnational Cinema: Towards a Critical Transnationalism in Film Studies', *Transnational Cinemas* 1.1 (2010), p. 9.

The first mode of analysis identified above – namely, the movement of films and film-makers across geographical borders – is similar to what Franco Moretti and other world literature theorists have used to interrogate the movement of literature, and in particular the *forms* of literature, across the globe. 'World cinema' is rather different to this, as it almost invariably designates – as does the similarly oddly named 'world music' – simply non-Western cinema, or even non-Hollywood/US cinema.[16] The concept of 'world literature', or *Weltliteratur*, is used in a more nuanced way by its theorists, who stretch from Goethe, through to Eric Auerbach, and on into the present day to the likes of Franco Moretti, Pascale Casanova and Mariano Siskind.[17] To take the most prevalent example of this, Moretti's work on world literature in general is characterised by the parallels it makes with world-systems analysis, in which the emphasis on the world as a singular system which is sustained by the unequal relations between states is used as both a model and a condition of possibility for the distribution and variation of literary forms across the globe: 'One and unequal: *one literature* (*Weltliteratur,* singular, as in Goethe and Marx), or perhaps, better, one world literary system (of inter-related literatures); but a system

[16] For projects which follow this model see Shohini Chaudhuri, *Contemporary World Cinema: Europe, the Middle East, East Asia and South Asia* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2005); David Martin-Jones, *Deleuze and World-Cinemas* (London and New York: Continuum, 2011); and Linda Badley, and others, eds, *Traditions in World Cinema* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2006).
[17] Eric Auerbach, 'The Philology of World Literature', in *Time, History and Literature*: *Selected Essays of Eric Auerbach*, trans. Jane O. Newman (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2014); Mariano Siskind, 'The Globalization of the Novel and the Novelization of the Global', *Comparative Literature*, 62.4 (2010); Mariano Siskind, *Cosmopolitan Desires: Global Modernity and World Literature in Latin America* (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 2014); and Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, trans. M. B. Debevoise (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard UP, 2004). For a selection of Goethe's writings on world literature see Goethe, 'On World Literature', in *World Literature: A Reader*, ed. Theo D'haen, and others (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2013). Marx and Engels were two of the first writers, along with Goethe, to talk about world literature. As they put it, with the establishment of the world market, 'national one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures, there arises a world literature'. Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto,* ed. David McLellan (London and New York: Oxford UP, 2008), p. 7. 'Global gothic studies' seems to offer a mixture between the vagaries of world cinema and the rigorousness of the world literature model. Thus, whilst many studies in this area focus merely on the gothic outside the West, there is also an emphasis on gothic forms as 'always mobile' and as 'shifted across geographical, virtual and cultural planes, global and local at the same time'. Fred Botting and Justin D. Edwards, 'Theorising Globalgothic', in *Globalgothic*, ed. Glennis Byron (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2013), p. 13.

which is different from what Goethe and Marx hoped for, because it's profoundly unequal'.[18] Whilst analyses of the literary on the basis of its actual movement across the globe, and within the capitalist world-system are, again, surely valuable, this thesis follows a different tack, in that it seeks to identify ways in which the global is conceptualised within texts themselves, in order to begin to form a broad picture of how this is being undertaken within contemporary Western culture. There is, however, a resonance here with Moretti's work. Indeed, Moretti himself demonstrates a proclivity toward the totality, toward, that is, figuring the movement of literary forms as a whole, and throughout the world-system. The current popularity of his work and others', then, is surely further testament to the resurgence of figurations of the totality within contemporary culture.

From this survey of the terrain of the study of the global, we can identify two main problems, or gaps, which this thesis seeks to address. The first is to be found in the world literature model (to which is added the national/transnational binary in studies of cinema), which, whilst it is certainly a viable method, does not pay much attention to the content of the works with which it is concerned. World literature studies do not seek to identify how the global, or indeed the world-system itself, is conceptualised *within* works, and we are consequently left with a model without content. This thesis will seek to close this gap by building up a broad picture of the way in which the global is being conceptualised in contemporary culture. In other words, if the totality is again a key part of our culture, then it is imperative that we see how aesthetic forms and contents express this, to see how this fits in with other disciplines, and to assess the implications of this. One might well posit that the problem the world literature model poses is solved by the representational model (which, again, remains a valuable method, and under

[18] Franco Moretti, 'Conjectures on World Literature', in *Distant Reading* (London and New York: Verso, 2013), p. 46. See also Franco Moretti, *Modern Epic: The World-System from Goethe to García Márquez* (London and New York: Verso, 1996).

which, ultimately, we would also have to place Jameson's work), in that the latter pays attention to the *content* of literary and filmic works. But here, we encounter the second problem, which is that analyses which seek to show how literary and filmic texts take their lead from the current state of globalisation fail to take into account how the realm of the aesthetic *itself* produces concepts of the global, which in turn relate to other discourses. The representational model, then, discounts both the irreducible nature of aesthetic works, and the primacy of the conceptual in articulations of the global. In fact, the global is *overwhelmingly* a conceptual affair. Benedict Anderson once described nation as 'an imagined political community – and imagined as both internally limited and sovereign'.[19] When it comes to defining the global, in very general terms, we might reformulate Anderson's statement by saying that this is an imagined political and cultural community – imagined as both boundless and without sovereignty in the classical sense of the word. This is not to suggest that all the elements which have been identified within globalisation theory, world-systems theory, or theories of the totality are wholly virtual, but merely to recognise the fact that the over-riding factor in articulations of the global is the conceptual. Neither is it to suggest, as Schoene does, that we have abandoned or ought to abandon the paradigm of the nation state. The concepts of the global traced in this thesis are, after all, wholly Western, largely Anglophone, and therefore intimately entwined with constructions of identity and modes of production associated with the nation state in the particular bloc which the term 'Western' designates. It is also beyond the scope of this project to assess how the global is conceptualised in other geographical areas. In sum, this thesis provides a solution to two separate problems in the field, whilst at the same time tracing the return of the totality as an important concern in contemporary culture.

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[19] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1991), p. 6.

Forms of the Global

As we saw from the very beginning of this introduction, concepts of the global, and alongside these figurations of the totality, are at once political and philosophical, and often incorporate overtly aesthetic elements too. If we are to track the way in which the global is being conceptualised today, then, it is worth providing here a brief summary of the ways in which this has been undertaken within explicitly philosophical and political frames, a summary which will also introduce some of the main theoretical rubric with which we will discuss concepts of the global. This, in turn, will allow us to flesh out our understanding of the particular resonances and significances with which the global is imbued, and will also lead on to providing a more solid basis for the methodological approach pursued here, which will be explained in full toward the end.

Whilst conceptualisations of the global can be traced back at least to Antiquity, we will limit the discussion to contemporary versions of this, and versions which overtly influence the former. For many theorists of globalisation, Marx can be read as one of the founding figures of the field.[20] Although we cannot agree in this instance (Marx, surely, would have been horrified to be associated with such a school of thought), it is the case that Marx's writings are in many instances concerned with the global, and the totality. It is also the case that many of the concepts of the global that we will be dealing with in this thesis are in some way indebted to Marx's thought, and we shall see various ways in which this is brought to bear on the contemporary moment. Marx – along with Engels – thought that, inherent in the capitalist system, was 'the

[20] For this reason, there exists a reader of Marx's works which are apparently about globalisation. See Dave Renton, ed., *Marx on Globalization* (London: Laurence and Wishart, 2001). J. Hillis Miller has stated that 'if Marx and Engels prophesized the globalization of capitalism, communism, as defined in the *Manifesto*, was also a form of globalization'. J. Hillis Miller, 'Who's Afraid of Globalization?', in *Technicity*, ed. Arthur Bradley and Louis Armand (Prague: Litteraria Pragensia, 2006), p. 155.

need of a constantly expanding market', one which spreads itself across 'the whole surface of the globe', a 'world market'.[21] As Marx puts it elsewhere,

> The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of black-skins, signalised the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production.[22]

From this point of view, then, the capitalist mode of production from its very inception strives toward an all-encompassing nature, to the point at which everything on Earth is brought under its logic. The world market is seen as all-encompassing, yet still expanding outward, continuing what Marx would call the operations of primitive accumulation into every minute part of the globe.[23]

To some extent, this dynamic is maintained, but it is also taken in a different direction in the writings of Immanuel Wallerstein, and other world-systems theorists.[24] Like Marx, Wallerstein – writing on the subject from the 1970s up until the present day – locates the beginning of the world market, or what he calls the world-system in the sixteenth century, again suggesting that the world economic system is far from a contemporary phenomenon.[25] In general, the world-system is said to consist of unequal relations and exchanges between strong and weak nation-states. According to this model there is a hierarchy of 'core', 'semi-peripheral', and 'peripheral' states, the core (predominantly Western) states being the most privileged and economically powerful as a result of the benefit they derive from the system of unequal

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[21] Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, pp. 5-6.
[22] Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critical Analysis of Capitalist Production: Vol. I*, trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling (London: George and Allen Unwin Ltd., 1949), p. 774.
[23] On primitive accumulation in general see Marx, *Capital*, pp. 736-766. On the relation between primitive accumulation and global expansion in the contemporary climate see Chapter 5.
[24] For other examples of world-systems theory see Giovanni Arrighi, *The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power and the Origins of Our Times* (London and New York: Verso, 2010); and Terence Hopkins, and others, eds, *World-Systems Analysis: Theory and Methodology* (London: Sage Publications, 1982).
[25] Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (London and New York: Academic Press, 1974), p. 15.

exchange.[26] Rather than a constant expansion, the model of a world-system suggests a global radiation, from the core out into the periphery, a pre-determinism which creates essence, and bounces back to yield profits. World-systems theory, then, is another, rather more precise way of talking about capitalism in its totality, and we will be using the phrase 'world-system' throughout the thesis in order to designate just this. Wallenstein's work also signals the need, into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, to continue to think of capitalism at the level of totality, and we will be seeing many different examples of this from the contemporary moment, ones which both challenge world-systems theory and take it in new directions.

Carl Schmitt's concept of a *nomos* of the earth posits the global as a site of struggle and domination too, although here the focus moves away from the economic and begins to resemble something like a history of global domination as such. *Nomos* (*νόμος*) generally means simply law, but Schmitt takes the word back to what he sees as its proper meaning: an 'original, constitutive act of spatial ordering', a portioning out of land which is in fact the bedrock of any claim or imposition of law.[27] Thus, the *nomos* of the earth refers to the way land is apportioned across the globe, who controls it, and, therefore, who holds power globally. According to Schmitt, the first *nomos* of the earth was without 'a global concept', but this soon changed in the sixteenth century with the circumnavigation of the Earth, and its subsequent colonisation. This precipitated a Eurocentric *nomos*, which lasted until the First World War.[28] When writing in the 1950s Schmitt was still unsure of what the new *nomos* of the earth would be, but he gave three options: a full-scale global union which has a 'sole sovereign', a neo-colonial regime reliant

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[26] Immanuel Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction* (Durham and London: Duke UP, 2004), p. 28.
[27] Carl Schmitt, *The* Nomos *of the Earth in the International Law of the* Jus Publicum Europaeum, trans. G. L. Ulmen (New York: Telos Press, 2003), p. 76. For the full description of the origin and complexities of *nomos* as a concept see pp. 67-79. See also Carl Schmitt, *Land and Sea*, trans. Simona Praghici (Washington DC: Plutarch Press, 1997), p. 37.
[28] Schmitt, *The* Nomos *of the Earth*, p. 352.

mainly upon the US, or a 'combination of several independent *Großräume* or blocks' which would restore some kind of balance.[29]

Even today, there is still large-scale disagreement as to what type of *nomos*, or indeed which form of the global we find ourselves in. Marshall McLuhan would probably have opted for the first of the above options, but for rather different reasons. McLuhan thought that, with the advent of telecommunications technologies and electronic media, the human race was being integrated into what he called a 'global village'.[30] According to McLuhan, there are three ages of human society: the pre-literate, the literate, and the electronic.[31] In the pre-literate, or tribal stage, 'we lived in acoustic space […]: boundless, directionless, horizonless, the dark of the mind, the world of emotion, primordial intuition, mafia-ridden'.[32] The literate age has as its defining feature print, 'the technology of individualism', which 'fosters a mentality that gradually resists any but a separative and compartmentalizing or specialist outlook'.[33] With this also come notions and habits of 'private property, privacy, and many other forms of "enclosure"', the most radical and significant being the state, and nationalism.[34] The electronic age coincides with the state of the global village, in which we are again hurled into a state of inter-relatedness, boundlessness, and affectivity as in the pre-literate age, but this time on a global scale: as McLuhan puts it, 'we live in a single constricted space resonant with tribal drums'.[35]

McLuhan's notion of the global relies on a very specific view of media as extensions of the human senses and organs, extensions which determine the overall trajectory of humankind.

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[29] Ibid., p. 355.
[30] Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), p. 31; and Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, *The Medium is the Massage* (London and New York: Penguin, 2008), pp. 63-67.
[31] Marshall McLuhan, *Counterblast* (London: The Pitman Press, 1970), p. 13.
[32] Ibid.
[33] McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy*, pp. 158, 126.
[34] Ibid., pp. 218, 131.
[35] Ibid., p. 31. See also McLuhan and Fiore, *The Medium is the Massage*, p. 63.

Electronic media (and to a lesser extent print) are seen to have a unifying, and determinate effect on human relations through their circulation across the Earth. As McLuhan states quite explicitly, media are the 'extension of man', the world, or global village in this light being an 'electronic brain', a brain which is part and parcel of an extension of human senses.[36] In this regard, McLuhan sounds like Pierre Tielhard de Chardin, whom he often quotes.[37] De Chardin proposed that the various advances in radio and telecommunications technology were part of a general evolution of humanity toward a 'super-Brain', a kind of global consciousness which is wholly collective.[38] What both of these models of the global have in common in their end-points, despite their apparent strain of technological pre-determinism, is a form of idealism, the original Western models of which are Hegel's *Weltgeist*, and to a lesser extent Kant's notion of reason as forming the basis for a possible cosmopolitanism.[39] The super-Brain and the global village are like heady, distributed versions of Hegelian Absolute Knowledge, in which, as opposed to a full articulation of individuality or particularity, the individual as such is erased. Still, it is only because technology is seen as an extension of human cognitive processes, that the global village, or the super-Brain can be posited at all.

Another (still emerging) concept of the global is the figure of the network, writings on which are often indebted to McLuhan. The new factor in debates about global networks, however, is their ostensibly non-hierarchical nature. Again, at first glance theories of networks

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[36] McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy*, pp. 32, 41.
[37] Ibid., pp. 32, 47.
[38] Pierre Tielhard de Chardin, 'The Formation of the Noosphere: A Biological Interpretation of Human History', in *The Future of Man*, trans. Norman Denny (London and New York, Doubleday, 1965), p. 162.
[39] These models – particularly the Hegelian – will be addressed in relation to contemporary concepts of the global throughout the thesis. In particular, see chapters 2 and 3. For Kant's essay see Kant, 'Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim', trans. Allan W. Wood, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant: Anthropology, History, and Education*, ed. Günter Zöller and Robert B. Louden (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge UP, 2007). For Hegel's concepts of *Geist* and *Weltgeist* see Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977); and Hegel, *Lectures of the Philosophy of World History*, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984).

seem to privilege technological facets of the global, most prominently the development of telecommunications and digital technologies, from telephones to the internet. Whilst some trace the roots of technological networks back much further to the laying of electronic cables, the internet is the prime example of an actually existing network today.[40] As Alexander Galloway points out, the internet is a distributed network, in which there are several nodes which link up, via edges or lines, to other nodes. This is just one possible type of network, as there are also centralised networks, in which there is one hub in the centre, from which various edges sprout off, connecting up with singular nodes. Or, there are decentralised networks, which are somewhere in between the two, and in which we have various hubs, each of which connect to nodes which are distributed around it, which in turn connect with other hubs.[41]

Built initially in order to withstand a nuclear attack, the internet, as a distributed network which is not reliant upon a centralised or decentralised hub, can still function as a whole if one or more of its nodes is removed.[42] A distributed network, then, is one which does not rely upon a hierarchical structure. It is in this vein that the concept of the network has been adopted by some in much more general terms as a way of articulating global relations as such.[43] This form of the network not only suggests a waning of hierarchical structures, but also, as John Urry suggests, 'breaks with the idea that the global is a finished and completed totality'.[44] In other words, the vision of the totality produced by theories of the network is one which is never fully complete,

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[40] For examples of the former see Armand Mattelart, *Networking the World: 1794-2000*, trans. Liz Carey-Libberecht (London and Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 2000); and Dwayne R. Winssek and Robert M. Pike, *Communication and Empire: Media, Markets and Globalization, 1860-1930* (Durham and London: Duke UP, 2007).

[41] Alexander R. Galloway, *Protocol: How Control Still Exists after Decentralization* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 2004), pp. 29-53.

[42] Ibid., p. 29. See also Friedrich Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, trans. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1999), pp. 1-2.

[43] See Alexander R. Galloway and Eugene Thacker, *The Exploit: A Theory of Networks* (Minneapolis and London: Minnesota UP, 2007). Manuel Castells is probably the most well-known theorist of the network, both in its technological guise and in its broader sense. See, for example, Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010); and Manuel Castells, *Communication Power* (Oxford and New York: Oxford UP, 2011).

[44] Urry, p. 10.

always evolving. Whilst this latter element was surely present in Marx's articulation of the global, capitalist system, it would certainly seem that the network offers a novel way of conceptualising the global. One of the problems faced here, however, is that an over-emphasis on the absence of the hierarchical can lead to a form of myopia when it comes to recognising the dynamics of power within what are seen as the global networks of people, goods, electronic signals, diseases, and so on. This is encapsulated, for instance, in Manuel Castells' assertion that, in what he calls the 'network society', 'the power of flows takes precedent over the flows of power'.[45] One way of getting around this has been to assert that the network – both as a means of conceptualisation and as an actual phenomenon – operates via the logic of what Gilles Deleuze designated as societies of control, the heir to Foucault's societies of discipline. Control, rather like the network, is seen by Deleuze to be distributed and flexible; as opposed to discipline which finds its place in strict orders of space and time (the factory, the prison, and so on), control functions by way of '*modulation*, like a self-deforming cast that will continuously change from one moment to the other, or like a sieve whose mesh will transmute from point to point'.[46]

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri are two authors who have also used the progression from discipline to control to articulate their own concept of the global. The key hypothesis, as they put it, is 'that sovereignty has taken a new form, composed of a series of national and supranational organizations united under a single logic of rule. This new global form of sovereignty' is what Hardt and Negri call 'Empire'.[47] It is not just the passage from discipline to control which is at issue here, then, but also a new form of sovereignty, one which is formulated

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[45] Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, p. 501.
[46] Gilles Deleuze, 'Postscript on Control Societies', in *Negotiations*, trans. Martin Joughin (Chichester and New York: Columbia UP, 1995), pp. 178-179. On the network and the Deleuzian model of control see Steven Shaviro, *Connected, or What it Means to Live in the Network Society* (London and Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 2003), pp. 31, 34; Thacker and Galloway, pp. 39-41; and Galloway, pp. 81, 142-143. On disciplinary societies see Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London and New York: Penguin, 1991), pp. 135-141.
[47] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard UP), p. xii.

in stark contrast to the classical models proposed by the likes of Thomas Hobbes and Jean Bodin. Empire constitutes a form of sovereignty which ‘does not rely on fixed boundaries or barriers. It is a *decentred* and *deterritorializing* apparatus of rule that progressively incorporates the entire global realm within its opening, expanding frontiers’.[48] Again, we have a form of power, and a form of the global, which seem to have gotten rid of the old hierarchical structures. Again, too, we find ourselves, to an extent, on well-worn territory, the description of Empire being an almost exact fit with Marx and Engels’ description of the capitalist world market. Indeed, Hardt and Negri, whilst they do not fall into the bracket of a fully-fledged pre-determinism when it comes to the capitalist system, nevertheless suggest that all of these changes go hand in hand ‘with the realization of the world market and the real subsumption of global society under capital’.[49]

And so, we are eventually led into the realm of globalisation, which in many instances can be seen as a fusion of all the variations of the global we have hitherto seen. Telecommunications and digital technologies, the world-wide capitalist system, neo-imperialism: some theories emphasise particular aspects more than others, but all the elements are present here, along with a few extra things thrown in for good measure, such as the perceived waning of the nation state (hinted at already with Hardt and Negri), urbanisation and the global city, climate change, terrorism, uniformity in the cultural and artistic realms, mass tourism, and the movement of disease and genetic material across borders.[50] Generally speaking, all of these elements are

[48] Ibid., p. xii.
[49] Ibid., p. 332.
[50] The amount of material on globalisation is immense, making it impossible to offer a complete review here. It will have to suffice, then, to point to some prominent examples which deal with the categories mentioned above. As already stated, most theories of globalisation are a mixture of all or most of these elements. Jean-Francois Bayart suggests as much by providing a list of the elements which convene to establish globalisation as a discourse. As he suggests, ‘we can mention, without any great risk of error, the integration of the capitalist market, the development of commercial exchanges, the improvement in means of transport, the acceleration of planetary communication in all its forms, the notable institutionalization of worldwide norms and mechanisms (including the political and juridical domains), the increase in migration, the emergence of challenges to health and ecology which the whole of humanity has to face together, the persistence of tangible threats to peace, and even the survival of the planet as a

said to increase the sense of the Earth and human relations across this as some form of all-encompassing, inter-linked totality. It may not surprise, then, that aside from movement *across* borders, one of the most prominent themes in all writings on globalisation is the world *without* borders.[51] The basic argument here is that the main features of globalisation (namely, capitalism and telecommunications, satellite and digital technologies) coincide to make the border an irrelevancy, whether this is as a result of the rapid communications and transactions taking place across the globe, or the constant movement of goods and peoples which forms an inherent part of the world market.[52] Zygmunt Bauman, writing on the theme of the borderless world, has suggested that we now live in 'open societies', in a rather different sense, however, to the way in which Karl Popper once used the term.[53] Whilst some see a lack of borders as inherently positive, Bauman thinks they are part of what he calls 'negative globalization', the 'open society' in this light coming to denote 'the terrifying experience of heteronomous, vulnerable populations overwhelmed by forces they neither control nor fully understand'. These forces are, according to

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whole'. Jean-Francois Bayart, *Global Subjects: A Political Critique of Globalization*, trans. Andrew Brown (Cambridge and Malden, MA: Polity, 2007), p. 2. This being said, the area which has received the most attention, whether from the right or the left, is the economic. Alex Callinicos, for example, has suggested that the 'central thesis of globalization' is that 'global economic integration, most evident with respect to financial markets, has radically undermined the autonomy of nation-states, producing "a world without borders"'. Alex Callinicos, *Against the Third Way: An Anti-Capitalist Critique* (Cambridge and Oxford: Polity, 2001), p. 15. For more works which emphasise economic factors see Joseph Stiglitz, *Globalization and its Discontents* (London and New York: Penguin, 2002); Neil Smith, *The Endgame of Globalization* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2005); John Gray, *False Dawn: The Delusions of Global Capitalism* (London: Granta Books, 1999); Kenici Ohmae, *The Borderless World: Power and Strategy in the Global Market Place* (London: Harper Collins, 1994); and Martin Wolf, *Why Globalization Works: The Case for the Global Market Economy* (London and New Haven: Yale Nota Bene, 2005). Fredric Jameson's work on globalisation focuses specifically on the intersection and blurring between the economic and the cultural in the face of world markets, and a nigh-total subsumption of art under the commodity form. Fredric Jameson, *Valences of the Dialectic* (London and New York: Verso, 2010), pp. 438-455. For a different perspective on this matter, see Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at-large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (London and Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 2000). On the urban environment and the global see Saskia Sassen, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1991). See also Doreen Massey, *World City* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007). On the global movement of genetic and biological information see Eugene Thacker, *The Global Genome: Biotechnology, Politics and Culture* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 2006).

[51] Ulrich Beck takes a similar view, citing the borderless as the 'common denominator' in theories of globalisation. Ulrich Beck, *What is Globalization?*, trans. Patrick Camiller (Malden, MA and Oxford: Polity, 2000), p. 20.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Karl Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies* (London: Routledge, 1995).

Bauman, 'the highly selective globalization of trade and capital, surveillance and information, coercion and weapons, crime and terrorism' which apparently 'all now [distain] territorial sovereignty and [respect] no state boundary'.[54]

Perhaps the joint contender with the borderless as regards both its frequency and potency in discourses of globalisation is the notion of a 'shrinking world'. As Roland Robertson puts it, 'Globalization as a concept refers both to the compression of the world, and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole'.[55] Such formulations, as with the borderless, are surely indebted greatly to McLuhan's global village, as Robertson himself acknowledges.[56] In general, this compression is seen to be brought about via an increasing awareness of the Earth as a whole (as Robinson's second characteristic implies) and the various means of quick access to other far-flung areas of the Earth, including train, car and air-travel, and the telephone, the internet, and satellite technology.[57] Indeed, these two images (the borderless and the compressed world) of the global will crop up again and again in this discussion, in various different guises. In both of these examples, we are confronted with a specific way of conceptualising the global; it is not only a matter of the all-encompassing, then, but of a shrinking, and a boundlessness, which are both particular *versions* of the global. That a very general theoretical and epistemological framework relating to the global – which is referred to through the term globalisation – has been established in recent times is testament to its increased relevance and concern. But this general framework throws up all kinds of internal distinctions, problems, and contradictions, and one of the major tasks here will be to delineate and evaluate some of these.

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[54] Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Fear* (Cambridge and Malden, MA: Polity, 2006), pp. 96-97.
[55] Roland Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* (London: Sage, 1998), p. 8.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Linked to this is the concept of 'time-space compression', which basically entails the same characteristics. This term, as we shall see in Chapter 2, has a strong Marxist heritage, the most recent and well-known proponent of the concept being David Harvey. For a full history of the term see Barney Warf, 'Excavating the Pre-History of Time-Space Compression', *The Geographical Review*, 101.3 (2011).

Peter Sloterdijk continues the tradition of the compressed world when he suggests that, 'it is characteristic of the third wave of globalisation that it de-spatializes the real globe, replacing the curved Earth with an almost extensionless point'.[58] What Sloterdijk terms the 'third wave' of globalisation is, apparently, roughly our own era, or what he calls the 'world interior'. Sloterdijk makes the bold claim that, in fact, the first wave of globalisation was that of Western Antiquity: the dawn and era of cosmology and of metaphysics. The second wave (correlative with Marx's description of the beginnings of the capitalist system, and Schmitt's notion of the European *nomos* of the earth) is what Sloterdijk terms 'terrestrial globalization', a globalisation constituted in the main through the exploration and colonisation of the Earth by Europeans.[59] This draws our attention to another aspect of globalisation theory, which is the tendency to see globalisation not merely as a contemporary phenomenon, but one which has been present, if not throughout Western history, then at least for a couple of hundred years.[60] What particularly interests us about Sloterdijk's work here, however, is its concern with the philosophical, properly conceptual aspect of globalisation. Sloterdijk's work on globalisation is, essentially, a conceptual history of the global, from the 'all-encompassing sphere' of Greek thought, to the Crystal Palace, which he sees as an apt shorthand for today's breed of the global.[61]

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[58] Peter Sloterdijk, *In the World Interior of Capital: For a Philosophical Theory of Globalization*, trans. Wieland Hoban (Cambridge and Malden, MA: Polity, 2014), p. 13.
[59] Ibid., p. 8-13.
[60] Jameson briefly summarises such a position, and takes it further, through reference to the work of Eric Wolf, stating that 'as far back as the Neolithic, trade routes had been global in their scope, with Polynesian artifacts deposited in Africa, and Asian potsherds as far afield as the New World'. Jameson's own position, however, is focused on what he terms a new 'third stage of capitalism', correlative with postmodernity. See Jameson, *Valences of the Dialectic*, p. 433. Thomas L. Friedman has also sketched out – in a very different way to Sloterdijk – a three-stage model of globalisation, which in this case dates back to the fifteenth century, with the beginnings of the exploration of the Earth by Europeans. Thomas L. Friedman, *The World is Flat: The Globalized World in the Twenty-First Century* (London and New York: Penguin, 2006), pp. 9-11. For a similar model see Daniel Cohen, *Globalization and its Enemies*, trans. Jessica B. Baker (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 2006), pp. 23-28. For something other than the three-stage model, see Winssek and Pike, p. 1, who suggest globalisation began in the nineteenth century.
[61] Sloterdijk, *In the World Interior of Capital*, pp. 8, 175-176.

A further connection which this study has with the discourse of globalisation is what are generally seen to be the determining factors of the discourse itself. Étienne Balibar usefully summarises these, suggesting that 'the discourses of globalization and the generalization of "global" explanatory models' are the result of three things: 'a new stage in the development of the capitalist market', generally known as neoliberalism; 'the end of the global antagonism that formerly appeared as the ultimate horizon of political practice', or in other words the end of the confrontation between communist states and capitalist states; 'and the constitution of a system of both real and virtual planetary interdependencies', which generally comes in the guise of network and digital technologies.[62] This thesis concurs with Balibar's assertion that these three things are some of the major determining factors in the prominence of the discourse of globalisation, and of concepts of the global in general. Indeed, the inception of these three factors all fit well with our own historical limitation, and are of concern in the various materials which we will examine. However, what this thesis seeks in part to address are the vagaries, and generalisations which, more often than not, are included in globalization theory, and concepts of the global in general. In other words, we will seek here to devise a system under which different categories of the global can be identified, and from which the implications of each mode of conceptualisation can be addressed, taking into account their political, philosophical, and aesthetic nature. This applies in the case of the globalisation too, and as we will see many aspects of this discourse fit into the four different categories we have spelled out above.

[62] Étienne Balibar, 'World Borders, Political Borders', in *We, the People of Europe? Reflections on Transnational Citizenship*, trans. Jack Swenson (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2004), p. 105.

Lineages of the Global

So far, then, it can be said that all the variations of the global laid out here – both conceptually and actually speaking – are spatially, philosophically, and politically resonant. The very notion of the global is perhaps that which, more than any other concept in contemporary currency, acts as a vehicle for so many of these types of concerns, whilst at the same time producing its own problems, categories and agendas. This is demonstrated most succinctly in the case of globalisation, which does not merely name a whole series of states and processes, but also affects the way the Earth itself in its totality is perceived, along with the various relations this entails. On one hand, then, a state of affairs and relations is being described, whereas on the other, this description is that which acts to change the way we not only think about those affairs and relations, but also how we might react to them in quite general terms.

Armand Mattelart has suggested that globalisation 'relates specifically to a holistic philosophy, that is, to the idea of a totalizing or systemic unit'.[63] For Mattelart,

> [g]lobalization is one of those tricky words, one of those instrumental notions that, under the effect of market logics and without citizens being aware of it, have been naturalized to the point of becoming indispensible for establishing communication between peoples of different cultures. This functional language constitutes a ready-made ideology that conceals the disorders of the new world order.[64]

For Mattelart, then, the term, or concept of globalisation, through defining relations across the Earth in terms of a holistic, all-encompassing dynamic, creates not only a narrow means for understanding different peoples and communities, but also perpetuates the global, capitalist system as if there were no flaws in it as such, as if it were part of the natural order of things. In this sense, globalisation becomes the justification for the world market, whether in boom or crisis. We start, then, from a certain description of global dynamics, and eventually end up on the

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[63] Mattelart, p. 77.
[64] Ibid., p. 97.

other side of things where that description or concept itself redefines how we react and deal with those dynamics.

If holism is an intrinsic feature of the global, however, this does not preclude there being different types of holism or the all-encompassing which pose their own problems. This, to an extent, has been illustrated via the brief survey provided here. When it comes to these various forms of the global, we can both identify differences between each system, and trace a conceptual lineage, an effort which was begun above.

This is something which we will undertake at various points throughout the thesis. One specific example of this ought to be addressed here, though. This will develop throughout the thesis, and is a way of conceptualising the global which we will call the Global Brain. In fact, there are two versions of the Global Brain, both of which we will outline here by way of some examples. As already explained, McLuhan's concept of the global village can be seen not only as a theory of the global which is technologically pre-deterministic, but, conversely, one which is in a strange way idealist. Consequently, his notion of a global interrelatedness of the senses can be linked with some earlier idealist models which refer to the Earth and humanity as a whole, such as Kant's and Hegel's. One of the main differences here, of course, is that it is media (print, film, electronic transmissions, etc.) which act as what Kant would have called reason, or Hegel Sprit; the new dimension that McLuhan's model of the global brings with it, then, is to posit technological prostheses as being deeply involved in human experience and perception, to the point at which they form a dual operation in achieving a global unification of consciousness. In other words, it is media that in some sense enable the global village, but media are always reliant upon the human sensorium, always pre-determined by the human itself in McLuhan's system. Aside from some of the problems this system sets up in terms of a tiered version of the human

(the pre-literate, the literate and the electronic, the middle category being the ideal one) which is not only historical, but supposedly actually existing, we can detect this version of the Global Brain throughout contemporary cultural production. As we will see, from direct invocations of McLuhan's work (encountered in Chapter 2), to scenarios whereby subjectivity becomes interchangeable on a mass scale (again, looked at in Chapter 2), and from the concept of the singularity (dealt with in Chapter 3), to the aesthetics of the mosaic narrative (explored in Chapter 5), what we will call the Idealist Brain has become a significant concern, and way of expressing the human totality. But there is another version of the Global Brain which we will start fleshing out from Chapter 4 onwards, one which abandons the human-centric, subjectivist oriented view of the global, and which puts us on a path toward a scenario in which the human totality is conceptualised as something which is traversed by the inhuman. We will call this the Unhuman Brain, and in many senses it signals a break from the Idealist Brain, even though the latter remains a prevalent figure within contemporary culture. In the conclusion to the thesis, we will try to assess this confrontation between the two versions of the Global Brain.

In order to demonstrate exactly how concepts will be extracted from works outside of the philosophico-political realm, though, it is worth turning now to a note on method.

Concepts, or on Method

If tracking a conceptual lineage of different forms of the global is possible, then this is only by making reference in some way to philosophy. Indeed, as Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari have suggested, in a definition which is by now famous, 'philosophy is the discipline of *creating*

concepts', and in fact 'the concept belongs to philosophy and only to philosophy'.[65] This, of course, raises the question of both how we are able to extract concepts from aesthetic works, and also why we would want to do this. We will answer these in turn.

Deleuze and Guattari go on to make some further distinctions, this time in terms of other disciplines. Art, they say, comes in the form of '*a block of sensations, that is to say, a compound of percepts and affects*', whereas science deals in terms of 'functions' and logic through 'prospects'.[66] The authors do, however, mention some instances in which philosophy and art (and specifically literature) cross over, where the two 'can slip into each other to the degree that parts of one may be occupied by entities of the other'. We are furnished here with a whole list of authors who perform this in some way, from Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, to Rimbaud and Mallarmé.[67] The mixtures between percepts, affects and concepts that works by such writers produce are labelled 'zones of indeterminacy'.[68] Whilst this is surely one way of approaching art from a conceptual point of view, it is not, on the whole, the approach that will be taken here. Indeed, in order to articulate the method of analysis carried out here, the attention needs to be turned onto what *criticism*, or *critique* is, rather than how we define art, or philosophy. To come to the point, the claim being made here is that criticism, alongside its more general functions of analysis, is (or at least is here) a means of *extracting* concepts.

We can detect such a proposition in some of Deleuze's writing itself. In his second book on cinema, Deleuze suggests that

> a theory of cinema is not 'about' cinema, but about the concepts that cinema gives rise to and which are themselves related to other concepts corresponding to other practices, the practice of concepts in general having no privilege over others, any more than one object has

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[65] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchill (London and New York: Verso, 2011), pp. 5, 34.
[66] Ibid., pp. 164, 117, 135.
[67] Ibid., pp. 66-67.
[68] Ibid., p. 217.

> over others. It is at the level of interference that things happen, beings, images, concepts, all the kinds of events. The theory of cinema does not bear on the cinema, but on the concepts of the cinema, which are no less practical, effective, or existent than cinema itself. [...] Cinema's concepts are not given in cinema. And yet they are cinema's concepts, not theories about cinema.[69]

Here, then, we have moved away from as strict a delimitation between philosophy and other disciplines, present in some of the previous material cited. Again, there is the allusion to a process of interference, one which has lead Cesare Casarino to suggest that this passage draws us toward the 'open secret' of this work, 'namely, that the whole two-volume study had been coursed and innervated by interference – between philosophy as a practice of concepts and cinema as a practice of images and signs'.[70] Whilst this may well be the case, what is much more striking about this passage is that it suggests what a theory of cinema can be, how we might carry out a critique of the cinema. This, for Deleuze, is to be carried out by reference to the concepts which the cinema gives rise to. In effect, the allusion here is to the continuities and the discontinuities between a theory of the cinema, and cinema itself. Cinema might give rise to concepts, or to phrase it differently, we might be able to extract concepts from cinema (and, indeed, art in general), but this does not mean that those concepts are then limited to cinema wholly, that they are simply elements of an organic structure which is the art work, elements which have no application or place in other spheres. Rather, by extracting concepts from cinema, and here also from literature, we are able to open particular works onto a much larger conceptual plane, a plane which would certainly include philosophy, the domain of concepts *par excellence*.[71]

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[69] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (London: Athlone Press, 2000), p. 280.
[70] Cesare Casarino, *Modernity at Sea: Marx, Melville, Conrad in Crisis* (Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 2002), p. xvii.
[71] It ought to be noted that the passage quoted above, and the books on cinema, are somewhat of an anomaly in Deleuze's work, which in general holds that concepts are the preserve of philosophy only. Thus, in *Difference and Repetition* (1968), it is stated that 'a philosophical concept can never be confused with a scientific function or an

Through this operation, we can affirm both the irreducible nature of the work of art, whilst at the same time acknowledging its inter-relations with other forms and practices. In other words, rather than stating the way in which a film or piece of literature represents, or is symptomatic of an external truth, reality, or plane, we will maintain here that art does not reside on a separate, or subordinate plane of the real, but is itself a part of the real in its own way. Simultaneously, we affirm that art does not simply produce its own, demarcated truths, concepts, or ways of being, but that, whilst it carries with it its own distinctness, it is still a part of the world in all of its affective, reactive and co-extensive qualities. By extracting concepts which belong to a particular work, or a set of works, we avoid reducing the art-work to an empty receptacle or (distorted) mirror image of social and historical relations, desire and neurosis, or the dominant mode of production. Whilst this is the case, this exercise in conceptual extraction does not intend merely to provide an exegesis of the text, or to simply point out internal contradictions and tensions, in each case attempting to reveal a truth contained firmly within the walls of the text. In sum, the goal here will be to provide a fully materialist mode of analysis of texts, and also of wider culture.[72]

The structure of analysis outlined here is similar to one which Alain Badiou has proposed. According to Badiou, there are three modes of philosophical analysis when it comes to art, or, as he puts it, three 'possible schemata of the link between art and philosophy'. These are

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artistic construction, but finds itself in affinity with these in this or that domain of science or style of art'. Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), p. xiii. When it comes to literature, Deleuze was concerned with affects and percepts, but also the related matter of the way in which 'writing is a question of becoming'. Gilles Deleuze, 'Literature and Life', in *Essays Critical and Clinical*, trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco (Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 1997), p. 1. For our own purposes, none of these models suffices in order to carry out a more general, cultural critique. It is for this reason that we come to define criticism alongside philosophy, that is, as a process of extracting and evaluating concepts.

[72] Thus, we are not content with merely, as Richard Ruston phrases it, affirming 'filmic reality' by making reference to various different philosophical strategies. Richard Rushton *The Reality of Film* (Manchester and New York: Manchester UP, 2011), pp. 1-19. Nor are we concerned with tracing the way 'literature "does" politics as literature', as JacquesRanciére has tried to demonstrate, despite the unique appeal of this approach. Jacques Ranciére, 'The Politics of Literature', *SubStance*, 33.1 (2004), p. 10. Instead, this thesis deals with the way in which literature and film, as a part of the real, interact with other aspects of this, specifically the political and the philosophical.

'didacticism, romanticism, and classicism'.[73] Didacticism, for Badiou, constitutes the thesis that 'art is incapable of truth, or that all truth is external to art', a thesis which is originally Platonic. The task of philosophical analysis here is to ensure a correct correspondence to an external truth.[74] Romanticism holds that 'art *alone* is capable of truth', that the former is a direct embodiment of the latter, that 'art is the Absolute as subject – it is *incarnation*'. The job of the philosopher here is merely to uncover this truth.[75] Finally, classicism (which has as its originary point Aristotle) decrees that art produces a semblance, or 'scrap of truth' which 'engages the spectator of art in "liking"'; in other words, 'art captures desire and shapes its transference by proposing a semblance of its object. Philosophy is summoned here only qua aesthetics. It has its say about the rules of "liking"'.[76] According to Badiou, these three schemata correspond to the three main means of philosophical, or critical interrogation when it comes to art in the twentieth century: Marxism conforms to didacticism, hermeneutics – and in particular Heideggerian hermeneutics – is correlative with romanticism, and, finally, psychoanalysis can be seen as a form of classicism.[77] Each of these three, in whichever guise, makes a choice between positing truth as either immanent to the work of art, or as singular. In the case of romanticism and hermeneutics, truth is directly expressed in the work of art, putting it on a plane of immanence. With didacticism and Marxism, truth remains external, making the *expression* of this truth in the art-work a singular one. Finally, when it comes to classicism and psychoanalysis truth again remains external, in that we are dealing only with a semblance or symptom. Badiou's stated aim

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[73] Alain Badiou, 'Art and Philosophy', in *Handbook of Inaesthetics*, trans. Alberto Toscano (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2005), p. 5.
[74] Ibid., p. 2.
[75] Ibid., p. 3.
[76] Ibid., pp. 4-5.
[77] Ibid., pp. 5-7.

is to overcome the reign of these three schemata by merging the two categories under which they can be placed, to affirm simultaneously both the art-work's singularity and its immanence.[78]

It is important to note here that Badiou's project is totally philosophical: it is concerned with art as a truth procedure, as a thing which produces its own truths. So, too, is Deleuze's project on the cinema, albeit in a rather different sense to Badiou's, in that here it is the concept and the problems this responds to and creates which is at stake, rather than philosophical truths. So, on the one hand the method followed here will be similar to both Badiou's formulations and Deleuze's, in that:

a) We will seek to advance an analysis of art-works (literary and filmic) which adheres to the principles of immanence (and in which co-extensiveness is affirmed), and yet also remains singular, in that we affirm that what is being expressed is in some way irreducible.
b) Rather than focusing on art as a machine for producing the truth, we will extract concepts from works of art, concepts which belong to the latter and originate there, but which are co-extensive with other concepts, in this case concepts of the global.

On the other hand, we encounter a radical difference, in that the aim here is to carry out a much more general, cultural critique. In extracting concepts from works of art and other elements of culture, we are able to relate the former on an equal plane when it comes to other concepts of the global. We therefore end up constructing an overall picture of some of the most common ways in which the global is conceptualised. In other words, it is not a case of finding an element in a film, piece of literature, or sociological tract which stands in for the global, but, rather, finding figures of the global which are in a sense ready-made, waiting to be gleaned from the text in question. From there, we can begin to place these concepts under categories, or master-concepts.

[78] Ibid., p. 9.

In the majority of cases, the means of extracting these concepts will be via analysing some of the spatial relations present within literary or filmic texts, meaning that we also make here an indirect contribution to one of the many 'turns' identified in recent years, in this case the 'spatial turn' in the humanities, which is seen generally to have its origins in the work of Michel Foucault and Henri Lefebvre.[79] But this is not – as should by now be clear – in an effort to exemplify how a mode of space in a given work is *representative* of the current, external spatial state of affairs in the city, the countryside, the Earth as a whole, or whatever the case may be.[80] Rather, the forms of space encountered in the various texts to be examined will be taken as formulations of space in their own right, which, whilst they are surely influenced by external spatial factors, are also in the business of creating new spaces, new possible combinations and dynamics, ones which eventually lead us to a figure of space which is global in its dimensions, and from which we can extract a concept of the global.

The rationale for carrying out this method of engagement, which takes an expansive view when it comes to concepts of the global, is grounded in the status of concepts as such within the contemporary moment. To return to our starting point, Deleuze and Guattari do indeed suggest that philosophy is the ultimate domain of the concept. This being said, they identify three ages of

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[79] For accounts of the spatial turn in methods of analysis, see Brian Jarvis, 'Cultural Geography and American Studies', *Literature Compass*, 2 (2005), <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1741-4113.2005.00124.x/full>; and Santa Arias and Barney Warf, eds, *The Spatial Turn: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2009). Most accounts make reference to Foucault's famous essay 'Of Other Spaces', which calls for an historical and political view of space and geography, as opposed to the then predominant privileging of time. Michel Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', trans. J. Miskowiec, *Diacritics*, 16 (1986). Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* has been and is a huge influence on all areas of spatial studies in the humanities. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Cambridge, MA and Oxford: Blackwell, 1991).

[80] Notable examples of this approach would include David Harvey's suggestion that postmodern cinema – in particular *Wings of Desire* (1987) and *Blade Runner* (1982) – 'hold up to us, as in a mirror, many of the essential features of postmodernity', the most important of these being what Harvey calls time-space compression. David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge, MA and Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), pp. 322-323. Brian Jarvis is particularly concerned with the way in which literature and film 'represent' the spatial affairs of postmodern culture, and the city in particular. Brian Jarvis, *Postmodern Cartographies: The Geographical Imagination in Contemporary American Culture* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), pp. 8, 89, 149, 166.

the concept: 'the encyclopedia, pedagogy, and commercial professional training'. The second age of the concept here refers to Deleuze and Guattari's own philosophical method, whereas the third constitutes 'an absolute disaster for thought whatever its benefits might be, of course, from the viewpoint of universal capitalism'.[81] This third age encompasses not only commercial training, but also 'computer science, marketing, design, and advertising, all the disciplines of communication'.[82] 'Concepts. Now', demands a CEO during a 'creative lecture' in Ali Smith's novel *Girl Meets Boy*.[83] It is not just that contemporary capitalist industry demands concepts, that it has taken a firm grip of the business of fabricating concepts, and that we have stumbled into that third age of the concept which Deleuze and Guattari held so much disdain for. We are now continually bombarded by concepts, the global being one of the prime examples of this. Mattelart points this out explicitly in relation to formulations of the network, in reference to which he suggests that 'one might even say that the deregulation and privatization of communication systems goes hand in hand with a veritable deregulation of the concepts and notions we use to designate the world of networks'.[84] Indeed, as Jean-Francois Bayart points out, globalisation as a concept itself originates not in sociology or philosophy, but 'appeared in the 1960s and 1970s, in English and in French, in the bureaucratic language of the United Nations and of multinational corporations. American Express turned it into an advertising campaign slogan for its credit card'.[85] Here, then, is expressed the interlocking vortex of the global in general as a concept, with its links to the corporate and economic, the political, and by virtue of its very status as a concept, the philosophical. Since the 60s and the 70s, we have witnessed an explosion of concepts of the global, via a variety of different media. What a conceptually-oriented study

[81] Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 12.
[82] Ibid., p. 10.
[83] Ali Smith, *Girl Meets Boy* (Edinburgh and London: Canongate, 2007), pp. 36-38.
[84] Mattelart, p. 119.
[85] Bayart, p. 2.

enables us to do, then, is to assess the various problems and implications of, in this case, concepts of the global, to give a sense of the way in which each concept is situated within the philosophical, political, economic and aesthetic vortex which it always is by its very nature.

In tracking concepts of the global in contemporary culture, we are always in some way situated within this vortex. As a matter of philosophical principle, then, like Deleuze and Guattari, we affirm that 'the concept is real without being actual', that it is a virtual part of material existence.[86] Simultaneously, though, we suggest here that the role of the concept has become much broader, and that – particularly in the case of the global – a swarm-like, general conceptual critique addresses this situation in the most appropriate way possible.

Thus, in the first two chapters, we will be looking at concepts of the global characterised by their immanence, signalled by the lack of an outside, and by an animating principle which is infused throughout the whole. In Chapter 1, we will encounter a way of conceptualising the global which is contingent upon the *internalisation* of the outside, whether this outside comes in the guise of unknown earthly territory, pre- or non-capitalist areas of human habitation, or indeed the outside of the boundless Universe itself. As we will see, this is figured in most cases by a demarcated structure which appears to have no outside. This comes in the guise of buildings and architecture in the case of texts like *House of Leaves* (2000) and *Oryx and Crake* (2003), the world-system in the case of what Mark Fisher has called 'capitalist realism'[87], and the Earth itself in the work of Peter Sloterdijk. With all of these instances, the aesthetic, the philosophical, and the political are linked together through an operation of cutting-through, a situation in which as a result of the lack of an outside, the space encountered must cut through itself in order to provide a means of differentiation, creation, or definition. Further, we will introduce here what

[86] Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 22.
[87] Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* (Ropley: Zero Books, 2009).

Deleuze and Guattari would call a 'conceptual persona'[88], a figure which will crop up again and again throughout this discussion, and will be dubbed the anti-nomad.

This structure-based way of conceptualising the global will be something we continue to look at to an extent in Chapter 2, particularly in reference to Charlie Kaufman's film *Synecdoche, New York* (2008). Linking this piece together with a series of other works and writings, is a joint interest in the figure of the network and in a form of infinite regress, both of which fit in here with the overall category of immanence. From this point of view, we drift away from hard structures and branch out into the virtual and the technological, looking at texts concerned in part with the effects of contemporary media such as Douglas Coupland's *Generation A* (2009) and David Cronenberg's *Existenz* (1999), whilst finding a politico-philosophical correlate in the work of Hardt and Negri. Here, as we will see, the animating principle within these versions of the global is control.

In Chapter 3, things take a slightly different turn, as we begin to see how the world without outside is not the only overarching way of conceptualising the global. Here, we will look predominantly at four pieces – Don DeLillo's *Cosmopolis* (2003), Will Self's *The Book of Dave* (2006), Iain Banks' *Transition* (2009) and Neill Blomkamp's *Elysium* (2013) – all of which contain a dynamic of transcendence, an interaction between two different worlds: the world of absolute, overarching proportions, and the world of the everyday. This serves to re-introduce the theme of the outside. We will pick up on an argument developed in Chapter 1, which finds a connection with a way of conceptualising the global which is firmly tied to both the Earth and the human subject. This also applies in this version of transcendence, in that it is one which remains earthly, a low-level transcendence which has close ties to the human subject. Indeed, this is best symbolised, as we will see, through the idea of the 'Singularity'. But we also find a

[88] Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, pp. 61-63.

whole host of philosophical and political discourses with which the model described connects, including writings on world cities, the status of financial capital, Martin Heidegger's concept of the world picture, and the idea of the glocal, along with its links to the cosmopolitan. Throughout the chapter, we will attempt to address some of the philosophical and political problems of transcendent motifs.

This is something which will endure to an extent in Chapter 4, in that we again find two different configurations of the absolute, but in this case based around contingency. It is contingency and its various relations to an absolute point of necessity which will be at stake here, particularly in relation to two of Ali Smith's novels – *The Accidental* (2005) and *There but for the* (2011) – but also the 2012 film *Cloud Atlas*. The two versions of contingency located offer quite different views of the contemporary world-system, and part of the aim of the chapter will be to uncover the various implications of these different ways of figuring the totality. Introduced in this chapter are also the first signs of the abandonment of the paradigm of the global as concomitant with the Earth and the human subject, and this is tackled directly through some links which can be made between the concept of the global extracted from one of Smith's novels and some of Quentin Meillassoux's work.

In Chapter 5 – entitled 'Beyond-Measure' – we will continue to track this version of the global which cuts loose the ties with the Earth, and which puts into doubt the centrality of the human subject at the level of totality. This is figured in the main through the concept of the Unhuman Brain, which we will extract from various pieces including David Lynch's *Lost Highway* (1997), Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Unconsoled* (1995), and some of Bernard Stiegler's work on technics. We will begin the chapter, however, with another way in which the capitalist world-system is being conceptualised in the contemporary moment, one which leads us to a vision of

the world without the human, but also points to a more rigorously political concept, which is that of the common. The concept is traced in this instance predominantly in relation to Patrick Keiller's film *Robinson in Ruins* (2010), and will allow us to move onto the concerns expressed in the material analysed in the rest of the chapter. What all of the examples in this chapter share – whether this is manifested through an interest in a network-oriented view of the world, or via a treatment of the role of media technologies, or even a return to Marxian primitive accumulation – is a way of conceptualising the global which is again contingent on the lack of an outside, albeit under rather different parameters than the chapters on immanence.

The common theme running throughout all the chapters of this thesis is the return to the totality that the different ways of conceptualising the global identified here figure. Part of the aim in each chapter will be to assess exactly how this is achieved, what forms of the global are put to use, and ultimately what this says about our current moment. The global and the totality are, as we have suggested, largely conceptual affairs. But these affairs are so prominent in our culture today that a proper assessment of them is long overdue, and so it is to this that we can now turn in earnest.

Chapter 1

The Dense Interior, or, Internalizing the Outside

Whilst most of the material discussed here was produced between the 1990s and the present day, J. G. Ballard's story 'The Concentration City' (1957) provides a useful template or paradigm, not only for this chapter and the next, but also to bear in mind throughout the thesis. Ballard anticipates here many of the key themes and ways of conceptualising the global that will be encountered in this study; his story traces the stirrings of a new, dominant way of thinking about global space, not only in relation to literary expressions of this, but also in a much broader sense. The eponymous 'City' is one from which it is impossible to escape, there being no known world outside it. It extends both horizontally and vertically. Indeed, there is even a classical-style metaphysical debate surrounding the City's scope, and its apparently all-encompassing nature. As the doctor-character in the tale puts it, 'some advanced opinion maintains that there's a wall around the City, through which it's impossible to penetrate'. The doctor, however, dismisses this opinion as 'far too abstract and sophisticated', preferring the view that 'the City stretches out in all directions without limits'.[1] The age-old metaphysical debate, then, which pits the view that the world has an outside and therefore a discernible limit, against the alternative standpoint that the world is in fact boundless and beyond limits is transposed here onto a terrestrial, urban environment.

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[1] J. G. Ballard, 'The Concentration City', in *The Complete Short Stories, Vol. I* (London and New York: Harper Perennial, 2006), p. 49.

The globe itself, along with its urban density, becomes the vehicle for the way the world as such is figured. The discovery of the City's all-encompassing nature is made particularly dramatic by the protagonist Franz's desire to find 'free space', meaning not only space which is not dominated by the urban sprawl, but also space which is not charged by the cubic foot.[2] Franz decides to take a sleeper train in order to reach the outside of the City. He travels west on the train for many days, until without warning, and without any sign of the City dissipating, the train changes direction, and appears to be heading east. As a final bizarre twist, Franz ends up arriving back at his starting point, at the same time and date of his departure. Whilst he has travelled what would appear to be the full scope of the City, then, we are left with the sense that, firstly, it is impossible to obtain any distance from the City, meaning that it either has no outside or – at the very least – an outside which it is impossible to gain access to (as in the Doctor's theory). Secondly, we are confronted with the strange fact that Franz, in travelling so far across the City's domain, has actually, paradoxically not travelled at all, in that he ends up back at his starting point, time and space having remained ultimately static.

These two Kafkaesque features of Ballard's story will crop up again and again in different guises throughout this thesis, and particularly in the first two chapters. To stick with the first feature, what we will begin to identify in this chapter is perhaps the most ubiquitous way of conceptualising the global across contemporary culture. All the material collated here suggests a form of the global in which the outside is done away with, where the external is no longer an integral part of the way in which the global is figured. In this particular situation, that disappearance of the outside is arrived at through an appeal toward immanence. But here it is not the heavens, or even the infinite universe which is imbued with such qualities but, rather, the terrestrial, the earthly. 'The Concentration City', then, presents something in between the two

[2] Ibid., p. 38.

theories which the doctor outlines. The City is a seemingly definable, discrete structure, yet its end is unreachable; it has no outside, and yet still has limits, in that eventually Franz is pinged back in a different direction. Such are the general qualities of the structures and concepts of the global found in this chapter and the next: a demarcated structure which nevertheless appears to have no outside.

Ballard's tale takes an urban environment to be the emblem of this state. From this perspective, we can suggest that Ballard taps into what Henri Lefebvre was describing around the same time as the emerging dominance of a fully 'urban society', in which – as Lefebvre puts it – the 'urban fabric [...] extends its borders, corrodes the residue of agrarian life'. For Lefebvre, this new urban dominant 'assumes and proposes the concentration of *everything* there is in the world, in nature, in the cosmos'.[3] A feeling, then, that the urban has subsumed the entire world, or is even the essence of that now rather ancient notion of cosmos, is what pervades Lefebvre's description here.[4] This feeling was widespread in the cultural matrix of the time, in which as Scott Bukatman has pointed out, we are given an image of the urban as 'both totalising and beyond the power of vision'. Ballard's story is included in Bukatman's list of this (then) emerging image, along with examples from science fiction comics, and Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982).[5]

But – as we have already seen to an extent – there is a more general shade to Ballard's story, in that it brings to the fore a new, terrestrial way of thinking about the global, and injects this with a metaphysical tinge. Evidently, we are dealing with a conception of the global which is instantiated through the urban. But this conception can also be viewed in the more general terms

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[3] Henri Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*, trans. Robert Bononno (Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 2003), p. 39.
[4] For a similar sentiment see Paul Virilio, 'The Overexposed City', trans. Astrid Hustvedt, in *Architecture Theory Since 1968*, ed. K. Michael Hays (New York: Columbia Books, 1998), p. 543.
[5] Scott Bukatman, *Blade Runner* (London: BFI, 1997), pp. 44-45.

delineated. To add to these, we can say that the urban environment in this tale is a globally dense environment, the ubiquity and concentration of the City extending its reach across the known and accessible world. The density at issue here brings us up-close to what Peter Sloterdijk describes as the 'post-historically dense' state, in what he designates as the third stage of globalisation.[6] This, among other similar versions of the global, forms one of the key contemporary ways of conceptualising such a state; it is a view that holds that everything is connected, everywhere has been explored, and everything affects everything else. Another, prominent example of this would be Marshall McLuhan's notion of the global village, discussed in the Introduction.[7] As McLuhan (along with Barrington Nevitt) puts it, as a result of flows of electronic information, we are now in a situation whereby 'effects merge with causes instantly'.[8] This, then, is another version of density, whereby separations in time and space are eroded in the wake of electronic impulses. What Ballard was articulating in the sixties, via an urban environment, McLuhan – around the same time – was exploring through television, radio and telecommunications technologies.

Hanging over all this, there is the sense in Ballard's tale that there is, in fact, no outside to capitalist relations, modes of production, and habitation. Try as he might, Franz is unable to escape this world in which all of space has been commoditised. In the contemporary moment, this is something which is expressed via various different means of conceptualisation. As we shall see in these first two chapters, many of the elements contained within 'The Concentration City' appear to have been re-hashed in the contemporary culture, but there are also new components added, new inferences to be drawn, and new configurations to be tracked in what is

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[6] Sloterdijk, *In the World Interior of Capital*, p. 191.
[7] McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy,* p. 31.
[8] Marshall McLuhan and Barrington Nevitt, 'The Argument: Causality in the Electronic World', *Technology and Culture*, 14.1 (1973), p. 1.

now a fully developed arena of the conceptual, rather than the stirrings of something on the horizon.

The Textual Interior

Within the bracket of immanence already outlined, there are two other, main themes which are addressed in this chapter. Firstly, if what we witness here is a dense interior, then this interior is one which has been formed by *housing* the outside. Rather than simply covering the surface of the Earth with a structure – as in 'The Concentration City' – the motif of immanence which we will begin to trace here is one achieved by dragging what was outside firmly within the bounds of the inside. When it comes to art, and in particular the literary text – and this is the second important characteristic of the chapter – we can see this movement being enacted not only in terms of the content of the work, but also at the level of form itself, and part of the task here will be to demonstrate how this is so. In other words, it would seem that from new conceptions of the global follow new conceptions of art. These ways of conceptualisation are not merely registered in art, but also in the more general philosophical-cultural climate of the time, and so we will link these three things (the artistic, the cultural, and the philosophical) together in order to begin sketching a broader picture of how the global is being conceptualised within the rubric of the immanent.

The link between a certain concept of the global and the art-form itself is fully exemplified in the main text analysed here: Mark Danielewski's *House of Leaves*.[9] So, whilst we will shortly look at some other examples of a dense interior – found in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2003), some of Olafur Eliasson's sculpture, and Peter Sloterdijk's work on

[9] Mark Z. Danielewski, *House of Leaves* (London and New York: Doubleday, 2001). Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

globalisation and globes – we will focus first on Danielewski's book. There are a number of different components which make up this text. It opens with a foreword from 'The Editors' (part of the fictional make-up of the book), which is followed by an introduction by one of the main characters, Johnny Truant (again, fictional), who describes the circumstances under which he finds what is to comprise the majority of the text which the reader is presented with (*HOL* xvii). The text, or 'project' is a descriptive and critical piece about a film called *The Navidson Record*, which never existed either fictionally or non-fictionally (*HOL* xix), and which has been written by a man named Zampanó, who was 'blind as a bat' (*HOL* xxi). The reader is immediately presented, then, with a comic, metafictional, self-referential maze, and the book has consequently been categorised as quintessentially postmodern by many critics.[10] After the introduction, we are presented with Zampanó's text about *The Navidson Record*, which comes with its own explanatory and bibliographic footnotes alluding to some books which do exist, and some which do not. There are also footnotes from the editors, and Johnny Truant chips in with his own footnotes too, most of which are somewhat irrelevant to Zampanó's text, but serve to carry on his own, substantial narrative; so the book proceeds in this way throughout, with the reader's attention constantly being diverted between the two narratives, and continually being referred back to a set of appendices which contain correspondences between Johnny Truant and his mother, plus collages, poetry, quotations, and various other materials.

The disruption of the reality principle of the text, and the bleeding-in of the various different levels of reality is, of course, a staple of postmodern fiction, and in this sense *House of*

[10] See Catherine Spooner, *Contemporary Gothic* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006), p. 47; Michael Greaney, *Contemporary Fiction and the Uses of Theory: The Novel from Structuralism to Postmodernism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 150; and N. Katherine Hayles, 'Saving the Subject: Remediation in *House of Leaves*', *American Literature*, 74.4 (2002), p. 779, for noteworthy examples.

Leaves is not particularly novel.[11] Viewed differently, however, Danielewski's text pushes these facets in a somewhat alternative direction. This is a text which is continually spilling out into itself, each text constantly displacing or – to use a phrase of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's -– 'deterritorializing' the other and putting it into operation elsewhere, only to undergo the same process itself shortly afterwards.[12] The book itself becomes like a plane, or base level upon which various texts and permutations of reality interact with one another. *House of Leaves*, then, is rather different from standard metatextual fiction, in that it is not just the reality principle that is disrupted. Instead, we are presented with a holistic, textual world, whereby each permutation of reality reacts against and is deterritorialized by the others; the book moves, in other words, from being a story, to being a story within a story, to being a criticism of itself as a whole, to being a criticism of a particular aspect, to creating associations with other texts, to looking at readers' responses to the various texts of which the book comprises, and so on.

In this regard, Danielewski's text has as a close relative Italo Calvino's *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller* (1979), in that the book itself provides a plane upon which various settings take over from one another, upon which each text is erased or subsumed by another.[13] But *House of Leaves* takes this one step further, as the movement of deterritorialization is not sequential, but instead happens in a much more fluid way, whereby we flick back and forth between settings, genres, and modes of writing and media. This may well have something to do with the way in

[11] In this regard, it is worth flagging up another of *House of Leaves*' archetypal postmodern traits, which are the references to and figurations of a labyrinthine structure, which mirrors to an extent the structure of the text itself (see Danielewski, pp. 114-119). The obvious (Ur-postmodernist) parallel here would be Borges' work. See in particular 'The Garden of Forking Paths', in *Labyrinths*: *Selected Stories and Other Writings*, trans. Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby (London and New York: Penguin, 2000). For a classic postmodern treatment of the labyrinth see John Barth, 'Lost in the Funhouse', in *Lost in the Funhouse* (New York: Anchor Books, 1988). For our own purposes, the references to the labyrinth in Danielewski's text are not as pertinent as some of its other aspects, and so it has not been addressed fully here.

[12] Deleuze and Guattari's concept, as we will see, is used in various different ways throughout the two thinkers' work. For an example which is particularly relevant to language, and the interplay between sign and signified, see Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (London and New York: Continuum, 2011), pp. 123-125.

[13] Italo Calvino, *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller*, trans. William Weaver (London: Vintage, 1998).

which the text is embroiled in the paradigm of the computer and of the digital. Throughout the book, we are given nods toward this through the various words which appear like links in the text. Further, as Katherine Hayles suggests, the text itself seems to operate like a computer through its incorporation of various different types of media. In Hayles words: 'as if learning about omnivorous appetite from the computer, *House of Leaves*, in a frenzy of remediation, attempts to eat all the other media'.[14]

In its broadest sense, *House of Leaves* functions as its own self-contained, textual world. Whilst it is obvious, then, that this text is embroiled in the larger world of which it forms a part, its various self-referential aspects point toward an immanent, textual interior which incorporates everything in its wake. Putting aside, for the moment, the content of the text, we can say already that *House of Leaves* is a truly global text, an artefact which figures an all-encompassing, textual interior.

The Limitless Interior

The content of Danielewski's text both supports this view, and expands it. In *The Navidson Record* various characters undergo explorations of an unexplainable phenomenon which has presented itself in a house in rural Virginia. The phenomenon in question begins when Navidson, the protagonist, comes back from a wedding to find that 'something in the house had changed' (*HOL* 24). The measurements of the house appear to have shifted in an unexplainable way, confronting the characters with 'the confounding impossibility of an interior dimension greater

[14] Hayles, 'Saving the Subject', p. 781. See also Martin Brick, 'Reading the Book of Someone's Reading: Spatial Allegories of the Reading Experience in Danielewski's *House of Leaves* and Gascoigne's *Master F. J.*', *The McNeese Review*, 47 (2009), p. 1.

than an exterior one' (*HOL* 55). The cause of this eventually appears as something 'resembling a walk-in closet' (*HOL* 28) inside the house, which no-one had noticed before.

This strange occurrence – which is referred to as 'uncanny' (*HOL* 24) – would immediately seem to invite interpretations along psychoanalytic and gothic lines.[15] The fact, however, that this strange space is eventually revealed as a massive, hidden web of passages and staircases recalls to an extent Gaston Bachelard's phenomenological taxonomy of the various areas of the house. The closest aspect to this in Bachelard's system would be the cellar, that underground, hidden space, which as he has it is 'the *dark entity* of the house, the one that partakes in subterranean forces. When we dream there, we are in harmony with the irrationality of the depths'. The cellar, by this logic, is a kind of topographical proxy for the unconscious.[16] In more general terms, the house is, for Bachelard, 'our corner of the world. As has often been said, it is our first universe, a real cosmos in every sense of the word'.[17] But as we shall see, it is not just an individual-oriented, phenomenological cosmos with which the house in *House of Leaves* is associated, but, rather, the cosmos, or world as such. In other words, the task in hand here is to show how the house in Danielewski's book relates to a way of conceptualising the global as such, rather than demonstrating any psychoanalytic formulas, or phenomenological schemata it might conform to.

In the first, preliminary exploration of this hidden space of the house, a space which has made inside bigger than outside, Navidson discovers that what appeared to be just a walk-in closet has become 'a constant stream of corners and walls, all of them unreadable and perfectly smooth' (*HOL* 64). In 'Exploration # 1', the explorers drafted in (Navidson not included this

[15] For already existing interpretations along these lines see (on psychoanalysis) Nick Lord, 'The Labyrinth and the Lacuna: Metafiction, the Symbolic, and the Real in Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves*', *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, 55.4 (2014); and (on the gothic) Spooner, pp. 41-47.
[16] Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston, MA: Beacon Press 1994), pp. 18-19.
[17] Ibid., p. 4.

time) momentarily find an end, or boundary to the shifting, impossible landscape, but are eventually confronted with an 'even larger entrance waiting for them, opening into an even greater void' (*HOL* 84). After a series of other explorations, we reach 'Exploration # 5', which this time is conducted by Navidson, and which gives us a description of the full extent of the unexplainable phenomenon. Again, we are presented with huge caverns and voids, labyrinths and passages, until Navidson reaches at some point a window frame, thinking that this may be a respite from what has become the 'interminable pattern of wall, room and door' (*HOL* 464). As it turns out though, Navidson is instead confronted with a 'grotesque vision of absence' (*HOL* 464).

Navidson proceeds to enter into this absence, in which he is left suspended, with only a few supplies to sustain him. This is, to say the least, a disorientating place, as we are informed: '[Navidson] suffers from surges of nausea, "like I've got a bad case of the spins". Questions plague him. Is he floating, falling, or rising? Is he right side up, or upside down or on his side?' (*HOL* 465). With no means of perspective or measurement Navidson is left irretrievably within this chaotic realm. The only thing close to some kind of solidity or sense of perspective Navidson has left with him is a book, which, in keeping with the novel's continually self-referential refrain, is entitled *House of Leaves*. As there is no light in the space in which he is suspended, Navidson begins by burning matches in order to be able to read this text, but, eventually, he ends up having to burn the pages of the book as he reads, one page providing 'him with just enough time to read the next two pages' (*HOL* 467).

Cutting through the Territory

These occurrences in Danielewski's book lead us to two related areas, both of which open things out to a wider discussion of the way in which the global is being conceptualised today, and the implications of this. The first is related to our previous designation of the book as a global text. As we shall see, the above events in the book further encourage an interpretation along the lines of the relationship between art and territory. The second area is that of the global itself, and the way *House of Leaves* figures this. Ultimately, we can say that the paradoxical disconnect between exterior and interior in the book points toward a mode of the global which is predicated on an internalisation, or housing of the outside.

We will look first at the relationship between art and territory in *House of Leaves*. It is worth here recounting some remarks that Deleuze and Guattari make on the subject of art. As the two put it, 'If nature is like art', then 'this is always because it combines these two living elements in every way: House and Universe, heimlich and unheimlich, territory and deterritorialization, finite melodic compounds and the great infinite plane of composition, the small and the large refrain'.[18] Art is, amongst other things, always an instance of both the creation of territory, and the demolition or deterritorialization of (already existing) territory. As Elizabeth Grosz has elaborated, 'art is not only the movement of territorialization [...]; it is also the converse movement, that of deterritorialization, of cutting through territories [...], traversing territory in order to re-touch chaos'.[19] When it comes to *House of Leaves* – as we have seen – this movement of territorialization and deterritorialization would need to be put in a rather different light. Of course, it is a *text* we are dealing with so matters are somewhat more

[18] Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 186.
[19] Elizabeth Grosz, *Chaos, Territory, Art: Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth* (Chichester and New York: Columbia UP, 2008), p. 18.

complicated, but the point can nevertheless still be made. In Danielewski's text, the art-form is shown to carry out this contradictory yet complementary movement *within itself*.

It is this process that the events described above also adhere to. The movement from the defined space of the house, to the vast, undifferentiated, highly mutable, hidden area in the book can be read as a movement into the general chaos of the Universe, to use Deleuze and Guattari's language. Or, to put it differently, the house in *House of Leaves* is dissolved in the chaos which is encountered in the various explorations of the unexplainable phenomenon that is discovered. But to suggest this movement is to omit the fact that this is an *interiorised* form of chaos. When Navidson enters the final stage of his exploration, he is entering into a fully interiorised, chaotic absence, in which direction and overall orientation are unavailable. From this angle, the house in Danielewski's text also offers a re-configuration of the architectural form, which we might elucidate again via Deleuze and Guattari. As the two suggest, architecture is the beginning of art, what they call the 'frame' – that which cuts out a portion of territory – being the primal scene, or pre-condition for the emergence of all the arts.[20] As Grosz puts it, 'the emergence of the frame is the condition of all the arts and is the particular contribution of architecture to […] the territorialization of the uncontrollable forces of the earth'.[21] In *House of Leaves* we have a frame that incorporates within itself the uncontrollable forces of the earth, which carries out the movement of deterritorialization and reterritorialization internally, and which therefore gives us a rather different view of the bedrock of art and its involvement in territory.

All these elements tie in with our previous designation of the text itself as a global artifact. In all cases, we are dealing with an instance where the movement of deterritorialization and reterritorialization is enacted on a plane, or block of immanence. On the one hand, we have a

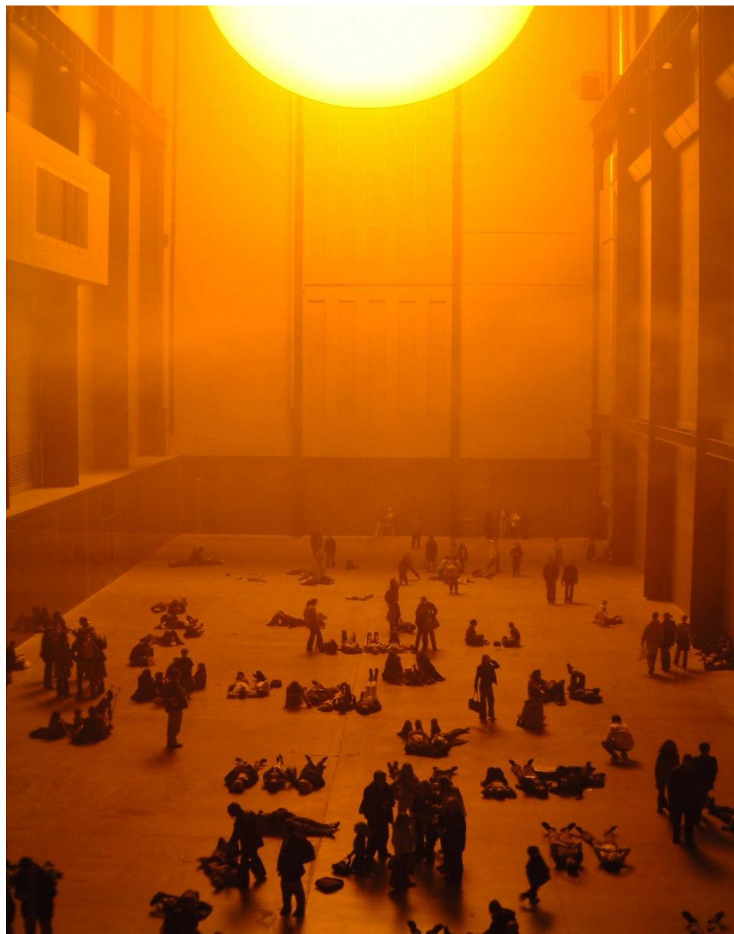
[20] Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?,* pp. 186-187
[21] Grosz, p. 11.

text which itself appears to eat all other texts or media. On the other hand, we have an instance within this text which posits a reconfiguration not only of inside and outside, but also of the framed parts of the earth and its uncontrollable aspects, the house and the universe, or cosmos. The house in *House of Leaves*, then, takes on the qualities of a global space, in which these various contradictory elements come together. Tying this together is the way in which Navidson is forced to read his own copy of *House of Leaves* whilst floating around in this strange space. This, of course, is a standard metafictional device, and it functions in this regard to cut through, or destabilise the reality principle of the text. But it also figures a text which must cut through itself in order to be read; in the act of burning each read page in order to read the next, Navidson undertakes a process which is suggestive of the way in which the text cuts through itself, or its own territory. Cutting through *House of Leaves* within *House of Leaves* is in this sense another instance to add to the list of those in which the text refers to an internal dynamic of territorialization and deterritorialization.

This vision of a self-contained artwork, one which brings in and houses elements of the Universe, is also expressed in the realm of installation art, Olafur Eliasson's *The Weather Project* (2003) serving here as a good example (see image overleaf). The piece was housed in the turbine hall at Tate Modern gallery in London. Through the use of various techniques and equipment (monofrequency lighting, projection foil, scaffolding), Eliasson achieved the impression of a huge sun inside the turbine hall. A machine pumped mist into the hall throughout the day, creating the impression of an atmosphere.[22] What Eliasson's work enacts, then, is an interior which combines the outside, uncontrollable forces of the Universe, a space which has its own, interior celestial body. Again then, this is an art-form which figures the global, in a specific

[22] Pamela M. Lee, 'Your Light and Space', in *Take Your Time: Olafur Eliasson*, ed. Madeleine Grynsztejn (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2007), pp. 36-37.

sense. This is achieved through the positing of an interior world, in which is enacted the dissonance between chaos and order, and between the deterritorialization and reterritorialization of the earth. Through the art-work's housing of this dissonance, we are left with an impression of a lack of an outside, an immanent interior which contains the contradictory elements outlined above, and which puts an end to the framing nature of art and architecture.[23]



Eliasson's *The Weather Project*

[23] Bruno Latour reads *The Weather Project* in a different, albeit related way. For Latour, Eliasson's work dramatises the fact that, according to him, 'because of the simultaneous extension of science and the entanglement of human activities with things, there is no longer any outside'. Latour's wider point here is that, as a result of the scientific transformation of the world and the increased world-wide inter-connectivity of the human with both its own species and all sorts of different objects, there is a need to pay attention to and experiment with the kinds of environments and atmospheres which we create, and this is what Eliasson's work taps into. Bruno Latour, 'Atmosphère, Atmosphère', in *Olafur Eliasson: The Weather Project*, ed. Susan May (London: Tate Publishing, 2004), pp. 39, 30.

These structures – in both *House of Leaves* and *The Weather Project* – which promote a global understanding of the art form are very much tied to, and responsive to, the way in which the global is thought of as such within cultural and philosophical discourse in the contemporary world. In other words, the global art forms that we have identified here form part of a broader picture of the global, with all of the conceptual and political resonances this involves. It is these, then, that we can now move on to discuss.

The World Interior

For Peter Sloterdijk, what he sees as the the current phase of globalisation can be illustrated through that iconic structure, the Crystal Palace. As he puts it, this huge structure 'already anticipated an integral, experience-oriented, popular capitalism in which no less than the comprehensive absorption of the outside world in a fully calculated interior was at stake'.[24] The name Sloterdijk gives to this phase of globalisation is 'the world interior', which as he puts it, 'is not an agora or a trade fair beneath the open sky, but rather a hothouse that has drawn inwards everything that was once on the outside'.[25] Immediately, then, we are on familiar ground, as again we are dealing with a structural figuration of the global, in which the outside has been 'drawn inwards', rather like the movement encountered in *The Weather Project* and *House of Leaves*. The apparent difference here, however, is that Sloterdijk is directly concerned with that ubiquitous term globalisation, and by extension the capitalist world-system. But, as we shall see, the previous ways of conceptualising the global are all related with such matters in one way or another.

[24] Sloterdijk, *In the World Interior of Capital*, p. 175.
[25] Ibid., p. 13.

As we saw in the introduction, Sloterdijk pins down three distinct phases of globalisation: the first coincides with Western Antiquity and the dawn of metaphysics and cosmology, the second arrives with the exploration and colonisation of the Earth by Europeans, and the third constitutes our own era, the era of the World Interior.[26] In the first phase, it is thought itself which constitutes a form of globalisation, in that Hellenistic scholarship 'devoted itself to the idea of representing the totality of what exists in the stimulating image of an all-encompassing sphere'.[27] The second phase involves a transference of this sphere from the Greek cosmos to the Earth itself; the transcendent 'above' of Greek thought becomes the outside of unknown parts of the Earth, 'the task of designing the new image of the world' no longer being left to the metaphysicians, 'but rather to the geographers and seafarers'.[28] Our own phase of this tripartite schema appears in this light as an *extension* of the preceding two phases; indeed, what was once 'a binding thought figure for philosophers and cosmologists' has now become something which for Sloterdijk is a truism, the idea of an all-encompassing sphere or world being 'a mere geopolitical fact'. [29] If we are now irrevocably part of an all-encompassing sphere, then for Sloterdijk this no longer has much to do with metaphysics, but is, rather, an inevitable consequence of a global capitalist 'hothouse' which has drawn everything inside, and a world-wide system of telecommunications, satellite and digital technologies. As Sloterdijk puts it in his first volume of the *Spheres* trilogy (1998-2004), our era of globalisation is one in which 'networks and insurance policies are meant to replace the celestial domes [and] telecommunication has to enact the all-encompassing'.[30]

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[26] Ibid., pp. 8-13.
[27] Ibid., p. 8.
[28] Ibid., pp. 21-25.
[29] Peter Sloterdijk, *Spheres Volume 2: Globes*, trans. Wieland Hoban (South Pasadena: Semiotext(e), 2014), pp. 45-46.
[30] Peter Sloterdijk, *Spheres Volume I: Bubbles*, trans. Wieland Hoban (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2011), p. 25.

As noted before, Sloterdijk also describes the current phase of globalisation as being 'post-historically dense'. It is hard to read these words without being reminded of other recent proclamations of the post-historical, the most prominent being Francis Fukuyama's Hegelian-Kojévian theory of the triumph of liberal capitalism.[31] Of more relevance here, however, is Sloterdijk's emphasis on density. This diagnosis comes about through an attention to the way in which telecommunications systems have the effect of making the world seem like it has shrunk; the perceived distance between cause and effect, between here and there, now and then become under this scenario increasingly blurred. Actions always bear consequences in that they can always be perceived across the globe.[32] From one angle, Sloterdijk is merely repeating here a commonplace of globalisation theory, which as we saw in the introduction puts an emphasis on the compression of the world, insisting that 'the world has "shrunk" dramatically' as a result of transportation and telecommunications networks, along with an increased emphasis on world-wide trade.[33] But the emphasis on density offers a new flavour, in that it does not merely suggest a closeness to the rest of the world, a simultaneity which is unprecedentedly accessible. This diagnosis also promotes a feeling of oppressiveness, of an inability to act, and of an inability to escape an interior which has done away with the outside.

Ballard's 'Concentration City' contains a similarly dense interior from which there is ostensibly no escape. So do *House of Leaves* and *The Weather Project*. In the former, we have a chaotic space, in which multiple directions are present at once, and in which the protagonist is left passively drifting through an interior which seemingly knows no bounds. In the latter, we have an interiorised world in which the mist being pumped into the turbine hall creates an

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[31] Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (London: Penguin, 1992). For more on this, and on Hegel and Kojéve's concept of the end of History, see Chapter 4.
[32] Sloterdijk, *In the World Interior of Capital*, p. 177.
[33] Peter Dicken, *Global Shift: Mapping the Changing Contours of the World Economy* (New York and London: The Guilford Press, 2015), p. 83.

impression of density, of a cloud connecting the various people inside. Through these images, then, we begin to create a much broader picture of a common way of conceptualising the global. This way of conceptualisation has as its defining feature a dense interior which has incorporated the outside, an apparently immanent, global space which takes on the qualities of the once all-encompassing sphere of metaphysics and cosmology. Sloterdijk's work, however, reminds us of the inescapably political aspect of the global. In other words, if one of the most common ways of conceptualising the global is via an immanent interior, then this links up directly with the global capitalist hothouse and the telecommunications networks which Sloterdijk is at pains to develop a philosophical rubric around. This is not to say that *House of Leaves* or the *Weather Project* represent a more real version of the global which stands behind, or above them. Rather, our contention here is that these works form part of a matrix of conceptualisation, the implications of which we are now able to sketch out further.

One further example, however, of this form of the global is to be found in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2003). The narrative is set in both a pre- and post-apocalyptic world. Crake – an archetypal 'mad scientist' – endeavours, just before the dawn of the apocalyptic events which he has himself engineered, to create a new species of human without any of the flaws which he perceives in the current human race, and which will be able to withstand the post-apocalyptic world in the offing.[34] This new species is named the 'Crakers', and Crake builds a gigantic dome for them to live in called 'Paradice'. The Crakers are unaware of the outside world, and know only what is inside the dome; for them, then, there effectively is no outside world from that of Paradice, and they are quite content with their own interiorised existence.[35] Whilst the Crakers are intended to be a new species of human, we might well read them – at least

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[34] Margaret Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* (New York: Anchor Books, 2003), pp. 302-306.
[35] Ibid., p. 309.

in terms of their mode of habitation – as the *current* species of human. Sealed off inside a dome, we find yet another interior, which is in this case perhaps the closest in architectural form to Sloterdijk's invocation of the Crystal Palace. This dome which appears to have no outside is mirrored in the general spatial relations of the novel, which Michael Spiegel has read as displaying a distinct tinge of neo-medievalism, setting the novel in the light of a world-system which encourages a dispersal of loyalties, which no longer gives credence to the sovereignty of the nation-state, and which ushers in new-found global ties, the equivalent of which in the medieval world (we might add) would have been something like the notion of Christendom.[36] Indeed, if we are to follow Sloterdijk's reasons for positing this version of the global, then all the dense interiors located here can be read in tandem with the capitalist hothouse and the all-encompassing telecommunications networks which the author describes. In other words, what the different ways of figuring the global identified so far have in common is their embroilment in the vast capitalist world-system, in conjunction with the telecommunication and satellite technologies which run along-side this, both of which constitute what can be claimed as our own actually-existing global capsules.

There is no Alternative!

As Gerry Canavan has pointed out, *Oryx and Crake*, along with its sequel *The Year of the Flood* (2009), goes some way to 'open[ing] up new space for imagining a post-capitalist future through a satirical, science-fictional staging of capitalism's final, catastrophic breakdown – and the subsequent emergence of other kinds of lives'.[37] Whilst this is surely a valid interpretation of

[36] Michael Spiegel, 'Character in a Post-National World: Neomedievalism in *Oryx and Crake*', *Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature*, 43.3 (2010), p. 120.
[37] Gerry Canavan, 'Hope, But Not for Us: Ecological Science Fiction and the End of the World in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* and *The Year of the Flood*', *Lit: Literature, Interpretation, Theory*, 23.2 (2012), p. 139.

Atwood's text, as we have seen there is an element located within this which is more correlative with the present-day, capitalist world-system. Indeed, there is something about all of the examples of the global hitherto traced which lends them particularly well to being subsumed under that oft-quoted phrase of Fredric Jameson's, which proclaims that 'it seems to be easier for us today to imagine the thoroughgoing deterioration of the earth and of nature than the breakdown of late capitalism'.[38] Whilst it comes from a wholly different side of the political spectrum, Margaret Thatcher's (in)famous declaration that 'there is no alternative' to modern-day capitalism touches the same nerve here.[39] Thatcher's comment, of course, is a statement purporting to be fact, whereas Jameson's is more a diagnosis of the state of our imaginative capabilities, of the ingrained nature of a doctrine which very much began in its contemporary guise in the Thatcher/Regan era. Both comments, however, get us to the heart of what Mark Fisher calls 'capitalist realism', the causes of which can be boiled down to the defeat of socialist principles, practices, and states in favour of an all-encompassing model of capitalism, which in turn brings about the sense that the only viable means of running society is through the latter. As Fisher puts it, 'in the 1960s and 1970s, capitalism had to face the problem of how to contain and absorb energies from the outside. It now, in fact, has the opposite problem; having all-too successfully incorporated externality, how can it function without an outside it can colonize and appropriate?'[40] Part of the answer according to Fisher is that any alternatives – whether they be cultural-aesthetic or political-practical – are disseminated within capitalist societies themselves,

[38] Fredric Jameson, *The Seeds of Time* (New York: Columbia UP, 1994), p. xii.
[39] On the origins of the term see Brendan Evans, *Thatcherism and British Politics: 1975-1999* (Thrupp and Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1999), p. 59.
[40] Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*, pp. 8-9.

that alternatives are co-opted in order to provide the illusion of an outside which enables an ultimate adherence to capitalist norms and ideals.[41]

With the absence of an outside, then, modern-day, world-wide capitalism must create means to cut through itself, to establish a minimal differentiation from itself, in order to remain functional. Fisher's characterisation gives us another example of a form of the global with no outside, which cuts through its own territory, in an analogous way to the instances highlighted in *House of Leaves*. Danielewski's text can be read in this sense as adhering to the dominant way in which the global is conceptualised, that is, as a limitless interior. What makes this limitless interior all the more resonant are two of the stalwarts of the global in the contemporary world: global capitalism, and global communications networks. Thus, when it comes to Danielewski's text in particular, it is tempting to read this directly in relation to the *workings* of contemporary capitalism. Brian Jarvis has succumbed to such a temptation, by attempting to relate the dense interior in the book specifically to finance capital. If, for example, the discrepancy between the size of the outside and the inside of the house in *House of Leaves* can be seen as an 'architectural analogue for the "compression of space" and time by flexible Fordism', then it can also be seen – according to Jarvis – as representative of some of the practices further embedded within this:

> 'How can a house be bigger on the inside than it is on the outside? This might be a question of *leverage*. Before the subprime crisis, many financial houses, investment banks and mortgage brokers were leveraged at a ratio of around 30:1'.[42]

Whilst interpretations along such lines are interesting, we cannot stretch the representative capabilities of the text as far as Jarvis does here. Rather, the initial and fundamental connection

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[41] Ibid., pp. 12-13.

[42] Brian Jarvis, 'The Fall of the Hou$e of Finance: Gothic Economies in *House of Leaves* (2000) and *Lunar Park* (2005)', in *Twenty-First-Century Gothic*, ed. Brigid Cherry and others (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), pp. 26-27.

we find here between global capitalism and the form of the global in *House of Leaves* is in their similar features as such; in depicting a limitless interior, Danielewski's text forms part of an overall way of conceptualising the global, one which is intimately linked with global capitalism, and which connects with some of the other ways in which this is figured, to be looked at shortly. But what the limitless interior also chimes with is the notion of an absence of an alternative to present-day capitalism, and all of the examples of the global hitherto discussed relate to this in some way. The lack of an outside is the most prominent of all the features in the works looked at here, and if all these form part of a general way in which the global is conceptualised, they are also part of a feeling that, today, there is no alternative to the capitalist world-system.

The metaphysical overtones of these limitless interiors make this all the more evident: whether it is an interiorised chaos, or universe, or a telecommunications network which replaces the celestial domes, or the dome in *Oryx and Crake* which alludes to a paradisiacal realm infused with chance, or a throw of the dice, in all these instances we are presented with a form of the global from which there is no escape, not merely on a geographical level, but also on a metaphysical one too. 'Paradice' might well be read, then, not only as a project which is open to the contingencies of the future in the novel, but also as another version of today's world interior, which is increasingly open to contingent events, whether this is in the realm of the ecological or the financial.[43] To simply dismiss, or identify these parallels with the metaphysical as ideological, however, would be to ignore a shift in conceptualisation. Indeed, a concept-oriented study such as this is able to take account of both the ideological implications here, and their more nuanced, philosophical ones. So, whilst we can see these elements as part of a broader political situation which involves the all-encompassing nature of a capitalist world-system, and the place of the subject within this, we can also recognise a shift in terms of the conceptual register as such

[43] See Chapter 4 for a thorough discussion of the contingent, and its links with the financial and the ecological.

here. To summarise the situation before going into more detail, we can say that these large interiors signal a break away from a restrictive view of the world in which figurations of the totality are to be actively avoided, whilst at the same time reconfiguring that Modern notion that goes by the name of Universe, which ends up being incorporated into a subjective- and Earth-oriented point of view.

If, as Alexandre Koyré has set out in great detail, the Copernican revolution – along with other revolutions in thought such as Nicholas of Cusa's – signalled a passage from the closed world of Ancient and Medieval metaphysics, cosmology and religion, toward the notion of an infinite universe, then we have remained broadly within the conceptual rubric of the latter up until the present day.[44] But what the forms of the global being tracked here suggest is that we are witnessing in the contemporary period a mixture between these two things, between the closed world and the infinite Universe. We can posit that the overarching reason for this is articulated by Sloterdijk's work on the different phases of globalisation; from this perspective, whilst the Copernican revolution opened things out to the infinity of the Universe, there was at the same time a turn inward toward the terrestrial universe, toward the globe itself. Thus, we are confronted with an additional paradox, which is that whilst 'man […] lost his place in the world'[45] during the passage from closed world to infinite universe which Koyré outlines, he also becomes the centre of the terrestrial world, through the various humanist and idealist doctrines of post-Copernicanism. In this sense, for example, Kant's 'Copernican revolution' is fundamentally anti-Copernican, in that it places the emphasis upon human perception and in turn what is

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[44] As Koyré points out, this revolution brought about 'the destruction of the Cosmos, that is, the disappearance, from philosophically and scientifically valid concepts, of the contemplation of the world as a finite, closed, and hierarchically ordered whole [...], and its replacement by an indefinite and even infinite universe which is bound together by the identity of its fundamental components and laws, and in which all these components are placed on the same level of being'. Alexandre Koyré, *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1976), p. 3.

[45] Ibid., p. 2.

cognisable – namely, what remains within the bounds of the terrestrial.[46] Indeed, this adds a slightly different, literal shade to Quentin Meillassoux's rebranding of Kant's so-called Copernican revolution as a 'Ptolemaic revolution', a shift in thought which puts a premium on a motionless, sovereign observer, rather like Ptolemy's motionless Earth.[47] The simultaneous turn toward an infinite universe and a subject-oriented world-view which is encased within the bounds of the Earth-globe creates a kind of Ptolemaic infinity, an Earth-universe which is concomitant with the centrality of the subject. A similar dynamic can be found in Carl Schmitt's work on the *nomos* of the earth, which as we saw in the Introduction he thought had become global in the twentieth century. As Peter Szendy has demonstrated through a reading of Schmitt's work, when dealing with the infinite possibilities of space travel, Schmitt shies away from positing what a *nomos* of the *Universe* might look like, and instead always re-directs and re-incorporates these infinite possibilities back into the original *nomos*, which is tied to the Earth. As Szendy puts it, 'the telluric at the origin of the series will always be privileged in Schmitt's work', and we are always 'led back to Earth', regardless of the initial distance or infinity proposed.[48] Again, then, we have the infinite Universe bleeding into a bounded terrestrial container. It is when this terrestrial universe becomes full, or when the outside and unknown parts of the Earth are fully incorporated into what Sloterdijk names the world interior, that we end up with the immanent forms of the global we have been discussing here, in which the motif

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[46] In shifting the emphasis of metaphysics toward the cognition of the subject, Kant held to be carrying out a shift comparable to that of Copernicus when the latter reversed the standard notion of the celestial bodies revolving around the Earth. See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998), p. 110.

[47] Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*, trans. Ray Brassier (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), p. 118. For a similar view see Graham Harman, *The Quadruple Object* (Alresford: Zero Books, 2011), p. 45.

[48] Peter Szendy, *Kant in the Land of the Extraterrestrials: Cosmopolitical Philosofictions*, trans. Will Bishop (New York: Fordham UP, 2013), pp. 21-25. See also Carl Schmitt, *Theory of the Partisan: Intermediate Commentary on the Concept of the Political*, trans. G. L. Ulmen (New York: Telos Press, 2007), p. 80.

of the infinite Universe without outside bleeds into an interior which is bounded, which has atmosphere, rather like the Earth itself.

Whilst we can in some ways agree with Sloterdijk's analysis on a purely conceptual level, then, we also find ourselves in the position of identifying a certain political tendency, or inclination which is in line with the view that there is no alternative to contemporary forms of capitalism. The same goes, in a sense, for the other pieces from which we have extracted a concept of the global: in one sense, they are part of a broad conceptual trend which posits the Earth as one, as an immanent interior. In another sense, however, they also form part of a general political feeling which posits a world without outside in light of the contemporary ubiquity of capitalism, and the fault-line in our imaginative capabilities that would appear to go with this. Here, then, we encounter that vortex which is the global alluded to in the Introduction, which incorporates the economic, the philosophical, and the political in one fell swoop.

Non-Representational Totalities

There is a tendency in cultural criticism to associate the kinds of spaces we have been looking at with another fault in our imaginative, or cognitive capabilities. Such a tendency is summed up best, again, with recourse to Jameson's work. In his famous writings on postmodernism, for example, Jameson identifies in genres such as the conspiracy plot, or cyberpunk, or even in different forms such as architecture – and particularly the Bonaventure Hotel in LA – what he alternately calls 'postmodern hyperspace', or the 'postmodern sublime'.[49] These immense, networked spaces signal, in Jameson's words, a 'transcending [of] the capacities of the individual human body to locate itself, to organize its immediate surroundings perceptually, and

[49] Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke UP, 1991), p. 37, 44.

cognitively map its position in a mappable external world'. For Jameson, this scenario ultimately stands for, or is a symbol of 'the incapacity of our minds, at least at present, to map the great global multinational and decentred communicational network in which we find ourselves caught as individual subjects'.[50] As it turns out, these immense spaces stand in not only for an equally immense communicational network, but, further, 'are themselves but a distorted figuration of something even deeper, namely the whole world system of a present-day multinational capitalism'.[51] For Jameson, what is needed ultimately are new ways of representing the global system of which we are part. Having reached a point where we are no longer able to represent, or properly map the environment in which we find ourselves, efforts must be made in establishing a new process of 'cognitive mapping', in order to (in Althusserian/Lacanian terms) explore 'the subject's *Imaginary* relationship to his or her *Real* conditions of existence'.[52] 'An aesthetic cognitive mapping' must, in other words, be developed in order to establish a properly political form of postmodernism in relation to the world-system to which the latter appeals.[53]

To distil Jameson's argument down to its essence, what he thinks is that the prevalence of these massive spatial configurations is indicative of an inability to properly and productively represent the totality which is multi-national capitalism. Again, then, there is a fault in our imaginative capacities, a fault which in this case not only prevents us from imagining something *different* to capitalist relations and the spaces and modes of being they engender, but also the very things themselves. Such a position – roughly speaking – has continued today in the analysis of the global in culture. Peter Boxall, for example, has argued that in the twenty-first-century novel, we witness 'a growing disjunction between the material conditions of contemporary

[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid., p. 37. See also Jameson, *The Geopolitical Aesthetic*, p. 16.
[52] Jameson, *Postmodernism*, p. 50.
[53] Ibid., p. 54.

being, and those spatial and temporal forms in which such conditions become collectively meaningful'. This disjunction, for Boxall, comes about as a result of a new phase of global capitalism, and 'global relations' as such.[54] Again, then, there is a proposed discrepancy between the material, or what Jameson might have called the Real conditions of contemporary life, and the spatial and temporal forms which provide meaning and orientation. This view also finds its way into more thoroughly philosophical registers, with Jean-Luc Nancy's work being a prominent case in point. According to Nancy, 'there is no longer any world: no longer a *mundus*, a *cosmos*, a composed order (from) within which one might find a place, a dwelling, and the elements of orientation'[55], and this is a situation which Nancy partly blames on globalisation.[56]

That all of these examples essentially agree, would appear to suggest that these analyses of contemporary culture in relation to the global are correct, and that appeals toward the global have hitherto always involved this imaginative disconnect. Indeed, the conclusions reached in these examples are certainly viable ones, and bear much scrutiny. The material examined thus far, however, and the range of material to be looked at in coming chapters, suggests something rather different. As with the reading of Ballard's short story at the beginning, we can view Jameson's identification of postmodern hyperspace as the beginnings of a new mode of conceptualising the global, one which we have begun to outline here, and will continue to do so (albeit from a different angle) in the second chapter. From this perspective, it is not that we have continued to experience an imaginative incongruence between Real and Imaginary. Rather, we will argue here that we are witnessing an intensification of an immanent conception of the global

[54] Peter Boxall, *Twenty-First-Century Literature: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2013), p. 9.
[55] Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Sense of the World,* trans. Jeffrey S. Librett (London and Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 1997), p. 4.
[56] Again, as Nancy puts it, specifically here in relation to globalisation and the advent of the capitalist world market, 'the world has lost its capacity to form a world', the point here being that the world market engenders complete homogenisation. Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Creation of the World or Globalization*, trans. Francois Raffoul and David Pettigrew (Albany: New York State UP, 2007), p. 34.

in contemporary culture, one which has its roots in the postmodern experience. It is not, then, that we wholly disregard the postmodern perspective, but more that we do not accept both the identification of a representational fault-line, and, in turn, the mimetic premise on which this identification is based.

Jameson's description of the Bonaventure Hotel serves to prove the point most forcefully. As he puts it,

> one would want [...] to stress the way in which the glass skin repels the city outside, a repulsion for which we have analogies in those reflector sunglasses which make it impossible for your interlocutor to see your own eyes [...] In a similar way, the glass skin achieves a peculiar and placeless disassociation of the Bonaventure from its neighborhood; it is not even an exterior, in as much as when you look at the hotel's outer walls you cannot see the hotel itself, but only the distorted images of everything that surrounds it.[57]

There are two, related spatial configurations that we might consider here. The first is the analogy of the sunglasses, which suggests that the Bonaventure has an impenetrable interior. The second suggests that the hotel is not even properly present, that it is indiscernible from the rest of the city by virtue of the way in which it reflects everything else around it. From this point of view, the interior of the hotel itself would appear to be in another realm altogether, apart from the city in its own impenetrability. Taken together, these two aspects which Jameson identifies in the Bonaventure Hotel suggest an impenetrable world, one which shuts out any form of the exterior, and which appears so self-contained that it makes itself absent from the rest of the city. The fact the Jameson sees this spatial configuration as, ultimately, representative of the capitalist world-system allows us to include this politico-economic view of the global into the rubric of the immanent being outlined here. The world-system is, for Jameson, an impenetrable world, one without a definable exterior. Further, we can in turn assert that Jameson's articulation of this form of the global is not, in fact, consistent with his diagnosis of us being unable to properly

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[57] Jameson, *Postmodernism*, p. 42.

imagine, or represent the capitalist world-system; rather – and in light of our previous analyses – we can see Jameson's own formulations as part of a certain way of conceptualising the global, one which involves both the conceptual as such and the political.

What we are identifying here, then, is not what Jameson would call a fault in our imaginative capabilities in respect to the totality, or – to take a somewhat different, albeit related stance – what Jean-François Lyotard described as the grand narrative's lost credibility in postmodern, postindustrial societies.[58] Instead, the forms of the global identified here are seen as new articulations of a different totality, one which responds to the contemporary state of the capitalist world-system, and the various developments in media, computer, satellite, and communications technologies. To illustrate the point further, it is worth casting our mind back to Marx and Engels' description of the capitalist world-system as an ever-expanding one.[59] What is articulated here instead, is an *immanent* world-system, one in which the outside has been wholly subsumed, and in which there is no longer any possibility of expansion. This is something which we can read not only in Jameson's and Sloterdijk's writings, but also in the various other pieces discussed in this chapter. Indeed, if all of these materials in some way conform to the feeling that there is no alternative to capitalism, no outside to the global relations it engenders, then from this perspective Jameson's description too is guilty of this to an extent.

Anti-Nomad

House of Leaves introduces a figure, or conceptual persona, that will crop up again and again in this thesis, and which articulates to varying degrees the interplays and contradictions between movement and stasis, nomadism and sedentariness, the boundless and the carceral to be found in

[58] Lyotard, pp. xxiii, 37.
[59] Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, pp. 5-6.

contemporary culture and life. This figure will be dubbed the anti-nomad, and as will be seen it invariably involves some form of power relationship.[60] Rather than immediately explaining the rationale behind the term, however, it will prove here more instructive to illustrate it through its relevance to Danielewski's text.

It is worth noting, first, that Navidson – prior to his explorations in the house – is in fact part of what Peter Merriman calls 'the kinetic elite of Western nations'.[61] As a successful photographer, Navidson is said to have gone on 'constant assignments abroad' (*HOL* 10). Indeed, the move to the house is portrayed as an effort to be rid of this kind of nomadic life-style, 'to put down roots' (*HOL* 23). This, then, is the classic upper middle-class migration in late life to a quiet life in the suburbs, or the country. But, as we have seen, life does not end up being so quiet for Navidson. What is set up as a contrast between the busy, globetrotting lifestyle and the quiet-life is disrupted through the chaotic realm of the house which Navidson eventually encounters. With the subordination of measurement and distance, and the absence of any borders or lines of demarcation, this space appears as an amplification of the kind of life Navidson has already been living, as well as conforming to some of the most common characteristics of globalisation theory, the 'borderless world' being the most obvious one here.

The erosion of measurable distance and demarcation draws our attention to the fact that Navidson's movements in this chaotic realm are essentially non-movements, in that there is no

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[60] The anti-nomad is not to be confused with Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the nomad, who operates beyond the measurements and striations accorded to usual journeys, and therefore cannot be said to move in the strict, peripatetic sense of the word. As the two put it, 'the nomad distributes himself in a smooth space; he occupies, inhabits, holds that space; that is his territorial principle. It is therefore false to define the nomad by movement. [...] [T]he nomad is on the contrary *he who does not move*'. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 420. Whilst the concept of the anti-nomad is similar, it is different in that it posits an historical shift in the way in which the nomadic is thought, whereby the nomadic not only contains its own apparent opposite (as in Deleuze and Guattari's definition), but also makes its way into the arena of the measured, or the striated. The anti-nomad signals the moment at which the nomad ceases to be a peripheral figure, and instead becomes a paradigmatic (albeit transfigured) one for the subject's place within the world.

[61] Peter Merriman 'Mobility', in *Globalisation in Practice,* ed. Nigel Thrift and others (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2014), p. 33.

way of quantifying and recording them. Floating around in this strange world, Navidson, as it were, goes off the radar. Further, even if these movements, or this floating were quantifiable the fact would still remain that this gigantic space is ultimately contained within a single space; that the movement across a seemingly infinite area is simultaneously confined to the limited area of the country house. Navidson's situation captures a fusion between movement and stasis which we will seek to examine throughout this thesis, via various examples. In all these examples, at stake is a stasis which also involves movement, a conflation of two operations which allows us to view some of the contradictions present within the current world-system. When it comes to *House of Leaves*, as already mentioned, we might well see this as simply an exaggerated iteration of Navidson's already-existing status as one of the well-heeled, globetrotting elite. But there is also the sense in which this is not a particularly pleasant experience, that the agency with which Navidson was once endowed in travelling around the Earth has been replaced with a form of vulnerability. This might well be read in terms of a fall from grace, in which the freedom and liberality of the class of global nomads is turned on its head, and Navidson is left instead to have the world wash over him, rather than washing himself over the world.

There is a final context for this anti-nomadism and that is to be found in the realm of the technological. According to Paul Virilio, what the contemporary age of satellite and telecommunications technologies spell is an 'end of geography and its continuum' (as opposed to the much-touted notion of the end of history), something which brings about 'a radical reversal between nomadism and sedentariness that is at the origin of settlement'.[62] The reversal of these two terms – effected through the instantaneity of real-time connections – is perhaps encapsulated best subjectively speaking through the contradictory figure of the anti-nomad, in which to remain

[62] Paul Virilio, *The Futurism of the Instant: Stop-Eject*, trans. Julie Rose (Cambridge and Malden, MA: Polity, 2010), pp. 12, 17.

still is also to move, and in which what has been hitherto seen as an alternative to the sedentary, normative lifestyle is incorporated into our very means for locating the subject within their spatial coordinates. In the next chapter, we will come across some more of these figures, although here we will find some different contexts and applications, along with some different ways of conceptualising the global within the bracket of the immanent.

Chapter 2

Infinite Regress, or Networks of Control

Josiah Royce, writing now more than 100 years ago, highlighted the absurd lengths that one would have to go to in creating a perfect form of mapping. Royce imagined that an area of England (of whatever size) had a map inscribed on it, which had been drawn to the most minute and accurate detail. In order for this map to be perfect, it would have to 'retain the map of the map, which should contain a map of the map of the map, and so on to infinity'. If a spectator were to perceive an end to this interminable iteration of the map, that is, 'a last map, such that it contained *no* further representation of the original object, he would know that the resources of the map-maker had failed', and that the perfect map had not been realised.[1] Royce's aim in illustrating this form of infinite regress was to provide a way in which we can think of what he called unity in diversity, the way in which 'the one and the infinitely many are conceptually linked'. To summarise, Royce's point is a metaphysical, monist one, in which the 'Absolute' (equivalent to unity and the one) is part of a self-representative system, whereby the former is 'capable of embodiment' in all forms (hence the allusions to diversity and the many), and therefore permeates everything.[2] Royce's vision of the world here – for which the infinite regress of mapping is used as a short-hand – is an immanent one, animated by an absolute which is distributed amongst all things.

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[1] Josiah Royce, *The World and the Individual* (London and New York: Macmillan, 1900), p. 503.
[2] Ibid., p. 546.

In this chapter we will see something like Royce's vision of infinite regress. In contrast to Royce's model, however, this is a regression in which the Absolute has been stripped out, one in which the totalising form is seemingly left without a locatable, animating principle. As will be seen, though, the animating principle is actually only replaced by the political procedure which Deleuze called control. In short, what is at stake in the works looked at here is a vision of the totality as an infinite regression, which is directly linked with the way of exerting power characterised by control. To add to this, we find embedded within this latter element another key figure in the way that the global is conceptualised: that of the network. This figure, again, ties us within the domain of control, for, as Alexander Galloway has argued forcefully and as we will see in more detail later on, 'distributed networks are native to Deleuze's control societies', and can be seen as the predominant diagram 'for our current social formation'.[3]

This three-fold interaction (between infinite regress, the network, and control) is to be found predominantly in two filmic works: Charlie Kaufman's *Synecdoche, New York* (2008) and David Cronenberg's *Existenz* (1999). But we will also find similar themes expressed in some other pieces, most notably Paul Auster's *The Music of Chance* (1993) and Douglas Coupland's *Generation A* (2009). For a substantial part of the chapter, we will read these works alongside what is by now probably the most famous theorisation of the contemporary capitalist world-system and the technological and political apparatuses which sit next to this, and that is Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's *Empire* (2000). This is a text which – along with some of the authors' other works – is also concerned with the global, the network and the movement toward control in modern capitalist states. All of these works display a vision of an immanent world, of a world without outside, as with the previous chapter. But the particular sub-concepts identified bring some new elements to this vision. One specific outcome of these will be to allow us to delve

[3] Galloway, p. 11.

much deeper into the subjective aspects of what was described in the previous chapter as a new articulation of the totality. This is not to suggest, however, that we are witnessing exact replicas of something like the Hegelian/idealist-rooted notions of universal history and Spirit, to take an example which, as it will become clear, is directly relevant here, and is also one which Lyotard invokes in particular in his book on the postmodern.[4] Rather, we will see in this chapter various mutations of a unifying or animating principle of the totality, particularly within the realm of the subjective. Further, whilst we will again encounter that tension between the boundless and the restricted summed up in the figure of the anti-nomad, the material selected here also suggests various means of resisting such totalising, global structures, and these means – rendered in both content and form – will become clear toward the end of the chapter.

The Self-Replicating Interior

Kaufman's *Synecdoche, New York* begins by depicting a not-so-happy family of three, which consists of Caden (the protagonist, played by Philip Seymour Hoffman), Adele (his wife, played by Catherine Keener) and Olive (their daughter, played by Sadie Goldstein).[5] After seeing one of his productions of Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* (1949), Adele suggests that what Caden is doing is meaningless, that he is a 'tool of suburban, blue-haired, regional theatre subscribers' and that he is not leaving behind any artistic legacy. Shortly after this, Adele will decide to take Olive with her to Berlin, from where they do not return. Following their departure, Caden decides to embark on a new, original work, one which will be 'unflinchingly true'. And so begins in earnest Caden's theatre project, in which he takes the meaning of the word 'true' rather too literally. Ultimately, Caden attempts to create a wholly accurate representation of his life and

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[4] Lyotard, pp. 33-35.

[5] *Synecdoche, New York*, dir. Charlie Kaufman (Revolver Entertainment, 2009).

his surroundings. Such is part of the significance of the film's title, in that we are directed immediately here the notion of a part representing the whole, a dynamic which Caden attempts to effect, in a very exact way.[6] As we shall see, however, things begin to spiral out of control, and the situation becomes rather more complicated.

Time is the film's immediate concern. The first shot is of an alarm clock, which initially reads 7:44 but then, just before we get a shot of Caden waking up, jumps to 7:45. Similarly, at the end of the film and just before Caden dies, we get a brief close-up of a clock drawn on a wall, which again reads 7:45. The film is thus framed by a singular unit of time, suggesting that, diegetically speaking, the events we witness all take place within a minute. This is confirmed again toward the end of the film just prior to Caden's death, in which there is a voiceover addressed to Caden which goes as follows:

> as you recognise your transience, as you begin to lose your characteristics one by one, as you learn that no-one is watching you and never was, you think about driving, not coming from any place, not arriving any place, just driving, counting off time. Now you are here at 7:43. Now you are here at 7:44. Now you are gone.

7:44, of course, was the time at which the film started. Here it is the time just before Caden is, apparently, 'gone'. Indeed, there is pretty much the same pattern here. The final 'now' is presumably 7:45, the time at which Caden both appears at the start of the film, and disappears, or dies at the end. In both instances, there is both a static, and an impossible logic of time. Everything is contained within one, singular unit; whole years pass by within the frame of one minute, suggesting an almost unimaginable compression of time.

This compression of time is tied with a compression of space, figured in Caden's theatre project. The project begins with Caden going, with an agent of some sort, to find a location, a theatre for his play. What he is presented with is not actually a theatre at all, but a massive

[6] The title is also an evident play on Schenectady, New York, where the film for a significant part is set.

disused warehouse somewhere in the city, the inside of which is a huge, barren space with hills on the perimeter, and echoes of bird and animal life. No outline of the project is ever really provided; there is no set plot, or definite theme. Only vague descriptions are provided by Caden, the most telling of which is after the project has already begun, in which Caden briefs a huge team of actors in the warehouse, who have all previously been acting out a vast number of scenes, the play beginning to take on (already) absurdly large proportions. Caden states that he 'won't settle for anything less than the brutal truth'. When asked when they will get an audience for the play, it having been seventeen years since they began (a time span which is alluded to suddenly, and without any prior warning), Caden brushes this off, and states:

> I'm not excusing myself from this either. I will have someone play me, to delve into the murky, cowardly depths of my lonely, fucked-up being. And he'll get notes too, and those notes will correspond to the notes I truly receive, every day, from my God.

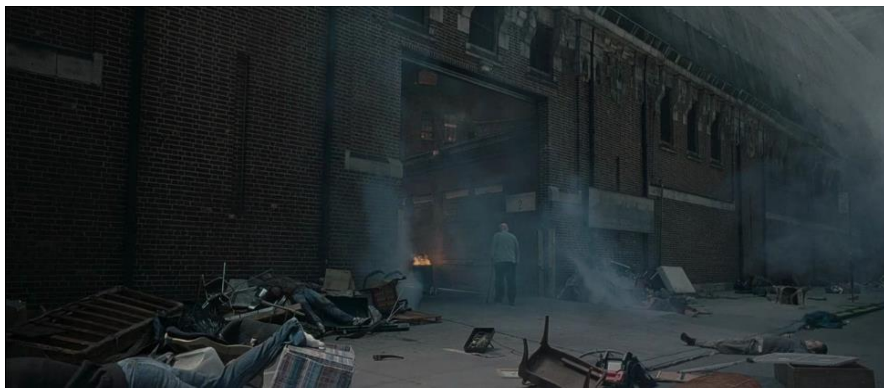
This is the beginning of a logic which leads to infinite regress, both with regard to subjectivity and space, and which as we will see points toward a form of homogeneity, or sameness. Indeed, it eventually transpires that Caden will not just have someone play him. For example, Sammy (Tom Noonan), the person who plays Caden, also has someone who plays him playing Caden, the process potentially carrying on interminably. Of course, one could surmise from Caden's mentions of his God that the process begins and stops at some point, God being in this instance the beginning or cause of things. But if it is being suggested here that character can be replicated or played infinitely then one would have to entertain the possibility of the regression carrying on in the opposite direction, Caden's God being replicated infinitely in an absurd version of the divine. The ultimate outcome of this form of subjectivity is put forward explicitly at the end of the film, where it is stated that the project has reached such a stage that anyone can be substituted for anyone else, that 'everyone is everyone'.

Caden, Sammy (right), and the latter's equivalent (left)

This scenario is mirrored in the development of the stage-world of Caden's project. At one point, there is a shot of Sammy looking at a map of the warehouse, on which there is a picture of another warehouse which has been called 'Warehouse 2', and shortly after we see him walking into this warehouse within a warehouse. Towards the end of the film, we get another shot of a map. Caden lifts up a flap with his walking stick on which 'Warehouse 2' is designated, to reveal another map underneath, which has marked on it 'Warehouse 3'. He repeats this again, with the same result, thereby again signalling a form of infinite regress, an internal repetition which knows no bounds. We are confronted here, then, with an impossible logic of space which is comparable to the impossible logic of time already outlined.

This spatial logic also has the curious effect of wholly obscuring what was the *original* environment that Caden's warehouse is replicating; the original merges with the copy, in other words, to the extent that the two in themselves can no longer be distinguished. To take an example which illustrates the point best, throughout the film we are presented with various shots of what looks like a perfect replica of the urban environment, housed under a glass dome. Caden's project then, in keeping with its mission towards 'brutal truth', has reproduced the surrounding urban environment, and roofed it over.

The interiorised city



Caden wandering into one of the warehouses within warehouses

This image inevitably brings to mind the previous chapter, in which the images of the Crystal Palace, and of that dome called 'Paradice' in Atwood's novel were read as versions of a dense interior, and of a form of the global where the outside had been wholly interiorised. Contemporary architectural forms also provide a key reference point here, such as Jameson's reading of the Bonaventure Hotel, or in more recent times the planned 'Mall of the World' in Dubai, which it is said will cover 48 million square feet, 'will sample bits of cities from around the world with gay abandon', and will all be 'sealed under snaking bubble rooftops'.[7] But the difference with Caden's project is that the distinction between interior and exterior is actually

[7] Oliver Wainwright, 'The World's First Indoor City: A Greatest Hits Mashup of London and New York', *Guardian* (Jul. 2014), <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/architecture-design-blog/2014/jul/09/worlds-first-indoor-city-dubai-mall-of-the-world>.

much more uncertain. The project ultimately becomes a wholly obsessive one of replication, in which Caden has the most minute specifications of the surrounding cityscape copied exactly. The fact that this replication leads toward infinite regress makes the distinction between the original, outside urban environment and the inside, housed one totally redundant; wandering around Caden's warehouses within warehouses, you could never know for sure if you were outside, or just in another part of the regression. It is in this sense that Caden's project becomes an immanent, global space, its own world in which inside and outside are endlessly replicated, extending beyond bounds. We can thus link together the form of time and space identified so far in the film, in that both not only adhere to the impossible logics mentioned above, but also a static state in which everything is already realised, and there is no room for deviation or mutation.

Worlds within worlds

There is an evident metatextual aspect to *Synecdoche* with its plays within plays, characters playing characters, authors playing authors, all pointing, self-reflexively, back toward the film's production itself, and thereby offering itself up, almost too easily it seems, to being classed as postmodern. Indeed, infinite regress itself is a common motif in postmodern fiction, as Brian McHale has pointed out. McHale suggests that infinite regress goes hand in hand with a loss of 'ontological horizon' the implication of which is essentially uncertainty as regards both textual and individual identity.[8] The situation in *Synecdoche*, however, suggests something different; it

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[8] Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction* (New York: Methuen, 1991), p. 114. On the topographical side of things, Borges – as with *House of Leaves* – would again be a key reference point, and in particular his 'On Exactitude in Science'. But here, the principle of representational exactitude is broken down as a result of only two 'layers' of reality, whereas in *Synecdoche* we are dealing with an infinite series of layers, which come together to create an immanent world. Jorge Luis Borges, 'On Exactitude in Science', in *A Universal History of Infamy*, trans. Norman Thomas Giovanni (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972).

is a sense of sameness, of endless replication which is apparent here, which would point less toward uncertainty and randomness, and more in the direction of a fixed mode of subjectivity and its environment. Indeed, this gives us a slightly different form of subjectivity from the fashionable, uncertain, shattered self. The world presented in Kaufman's film – in terms of space, time, and subjectivity – is not one of disconnected parts, disparate events, and dislocated subjects; rather, it is a world of infinite repetition without difference, of an amalgamation of subjects into a singular form. As Caden is informed via the mysterious stage directions toward the end of the film, when it comes to who is playing who 'the specifics hardly matter'. Indeed, 'everyone is everyone'; not only is Caden Ellen (whom he is playing at that moment in time), but he is apparently also a whole host of other characters, including 'Adele, Hazel, Claire, Olive'.[9]

What was in Royce's model of infinite regress an illustration of diverse forms within a singular world becomes here a global, singular, homogeneous unit. In other words, without a difference-producing engine, an absolute force which effects diversity across infinity, we are left to wallow in an endless replication of the same in *Synecdoche*. And this leads us naturally on to Jean Baudrillard's writings on what he calls the hyper-real, in which the original is no longer distinguishable from the copy, the sign no longer separable from the referent. With the potentially endless replication of space and subjectivity carried out in Caden's project, and the lack of distinction between inside and outside, one could surely make a case for reading *Synecdoche* as a kind of companion piece to what Baudrillard designates as the final order of simulacra, in which the image or the event is 'its own pure simulacrum'.[10] In fact, at one point

[9] Many of the films Kaufman has been involved in (largely on a screen-writing basis) are concerned with the limits and permutations of the self, two apt examples being *Being John Malkovich* (1999) and *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004). With *Synecdoche* we can identify a break with these films, in that the individual becomes wholly interchangeable with a huge mass of subjectivity. *Being John Malkovich*, dir. Spike Jonze (Universal Studios, 1999); *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, dir. Michel Gondry (Momentum Pictures, 2004).

[10] Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, trans. Paul Foss and others (Semiotext[e], 1983), p. 11. On this link see also Hermione Hoby, 'The Ultimate Postmodern Novel is a Film', *Guardian* (May 2009),

Caden himself even considers calling the project 'Simulacrum'. Baudrillard, not surprisingly perhaps, is fond of talking about clones to exemplify such a state, both metaphorically and literally in terms of the implications for subjectivity under such a regime. The ultimate horizon here, then, is 'a subject purged of the other, deprived of its divided character and doomed to self-metastasis'.[11] In essence, it is the reality principle which has broken down, the mimetic relationship between the real and its representation which has been with us at least since Plato: 'no more mirror of being and appearances', says Baudrillard, for 'it is all of metaphysics that is lost' here.[12] There is a clear parallel with *Synecdoche*: by virtue of infinite regress, it is not only the reality principle which would appear to have been shattered, but also the notion of Caden's God as cause, or starting point, the monotheistic version of Being as unity. We are left, then, with an absence of the transcendent, and a move toward a form of immanence, in which the outside is abolished as a result of its indistinguishability from the inside. Space and subjectivity veer toward a form of pure repetition, a state which is fully realised by the film's end.[13]

From this perspective, we should read against the grain when it comes to the title of the film. Some critics have followed the line that, as pointed out above, *Synecdoche*, through both its title and its content, taps into the notion that one can only represent the world in part, and that as humans we 'can produce only synecdoches'.[14] Instead, one should recognise that just as each world, and each subject within Caden's project is in effect a simulacrum of itself, so too is each

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<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/booksblog/2009/may/13/synechdoche-postmodern-novel-film>.

[11] Jean Baudrillard, 'The Hell of the Same', in *The Transparency of Evil: Essays on Extreme Phenomena*, trans. James Benedict (London and New York: Verso, 2009), p. 140.

[12] Baudrillard, *Simulations*, p. 3

[13] Kaufman's film – through its constant repetition of the same – can be related to another strand of globalisation theory, which sees the world as becoming increasingly homogenised due to the multi-national corporation. See, for example, George Ritzer, *The Globalization of Nothing* (London: Sage, 2004); and George Ritzer, *The McDonaldization of Society* (London: Sage, 2011).

[14] David L. Smith, 'Synecdoche, in Part', in *The Philosophy of Charlie Kaufman*, ed. David LaRocca (Lexington: Kentucky UP, 2011), p. 247. See also Richard Deming, 'Living a Part', in *The Philosophy of Charlie Kaufman*, p. 203.

part a synecdoche of itself. Such distinctions, in other words, between real and representation, inside and outside, part and whole, no longer hold sway, are collapsed into one another in the immanent interior to be found in *Synecdoche*.

With this in mind, it would seem that the most natural, filmic counterpart to Kaufman's film would be David Cronenberg's *Existenz*, another piece which is concerned with an infinite regression of worlds within worlds.[15] But it is not hard structures with which *Existenz* is predominantly concerned, but, rather, virtual structures and worlds. The film begins with a group of people getting ready to play a version of an immersive, virtual reality game, which requires that each person is connected to one of the other players. The game is called 'Existenz', and the characters – after having the game explained to them – begin to move from what we initially presume is the outside, actual world of film's diegesis into the inside, virtual world of the game. But something goes wrong: what appear as essentially political opponents of the game – a group which Badiou in his reading of the film calls 'partisans of the pure actual, enemies of every virtual world'[16] – disrupt this foray into the virtual, shoot some of the participants, and the game is thwarted. Ted Pikul (Jude Law) and Allegra Geller (a lauded game-player in the film, played by Jennifer Jason Leigh) are then paired together in what becomes a flight from these opponents, and a defence of the game, which involves both playing it and entering into various other games within this game. There is a double twist to this film though. The first is that what initially appeared to be the actual world, as opposed to the virtual world of 'Existenz', was in fact itself always just another game, which Pikul and Geller eventually wake up from, having solved its mystery. But, arriving back in a similar setting to which the film began – the game's title reading now instead 'Transcendenz' – we are confronted with the final twist, which is that Pikul and

[15] *Existenz*, dir. David Cronenberg (Dimension, 1999).
[16] Alain Badiou, 'Dialectics of the Fable', trans. Alberto Toscano, *Science Fiction Film and Television*, 1.1 (2008), p. 19.

Geller are in fact themselves anti-virtuals, opponents of the virtual world's 'deforming of reality', and we see them shoot the game's makers, thereby repeating the film's opening scene. We are therefore left with a feeling that everything is about to start again, that this is in fact just another world within an infinite amount of virtual worlds, and this feeling is cemented with the ending line of the film, in which a character asks, 'tell me the truth, are we still in the game?'

Waking up from *Transcendenz*

Cronenberg's film leaves us in a very uncertain position in relation to the world outside the games. Indeed, this is an outside which fades more and more out of view throughout the course of the film, to the point at which, as Badiou puts it, 'we are obliged to say that the natural universe is neither obviously *abolished* […], nor historically *destroyed* […], but rather *suspended*, since nothing can prove its global difference with regard to the virtual world of the games'.[17] It is this suspension of the outside, natural universe which leads us here to make the claim – as with *Synecdoche* – that the latter is effectively rendered inconsequential, in that we are left with a global condition of indistinguishability between outside and inside.

With its various different virtual worlds which cannot be distinguished from an original, or actual world, *Existenz* also fits well with Baudrillard's definition of the hyper-real, and of a

[17] Ibid.

subjectivity purged of the other; indeed, when it comes to the subjective side of things, we not only have various different versions of character in each world which ultimately boil down to just one subject, but also a web of subjects, which must be connected to one another in order for whichever game is being played to function. A subject purged of the other, then, but also a world in which subjectivity may assume slight variations, but is essentially fixed, the dynamic between Being and beings becoming merely an array of stagnant forms, a state which is opposed to the classic postmodern view of a lack of ontological horizon, as pointed out in reference to *Synecdoche* previously. Again, the motif of infinite regress in both films leads toward this scenario. This is an infinite regression which can easily be read in the light of Baudrillard's proclamations on the hyper-real – perhaps even more so when it comes to *Existenz*, as a result of its concern with the virtual. But reading these films solely in this way obscures some of their other facets, along with the ways in which they interact with other material and conceptual states, which in turn feed into contemporary articulations of the global. Whilst the hyper-real, and the particular strain of simulacra alluded to here do aid us in reading these films, they also have a tendency to obscure both the more detailed aspects of the way the global is being conceptualised, and the ways in which these works suggest such totalising states might be resisted, or subverted. It is to these two things, in this order, that we will turn for the rest of this chapter.

Networked, pt. 1

Both Kaufman and Cronenberg's films are concerned with the diagram of the network, whether this is in an implicit or an explicit way. *Existenz* is explicitly. As mentioned before, each character in the film must be connected with another in order to enter into the game together. At the start of the film – just before entering into 'Existenz' – each character is linked up to the

other through what is called a ‘biopod’ (shown in the image below), a strange device which is both technological and biological, and calls to mind some of Cronenberg’s other works in which these two things are blended, the obvious example being *Videodrome* (1983).[18] These means of connection are repeated in the games within the game, the biopods sometimes varying in size. In the final scene – having just woken up from ‘Transcendenz’ – the characters are connected via more recognisably technological gear, as shown in the image above.

The biopod network in *Existenz*

In *Synecdoche*, the presence of the network is subtler, and yet remains an important feature. The first network-like image in the film is a shot of the huge amount of notes which Caden provides the immense amount of actors working on his project. Each note is laid out on a table, with no hint of a linear story-board, or a set of fixed connections or sequences between notes. Rather, each note is distributed evenly amongst the others. The connecting thread between all these notes is, of course, that they all correspond to the same project, the implication being, then, that the world of Caden’s project does not operate under fixed, hierarchical parameters, but is instead of a networked, plastic persuasion, in which multiple encounters and connections can be established between all actors who inhabit this suspended state of interiority. This view is

[18] *Videodrome*, dir. David Cronenberg (Universal, 2011).

confirmed by a preceding shot in which are depicted the beginnings of this model of the network. Each actor is posted along with a few others in what looks like a small station within the warehouse, and each group acts out various different scenarios. This immensity of different groups again resembles a network form, a distributed set of scenarios which are about to be linked up with one another, thereby resulting in the world of the project.

The network of notes in *Synecdoche*

Both instances of the network diagram in these two films can therefore be classified as *distributed* networks, which – as we saw in the Introduction – are non-hierarchical, and do not rely on centralised or decentralised hubs. Each point in the network, in other words, can connect with and interact with any other. In some respects, both of these versions of the network touch on a significant aspect of Chapter 5 of this thesis, which deals with the fact that the network form has become a way of describing our interactions with the world in general, that it has seeped out from the exclusive world of the technological into everyday life. Christopher Vitale takes this point to its most extreme, when he states that the network form is *the* way in which the world is structured, the internet and satellite networks (amongst other things) being simply the most

prominent, and recent manifestations of networked interactions in a world which was 'always already networked'.[19] Whether the world has always been composed of networks, or it has been imbued with the paradigm of the network following the rise of large-scale networked forms such as the internet, both *Synecdoche* and *Existenz* display a form of the network which is much more generalised, which includes the biological, the social, the technological, the artistic and the communicational. There are, however, two predominant associations that we will focus on for the purposes of this chapter. The first is ultimately related to the technological, whereas the second relates to control.

We begin with the technological. Previously, it was noted that the huge interior of Caden's project in *Synecdoche* involves an impossible spatio-temporal logic: the whole sequence of events which take place in the film are compressed into just a couple of seconds, whilst the infinite regression of warehouses within warehouses is contained within one, discreet, bounded (albeit massive) warehouse. Within contemporary theories of the global and of the capitalist world-system, there are various appeals toward analogous erasures, or compressions of time and space. We have seen already, for example, Virilio's pronouncement of 'the end of geography and its continuum' in the previous chapter.[20] Zymunt Bauman takes a similar view, suggesting that the current era – what he dubs 'liquid' or 'light' modernity – is one in which an 'irrelevance of space' is inaugurated, whereby, 'in the software universe of light-speed travel, space may be traversed, literally, in 'no time'. 'Genuine instantaneity', in which 'zero is the time needed to reach a spatial destination' is 'the developmental horizon of light modernity', this being a

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[19] Christopher Vitale, *Networkologies: A Philosophy of Networks for a Hyperconnected Age – A Manifesto* (Alresford: Zero Books, 2014), p. 4.

[20] Virilo, *The Futurism of the Instant*, p. 12. Whilst the erasure of time and space is certainly a very common theme in contemporary culture – perhaps more than any other culture before it – it is certainly not exclusive to it. H. G. Wells, for example, began referring to what he called 'the Abolition of Distance', which he saw as being brought about predominantly through innovations such as railways and telecommunications, as early as the 1930s. Even then, Wells referred to his own diagnosis as a 'truism'. H. G. Wells, 'The Brain Organization of the Modern World', in *World Brain* (Methuen and Co. Ltd.: London, 1938), p. 28.

scenario in which (nod to Foucault) 'labour has been let out of the Panopticon', or in other words has been allowed to spill out of a system of fixed spatial discipline.[21]

Being let out of the Panopticon, as we shall see again shortly with reference to Hardt and Negri's work, implies not only an end to Foucault's society of discipline, but also an end of the over-reaching structure which that discipline entailed, an end of the remnants of a structure of transcendence.[22] The similarities between these descriptions of the erasure of time and space and the two films at issue are relatively straightforward. To take *Synecdoche*, the theatre project in this film portrays a singular unit of space and time, a static interior in which everything remains fixed. Within this world of infinite regress, there is a kind of instantaneous logic, whereby everything is already realised, things remaining seemingly impervious to the variation conferred through the passing of time. In *Existenz*, the world of the games enacts quite literally a world in which, through (a form of) software, one can make actual space an irrelevance, arriving in all kinds of different places more or less instantly. It is this mixture of a boundless and a fixed space, the internal contrast between the fixed area of Caden's theatre project and its infinite regression, or the set area for game playing and the virtual world of the game itself in Cronenberg's film, which leads us to designate the characters in these films as anti-nomads, rather like Navidson in *House of Leaves*. Both Caden and the game-players in *Existenz* are anti-nomads in the sense that they traverse vast expanses, whilst simultaneously remaining in a fixed point in space.

We will see one of the more specific ways in which the figure of the anti-nomad is deployed here later on. What is clear for now, however, is that the figure of the network and the

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[21] Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge and Malden, MA: Polity, 2006), pp. 117-121. For more on the links between the figure of the panopticon and globalisation see Zygmunt Bauman, *Globalization: The Human Consequences* (Cambridge and Oxford: Polity, 1999), pp. 48-54.

[22] For the background to this see Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, pp. 135-141.

erasure of space through instantaneity is intimately linked in these two films, as it is in Bauman and Virilio's formations. In Cronenberg and Kaufman's films, the network form is either that which enables this unsettling dynamic between time and space (as in *Existenz*), or is concomitant with it (as in *Synecdoche*). In this light, reading these films in relation to the figure of the network, and more specifically networked technologies, would seem wholly justified. But there is a further shade to all of this, which is found within the realm of the subjective. If the characters in both films can be read as anti-nomadic in the way they relate to their environment, then they can also be read in a specific way when it comes to their relations with other subjects, and how in turn this relates to the network form. We have already seen how distinct subject positions are dissolved in both films, a factor which led us to make links with Baudrillard's work. But the figure of the network is also part and parcel of this erasure. Whilst the network is at the very least concomitant here in effecting an erasure of time and space, it is also responsible for, or facilitates, the erasure of distinct subject positions.

The particular state of inter-relationality, or of homogeneity in the two films has all sorts of prior reference points, both biological and technological. One example of the former, again, would be narratives of cloned communities in which the community as a whole develops a kind of group sensorium, a way of thinking and feeling which is wholly collective, such as in Kate Wilhelm's novel *Where Late the Sweet Birds Sang* (1974).[23] Or, with the technological, there is the more recent 'Borg' in the *Star Trek* franchise, who also have a hive-like mind, but in this instance with various prosthetic enhancements.[24] Perhaps the most relevant contemporary artefact we have available is Douglas Coupland's *Generation A*, in which we witness not only the beginnings of the erasure of distinct subject positions and emergence of a hive-like mind, but

[23] Kate Wilhelm, *Where Late the Sweet Birds Sang* (London: Gollancz, 2006).
[24] *Star Trek: The Next Generation, Season 2*, dir. Rob Bowman and Robert Becker (Paramount Home Entertainment, 2006).

also the effectuation of this through networked technologies and media which span the entire reach of the globe. The novel follows five main characters from different locations, which include Sri Lanka, the US, New Zealand, France, and Canada. All of these characters make their entrance in the novel by being stung by a bee, whilst at the same time being engaged in some kind of network-oriented communication, such as telephone calls, video-calls, or social networking.[25] Getting stung by a bee in the world of this novel is unusual, as it is set in a near-future scenario in which bees have disappeared from the face of the Earth. The disappearance is a reaction to a drug called 'Solon', which was developed by a scientist in order to get rid of anxiety, and to give 'a calm sense of individualism almost identical to that achieved while reading a novel'. In fact, the drug itself is developed from 'isolat[ing] a neuroprotein from people reading *Finnegans Wake*'.[26] Whilst a concrete explanation for the bees' disappearance is never provided, it is evidently linked in the book to the promotion of individualism that Solon entails (as opposed to the hive-like behaviour of bees). As it turns out then, it is not a mere coincidence that these people were stung whilst engaging in these various forms of communication via media; as the creator of the drug puts it, this was probably because all the characters at this moment 'were involved with the planet', through being hooked up to the network, and thereby producing a counter-effect to the individualising qualities of Solon. Indeed, the effect of communication on these characters is to produce an 'anti-Solon', one which is brought out particularly well through 'telling stories'.[27] The novel concludes with the group finding out that they have been secretly fed a drug developed from the anti-Solon they produce. Through taking

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[25] Douglas Coupland, *Generation A* (London: Windmill Books, 2010), pp. 1-34.
[26] Ibid., pp. 306, 336.
[27] Ibid., p. 341.

the drug, and telling stories to one another, the characters ultimately 'become each other, one big superentity'.[28]

At the very least this narrative renders clearer the association between network-technologies and the erasure of distinct subject positions identified in *Existenz* and *Synecdoche*, whilst simultaneously demonstrating the prominence of the connection within contemporary culture. To put it simply, the network here spells an end to the individualism which has been so prevalent in capitalist states for the last 300 years or so, one which is replaced by (on the optimistic view) a new-found collectivism, or (on the pessimistic view) a nightmare vision of end of the self, of free will, and of individual thought. It is fair to say that *Synecdoche* and *Existenz* veer toward the latter, whilst *Generation A* is rather more optimistic regarding this new found connectivity, one of the characters at the end of the novel even suggesting that this signals the possibility of 'world peace'.[29] All these pieces figure, however, an emergence of a new configuration of subject positions on a global scale, an erasure of individualism which comes about as a result of being part of a network which is global in its proportions, and which compresses space through instantaneity.

Coupland's novel conveys the full implications of this scenario, and allows us again to project these implications onto Kaufman and Cronenberg's films. *Generation A* has evidently been influenced by Marshal McLuhan's theories of media.[30] With the opposition between the individualism which literacy promotes and the quasi-tribalism which is engendered by modern media, the novel taps directly into McLuhan's notion of the global village, which he elsewhere

[28] Ibid., p. 355.
[29] Ibid.
[30] The influence of McLuhan is apparent throughout Coupland's work, but most telling is the fact that Coupland has written a biography of McLuhan. See Douglas Coupland, *Marshall McLuhan: You Know Nothing of My Work!* (New York: Atlas and Co., 2010).

calls the 'global brain'.[31] There are two main differences here though. The first is that Coupland's novel shows literacy, and the individualising effects of this produced in this case through the drug Solon, as still alive and kicking, as opposed to being fully subsumed by the affective connectivity which McLuhan associated with modern media technologies. The second is that Coupland's novel features some rather different media technologies and software, such as satellite communication devices, social media, video telephone calls, and so on. Essentially, at issue here is a whole new raft of network technologies which were completely unheard of or unimaginable during McLuhan's life time.

Putting aside these differences for the moment, however, the common feature of all these articulations of a networked subjectivity is their idealist nature. People become connected in these scenarios ultimately through a vast web of consciousness, or what Hegel would have called Spirit or *Geist*. There is not a *direct* connection with Hegel, however, as his own definition of Spirit is not conditional upon the emergence of certain technologies, but, rather, is the development of human consciousness in itself and as a whole throughout history.[32] Further, Hegel's model of world-history (*Weltgeist*) as one which moves from the Oriental world through successive phases until it ends up in the Western, Christian moment where it reaches its full conclusion, would not apply here.[33] But the parallel remains, as what is at issue is still the manifestation of consciousness on a global scale, one which brings about an overarching feeling of connectedness, a kind of 'super-entity' to use Coupland's phrase. In *Synecdoche* and *Existenz* also, this connection is achieved through the way in which each subject becomes substitutable

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[31] McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy*, p. 41.
[32] As Hegel himself puts it, 'Reason is Spirit when its certainty of being all reality has been raised to truth, and it is conscious of itself as its own world, and of the world as itself'. It is human reason, or self-consciousness, then, which attains Spirit, the sum of human consciousness, without (ultimately) the mediation of any additional factor. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 263.
[33] See Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, pp. 129-131, 197.

for another, facilitated by being hooked up to a network of global proportions. We will call this feeling of inter-connectedness in the contemporary era the Idealist Brain, as it is a variant of the Global Brain in which the connection of *human consciousness* is of paramount importance. In Chapter 5, we will see how, sitting alongside this variant of the Global Brain, there is another which entertains the possibility of the non-human, and the other-worldly being thrown into the mix.[34]

What this Brain figures is a re-connection with something like the notion of Spirit, albeit one which is re-figured, so that there is no longer such a privilege placed upon the individual and its consequent freedom, and there is less of a priority of reason in favour of intuition and affect. Whilst this is the case, we still witness here a return to figuring the totality, albeit under rather different terms and conditions.

Another way of reading this networked subjectivity would be to shift slightly the meaning of the word spirit toward the Weberian definition, in which spirit appears as a kind of guiding or animating force for particular modes of production, in this case those of the capitalist

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[34] We have already encountered some theorists who use the term 'global brain'. Another forerunner of this concept would be H. G. Wells' vision of a 'World Brain' or 'Permanent World Encyclopaedia', a huge network for the exchange of knowledge which he saw as being made possible through the advent of technologies which abolished distance. Wells, 'The Brain Organization of the Modern World', pp. 28, 49, 57. For Wells, the ultimate goal was, as he puts it, to 'to pull the mind of the world together'. H. G. Wells, 'The Idea of a Permanent World Encyclopaedia', in *World Brain*, p. 59. Wells' vision today seems like an uncanny anticipation of the internet, but ultimately it is the emphasis on a world-wide form of *consciousness* which is of interest to us here. Charlie Gere has provided a brief history of what he also terms the 'world brain', spanning from Marx and H. G. Wells, to Peter Russell and Italian Autonomist thinkers such as Antonio Negri and Maurizio Lazzarato. Charlie Gere, 'Brains-in-vats, Giant Brains, and World Brains: The Brain as Metaphor in Digital Culture', *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences*, 35 (2004). What the various examinations of the Global Brain in this thesis adds – other than some additional examples in theoretical writings, along with a host of other examples from the wider cultural sphere – is to introduce the distinction between an Idealist, human-centred Brain and an Unhuman Brain, a Brain where technology, ecology and other factors outside the human tip the balance of the Global Brain in their own favour. This is not to say that theories or instances of the Global Brain which involve technological aspects cannot fall under the bracket of the Idealist Brain. Indeed, as we have seen and will see further, there are plenty of examples where this is the case, and in this sense the distinction proves all the more useful, in that it allows us to link these kinds of theories to a bigger chain – encompassing figures like Hegel, or Kant – and to thereby draw out the further implications of this. What the distinction also draws our attention to is a potential historical and conceptual shift which has huge implications for the way the global is thought, and for human culture in general.

variety.[35] Slavoj Žižek, for example, has suggested that a move toward inter-relatedness might signal a supplanting of the '"third spirit" of capitalism' ('the plastic "creative" capitalist') with a '"fourth spirit", one which would repeat the [previous] move from the individual to the collective, from the protestant ethic to the organization man'.[36] For Žižek, this new-found collectivism is particularly reminiscent of the ideals of communism, the former thereby perhaps signalling an opening out to the latter. Such a view, then, would be correlative with the view of collectivism that Coupland's novel puts forward, in that both share a degree of utopianism. But as we have seen, there is a different side to the optimistic view, one which is illustrated in Kaufman and Cronenberg's films, and which we will continue to examine in more detail in relation to the notion of control. Finally, though, to come back to McLuhan briefly, Žižek's historical schema provides a way of explicating the relevance of the former's system here. If McLuhan's proclamations on the global village can be situated roughly in the context of the spirit of the organisation man, then the return to the similar themes of connectivity, affectivity, and the erasure of distinct subject positions in the contemporary works we have examined here would seem to go hand in hand with the development of what Žižek terms the fourth spirit of capitalism; what is taking place, in other words, is a resurgence of a spirit of collectivism in

[35] Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (London: Unwin University Books, 1970), pp. 176-183.

[36] Slavoj Žižek, *Living in the End Times* (London and New York: Verso, 2011), p. 349. The first spirit – the protestant ethic – which Žižek refers to here is the one outlined by Weber. The second – the 'organization man' – relates to theories of managerial and team structures, and their relation to capitalism in the 1950s. The key text on this (published in 1956) is William H. Whyte's *The Organization Man* (London: Penguin, 1960). The third spirit – the 'plastic "creative" capitalist', which is associated here with a return to the individual – is something identified by Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello in *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Elliot Gregory (London: Verso, 2005).

response to the dominance of the network form, one which makes McLuhan's theories of media suddenly seem relevant again.[37]

Empire and Control

To continue with the political flavour that Žižek's remarks bring to the fore, we might turn our minds back to the notion of the erasure of time and space. What is missing from the accounts above, perhaps, is just this kind of political contextualisation. David Harvey is the most famous theorist in recent years to have undertaken this.[38] Harvey's concept of 'time-space compression' designates basically the same as what Virilio and Bauman describe above, except that Harvey thinks this process is an inherent part of the development of capitalism itself. It is not merely an isolated set of technological apparatuses, then, which are responsible for this state, but also the 'speed-up and acceleration in the pace of economic processes, and, hence, in social life', something which is surely not confined to our own era.[39] Indeed, from this point of view, Harvey's diagnosis is merely a continuation of Marx's observation in the *Grundrisse* (c. 1858), that 'capital by its nature drives beyond every spatial barrier. Thus the creation of the physical conditions of exchange – of the means of communication and transport – the annihilation of space by time – becomes an extraordinary necessity for it'.[40] But, according to Harvey, we are now in an era of intensification in terms of these processes, engendered by phenomena such as the now fully global financial system, (again) advances in telecommunications, and 'the global city', this latter element being something which exemplifies a new spatial hierarchy which has

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[37] McLuhan himself makes reference to the notion of the organisation man when articulating the concept of the global village. See Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1968), p. 304.
[38] See also Doreen Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender* (Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 1994), pp. 146-148.
[39] Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity,* p. 230.
[40] Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of Political Economy (Rough Draft)*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), p. 524.

been effected as a result of the erasure of previous barriers.[41] It is worth pausing here, then, to consider the content of Caden's project, which is an endless replication of that quintessential 'world city', New York (an element which in turn harks back to the beginning of the last chapter, and the discussion of Ballard's 'Concentration City'). The urban environment here not only lends itself to being read along-side the global system itself, but also in relation to the way in which the erasure of one set of spatial barriers necessarily equals the creation of new ones, something which is perhaps best evoked in *Synecdoche* through the potentially infinite amount of barriers present in between each warehouse.

The overall motif of this form of hyper time-space compression is of the world as a singular unit, an immanent world which has done away with the outside both through the spreading of capitalist relations across the globe, and through the instant accessibility that the various contemporary technologies provide, which both aid the development of capitalism and produce their own effects. In the realm of full-blown globalisation theory, this definition would conform to the ubiquitous shrunk-down world, Roland Robertson's definition of globalisation as 'the compression of the world' being the most pertinent case in point,[42] or Jean-François Bayart's assertion that globalisation is 'first and foremost a change of scale in time and space' offering a more contemporary version of this.[43] Perhaps the most relevant theory of the global for our purposes here, however, is Hardt and Negri's concept of Empire, which takes into account many of the themes we have discussed thus far, the three main ones being the capitalist world-system, the figure of the network, and a movement away from what Foucault named disciplinary societies. Indeed, read alongside the pieces we have looked at already, Hardt and Negri's work

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[41] Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, p. 294.
[42] Robertson, *Globalization*, p. 8.
[43] Bayart, p. 12.

allows us to add another example to our list of a certain way of conceptualising the global, one which is characterised by immanence.

Indeed, immanence is the guiding principle for the concept of Empire. As the two put it perhaps most succinctly in *Commonwealth* (2011), the contemporary era has witnessed 'the creation of a common world, a world that, for better or worse, we all share, a world that has no "outside"'.[44] Whilst we will not be able to give a full account of the work on Empire (which spans three volumes), it will suffice to enumerate some of the main reasons as to why this particular conclusion is arrived at.

As we saw in the introduction, one of the main contentions when it comes to the purely political is that we have moved away from overarching structures of transcendence. With the waning of the power of nation-states in favour of various different types of global actors – such as large corporations, NGOs, major financial institutions, and so on – Hardt and Negri think that we are seeing an end of that narrative of overarching sovereignty, best exemplified through Hobbes' Leviathan.[45] But such a move is compounded by another movement away from what is cast here as the remnants of political transcendence, and this is Foucault's disciplinary societies. The authors suggest that disciplinary societies still retained a flavour of the overarching through the way in which they ordered and differentiated social space via the *dispositif*, the most famous examples of the latter being the factory, the prison, the school, and so on. Hardt and Negri concur, then, with Deleuze's identification of the passage toward societies of control, and they state explicitly that this passage 'marks a step toward the plane of immanence'.[46] This goes hand in hand with the operations of capital, which we are told now 'operates on a plane of *immanence*', in that its flows take place in a singular economic market, and it operates without

[44] Hardt and Negri, *Commonwealth* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard UP, 2011), p. vii.
[45] Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, p. 325.
[46] Ibid., p. 329.

fixed, inherent laws dictated from outside its own workings.[47] These elements, coupled with what Hardt and Negri accept as the transition from the dominance of industry to the dominance of an information-based economy, come together to form the boundless, smooth landscape which the two authors call Empire, where 'there is no *place* of power', and where there is 'progressively less distinction between outside and inside'.[48]

The four elements mentioned here also instantiate another main aspect of Empire, which is that of the network form. The increased prominence of global actors as opposed to national ones creates – at least from the perspective of the absence of national sovereignty – a 'form of pluralistic regulation, which builds from below and is established in a network configured by a variable, multilevel, and/or polycentric geometry'.[49] The movement away from the disciplinary is said to inaugurate 'the networks of the society of control', whilst the dominance of informational labour creates a situation whereby 'the assembly line has been replaced by *the network* as the organizational model of production'.[50] Finally, capital itself operates 'through relays and networks of relationships of domination, without reliance on a transcendent center of power'.[51] These appeals to the network, it would seem, offer two vantage points onto the contemporary world and the way the global is conceptualised in it. The first is that the world is increasingly dominated by network-oriented practices and technologies, factors which are essential for things like informational labour. But the recurrent references in this work to the network also bear testament to the prevalence of this figure as a means of *describing* the world in which we live. This is not to say that these two things are not connected. Indeed, they very much are. What the distinction between these two aspects draws our attention toward, though, is the

[47] Ibid., p. 326.
[48] Ibid., p. 187
[49] Hardt and Negri, *Commonwealth*, pp. 226-227.
[50] Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, pp. 329, 295.
[51] Ibid., p. 326.

properly conceptual nature of Hardt and Negri's project. Through this privileging of the concept, we are able to assess the implications of 'Empire' in relation to the rest of the material looked at here.

Hardt and Negri's version of the network is an immanent one, one from which there is no escape, no outside. Such is also the case with the networks in *Synecdoche* and *Existenz*. In their allusion to what they call the 'networks of the society of control', Hardt and Negri agree with Alexander Galloway's assertion – quoted in the introduction to this chapter – that networks are native to control societies. Steven Shaviro explores the connection between the two particularly vividly, stating as follows:

> Once we have all been connected, there is no longer any need for the Panopticon's rigid, relentless, centralized gaze. The new forces of control are flexible, slack, and distributed. In a totally networked world, where every point communicates directly with every other point, power is no longer faceless and invisible. Instead, it works in plain sight. Its smiley face is always there to greet us.[52]

In all of these cases, then, there is an abandonment of the paradigm of transcendence in favour of a concept of power which is immanent, distributed, networked. We have seen how both *Synecdoche* and *Existenz* are characterised by all three of these terms, and this is something which does not change when it comes to the subject of power. To take *Existenz*, the very notion of existing within the virtual realm of a game suggests that at each point one is passing through a set of rules, checkpoints, and barriers which are distributed throughout the course of play, and are (at least in our own version of the computer game) achieved ultimately through the use of algorithms. At each point throughout the game, the rules are modulated depending on the choice made by the protagonists. From this point of view, the model of a game-world without an outside is strikingly similar to Deleuze's own description of control, whereby the latter works through

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[52] Shaviro, *Connected*, p. 31.

continuous modulation, adapting to events, allowing things to happen, but always keeping these within certain parameters and modes of production.[53]

Mark Fisher has suggested that *Existenz* can be read 'as decisively *anti*-existentialist. Free will is not an irreducible fact of human existence: it is merely the unpreprogrammed sequence necessary to stitch together a narrative that is already written'.[54] Fisher relates this point to what he calls 'cognitive labour' (which is roughly similar to what Hardt and Negri term informational labour), suggesting that the lack of free will in Cronenberg's film can be read in relation to the outcomes of this particular form of labour. We might also link Fisher's argument, though, with the way in which *Existenz* puts forward a certain version of control, one which operates via a principle of immanence, and which connects with Hardt and Negri's concept of Empire. Indeed, Fisher's characterisation of being in the midst of a world which is 'unpreprogrammed', but which is ultimately already written, would again fit very closely with the Deleuzian definition of control. When it comes to *Synecdoche*, there is a similar dynamic in place. Again, each action which takes place within the immanent space of Caden's project is part of a flexible narrative structure, but one which nevertheless makes it essential that all things coalesce around this structure. Thus, whilst it seems Caden is free to wander where he chooses, and to act how he wishes, this always remains within the bounds of a narrative that is already written, and within a space-time continuum which remains static. To add to this feeling of what we might call anticipated spontaneity, the instructions which Caden receives toward the end of the film again fit in with the model of control outlined. These instructions come from nowhere; one might presume that they are given via earpiece, but there is no actual hint of this throughout the film. There is here, to use Hardt and Negri's language, no discernible place of power. The

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[53] Deleuze, 'Postscript on Control Societies', pp. 178-179.
[54] Mark Fisher, 'Work and Play in *Existenz*', *Film Quarterly*, 65.3 (2012), p. 72.

potency of such a power, however, is confirmed at the film's climax, in which Caden is given the simple instruction to die, which he proceeds to do, amidst the background noise of what sound like telecommunications and satellite emissions.

Carceral Logics

Taken together, what *Empire*, *Existenz* and *Synecdoche* figure is a totalizing form of control which has done away with the previous motifs of transcendence. All three are concerned with animating forces which are distributed, which have no place, and control is the force which fits this description in all of the cases being dealt with. As opposed to the difference-producing engine of an absolute force, or the unifying State or Leviathan which brings together all that is (and largely remains) atomised, what we have here is a force that keeps everything the same, and holds events within a fixed set of parameters. Control, then, is an animating force here in the sense that it keeps things ticking over at a kind of base-level; it allows things to develop only within a set, albeit shifting framework where difference is ultimately annulled. A distributed, animating force situated across a global, immanent landscape is, in fact, an accurate description of what Hardt and Negri designate as Empire itself, and in this sense we can identify a direct link between this and the types of spaces found in Kaufman and Cronenberg's films. Put in another way, there is a direct parallel here between the way in which the concept of Empire seeks to describe the capitalist world-system, and the versions of the global in *Existenz* and *Synecdoche*. As a result, we again enter into the most common way of conceptualising the global today, which is characterised by the disappearance of the outside. There is an evident similarity here, then, between these versions of the global and those found in the previous chapter. All of the concepts tracked throughout the course of these two chapters have as their common denominator a world

without outside, one which links up with the capitalist world-system as it is figured today, the various mutations in computer and network technologies, the form of power being exercised, and the configuration of art.

To add to this, there is an element of the carceral present in the two films looked at here, a feeling that there is no way out of a scenario in which each foray into what appears to be an outside ends up being just another part of an infinite regression. We might link this to the feeling that there is no alternative to the global, capitalist system, identified in the previous chapter. But there is a more specific way in which this can be linked to the current geo-political situation, and this is to be found initially in *Synecdoche*.

Rather than the smiley face of control which Shaviro refers to, *Synecdoche* gives us a more sinister face, one which is illustrated particularly well by the ending scene of the film. It is also put across through the very structure of Caden's project. As opposed to the smooth space of Empire which resists partition and demarcation, the world of the warehouses within warehouses is one of infinite barriers and checkpoints, each separating one warehouse from another. Instead of a world which is stripped of transcendence and which becomes boundless as a result, we are left with the opposite outcome, that is, a world with an infinite amount of walls. On a quite literal level, this might be equated with the recent frenzy of wall building by nation states across the globe. As Wendy Brown has pointed out, this race to build fortifications between nation states – from the Saudi/Yemen border to the China/North Korea border, and from the fortifications separating the US and Mexico to those separating Botswana and Zimbabwe – does not suggest necessarily a strengthening of the nation state, but rather signals the need to assert an authority which is on the wane in response to the increasing prominence of global actors and flows of capital; as Brown puts it herself, 'rather than resurgent expressions of nation-state sovereignty,

the new walls are icons of its erosion'.[55] Whatever the prognosis, though, it is clear that a new form of the carceral is emerging on the geo-political stage, one that provides a context for reading the grand interior in *Synecdoche*. Whilst a move toward immanence in terms of geo-politics and global conceptualisation might in some ways seem to be liberating, it also carries with it its own pitfalls. As Terry Eagleton puts it, to 'wish nation away' – to which we might add, to wish away the structures of demarcation and order which previous political systems based on transcendence relied upon – is 'to play straight into the hands of the oppressor'.[56]

We can again detect this dynamic of supposed openness within an ultimately carceral environment in the mysterious directions, or instructions with which Caden is provided. Caden is told that he 'think[s] about driving, not coming from any place, not arriving any place, just driving, counting off time'. Other than the evidently prescriptive nature of this (Caden being told what he thinks), this notion of driving without destination is significant, in terms of the carceral nature of Caden's project. The description evokes a space without borders or set destinations, a fluid, smooth space, quite the opposite, in other words, of the space in which Caden actually finds himself. Here, then, we are provided with a scenario with which to read not only the global space in *Synecdoche*, but also conceptualisations of the global which appeal toward the boundless in general. Whilst many popular thinkers of the global – Thomas L. Friedman being perhaps the best example here[57] – suggest that the 'borderless world' is something inherently

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[55] Wendy Brown, *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty* (New York: Zone Books, 2010), pp. 19, 24. For more on the resurgence of wall-building across the globe see Danae Stratou and Yanis Varoufakis, *The Globalising Wall*, <http://www.vitalspace.org/text/globalising-wall-yanis-varoufakis.>.

[56] Terry Eagleton, 'Nationalism: Irony and Commitment', in *Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature* (London and Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 2001), p. 23.

[57] As Freidman puts it, 'Globalization 3.0' – the current era of globalisation – 'is going to be more and more driven not only by individuals but also by a much more diverse [...] group of individuals. Individuals from every corner of the flat world are being empowered. Globalization 3.0 makes it possible for so many people to plug in and play, and you are going to see every color of the human rainbow take part'. Friedman, p. 11. By saying that the world is flat, Friedman intends to suggest a new non-hierarchical structure to socio-political relations across the globe, enabled mainly by new computer and tele-technologies. This position, it seems, fails ultimately to take into account any of

liberatory, this is to obscure the carceral, oppressive side which appears to have developed hand in hand with this. Whilst it is put forward with a rather different agenda in mind, Hardt and Negri's concept of Empire is also guilty to an extent of ignoring both this tendency and its reality. To put it simply, it is all very well to extoll the benefits of a world without borders, one without hierarchies and striations, but this often leads merely to the creation of new, transformed, or covert versions of these former elements, in which the very rhetoric of the borderless is used as a tool in the creation of the carceral. This is shown to be the case in *Synecdoche*, but it is also arguably the case in our own control-oriented societies.

It is this tension between the carceral and the boundless which the figure of the anti-nomad in *Synecdoche* captures so well; Caden is not only caught between the infinite and the fixed, the mobile and the immobile, but also captures that contradiction which brings into play both the carceral and the boundless in contemporary culture. One earlier forerunner of *Synecdoche* is to be found in Paul Auster's *The Music of Chance*. The contradiction is not expressed in such a unified way here, but nevertheless all the elements are present.

The novel begins with the protagonist, Nashe, quitting his job, cutting loose his responsibilities, and for a whole year doing 'nothing but drive' across the whole of the United States.[58] After this year, Nashe's money (inherited from a relative) all-but runs out, and he ends up gambling away what little of it he had left. Not only this, he accrues a ten-thousand-dollar debt in the process, and ends up entering an agreement with his debtors, meaning that he will be incarcerated on their estate in order to undertake the mammoth task of building a huge wall, with

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the vested interests, or realities of inequality present in the current world-system, and further fails to operate critically in relation to the subject matter, as evidenced by the relentlessly exuberant celebration of the latter throughout the book.

[58] Paul Auster, *The Music of Chance* (London: Faber and Faber, 1992), p. 1.

large stones, by hand.[59] We switch, then, from a nomadic type of movement to a carceral state. The connections between this latter state and the space in *Synecdoche* are furthered through a hobby which one of Nashe's debtors has. The hobby is model-making, and the model which Nashe is shown is called the 'City of the World'. Its maker, on unveiling the project, confides that he is thinking of including in the model city a model of the room in which the city is itself contained, which means he would 'also have to build another City of the World'. Nashe points out the ultimate logic of this process, by which if 'a model of the model' was built, 'theoretically you'd have to do an even smaller model of that model. A model of the model of the model. It could go on forever'.[60] This, then, is another example of infinite regress which comes to be associated with the carceral world which Nashe enters into. The inheritance of money which gives Nashe the ability to move freely, to become nomadic, also causes him to be effectively imprisoned, each situation being one side of the same coin.[61] Mark Brown has interpreted this instance of infinite regress, along with Nashe's imprisoned state as 'laying bare the brutality of the carceral and surveillance apparatus that is emerging in metropolitan spatial formations'.[62] But we might also view this as a forerunner to a concept of the global which is inherently carceral, and in which infinite regress becomes a key motif of this.

Virtual Resistance

The concepts of the global identified so far present a somewhat fatalistic view of the contemporary world, and the geopolitical relations this entails. Whether it is a capitalist hothouse

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[59] Ibid., pp. 87-104.
[60] Ibid., pp. 79-81.
[61] For an elaboration on the links between this incarceration and capitalism as such see Warren Oberman, 'Existentialism meets Postmodernism in Paul Auster's *The Music of Chance*', *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, 45.2 (2004).
[62] Mark Brown, *Paul Auster* (London and New York: Manchester UP, 2007), p. 140.

from which there is no escape, or a totalising system of control from which one cannot be free, at issue invariably is a feeling that there is no longer an outside to our current situation, or predicament, depending on one's point of view. Whilst this remains the case, with some of the material engaged with in this chapter, we find something like a means of resistance to these totalising systems and the ways in which they are conceptualised. In *Synecdoche*, this is expressed purely formally, whilst in *Existenz* and *Empire* the form of resistance is more overtly political.

The situation in *Existenz* is fairly obvious. As we saw before, in this film there are various examples of what Badiou calls enemies of the virtual. These enemies or militants suggest the possibility, or at least the acknowledgement of the possibility, of an outside to the world of the games, an alternative to the infinite regression which the characters find themselves in. But there is a paradox here, in that we can never be sure if the alternative which this resistance force promises is in fact just a function of the totalising system itself, a built-in part of the progression from one level to the next. We are thus led back into the kind of situation which Fisher sketches out in *Capitalist Realism*, whereby alternatives to the current, global system become the very means of its sustenance.

In *Synecdoche*, the type of resistance is less concrete as it is located at the level of form. Nevertheless, there is a connection here with Hardt and Negri's work, and reading *Synecdoche* for one last time will lead us on to this. Even though we are presented with a static vision of time and space in *Synecdoche*, the film's form creates a rather different spatio-temporal dynamic. Throughout the course of the film, there are various disruptions to what would normally pass as a linear sequencing of events. One example of this is to be found in an instance of the film already discussed, where, at what would seem to be the beginning of the project, Caden is asked by one

of the actors when they will get an audience for their play, it having been seventeen years since it commenced rehearsal. The time span between the start of the project and this moment is completely disregarded until this point, and we receive no prior warning of it. In another instance, Caden attempts to visit his daughter in Berlin, and during a heated exchange about her with another character Caden exclaims 'she's a four-year-old!', the reply to which is that 'she is almost eleven now'. At one point a whole year is perceived as a week by Caden, whilst a phone conversation which lasts only a couple of seconds is recounted by him at impossible length. In the first three of these examples, the past bleeds into the present; the past exists, in other words, freely in the present, and the moments at which Caden is temporally reoriented constitutes a rupture in the fabric of the narrative, and its temporal progression. Time is out of joint in these examples, and this is also the case for the fourth example, in which the phone conversation is stretched out in the present, is slowed down, and passes conspicuously.

This temporal unevenness goes some way to explaining the references to the modernist literary canon scattered throughout the film, with texts such as *Remembrance of Things Past* (1913-1927), *Krapp's Last Tape* (1958), *The Death of a Salesman* (1949), and *The Trial* (1925) all getting a mention. All of these texts play with time, with linear sequencing and the distinctions between past and present. They are also all texts which Deleuze turns to in his work on the time-image in cinema, which itself provides a way of reading the temporal dislocation in *Synecdoche*. For Deleuze, the cinema of the time-image is characterised by a disjointed flow of time, whereby the linearity signalled traditionally through continuity editing is constantly disrupted.[63] In connection with this, the time-image is always caught between the virtual and the actual, between the past or future image, and the present image. The actual and the virtual get

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[63] Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, pp. xi-xiii.

mixed up to such an extent that they become indiscernible.[64] One can certainly claim here, then, that *Synecdoche* offers a contemporary version of the time-image aesthetic, with its mixture between past and present, actual and virtual. That moment at which the past and the present divide is what Deleuze calls the 'crystal'; 'time consists of this split', says Deleuze, 'and it is this, it is time, that *we see in the crystal*'.[65] The moments of rupture in *Synecdoche* referred to above can be read as instances of what Deleuze calls the crystal, moments where we get an image of the fluidity of time in the face of the static version of temporality which is the huge interior of Caden's project.

These instances of the virtual bleeding into the actual in *Synecdoche*, then, produce a counterpoint to the static vision of space and time in the film, a vision which we linked to various ways of conceptualising the global throughout this chapter. Even the crystalline points at which the past and present separate produce a counterpoint, in that they re-introduce the fluid, durable nature of time as such. What we have here, then, is a virtual resistance to the static, homogenising force of a global interior which knows no bounds. The links with modernist aesthetics (and with Deleuze's model of the time-image itself) suggest, in some sense, a return to older forms of resistance associated with avant-garde practices and artistic forms of critique, albeit in a different guise and under different circumstances. This would imply a return to resistance at the level of form. But we can also read this virtual level of resistance in more abstract terms. Essentially, we can say that it is a form of resistance which cuts through the immanent interior to be found in *Synecdoche*, thereby opening it out onto the possible. This is a low-level resistance, yet one which nevertheless succeeds in providing some form of opposition.

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[64] Ibid., p. 274. On the actual and the virtual outside of the cinema see Gilles Deleuze, 'The Actual and the Virtual' in *Dialogues II*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (London and New York: Continuum, 2006).
[65] Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, p. 81.

Whilst it would be highly simplistic to directly equate the two, Hardt and Negri also suggest that the alternative to Empire is to be found in the sphere of the virtual. The two suggest that, as a result of the stripping of transcendent, overarching systems of power, a new form of subjectivity and space is formed, one 'beyond measure', which allows a possibility to 'constitute the biopolitical fabric of Empire from below', this no longer being governed by a strict system of ideals and sovereignty. There is, they suggest, 'a *virtuality*' invested in 'the entire biopolitical fabric of imperial globalization'. The virtual here then represents 'the set of powers to act', an opening out onto the possible in terms of the current political, spatial and subjective situation.[66] Again, then, this is a low-level form of resistance, a cutting-through which – as opposed to the cutting-though located in the previous chapter – figures an opening out onto new possible forms and states, and an alternative to the current geo-political regime which consistently appears to be without an outside.

Whilst – as we have seen in these last two chapters – the concept of a world without outside is perhaps the most ubiquitous way of conceptualising the global today, in the next two chapters we will see a rather different form of the global, one where the outside returns with a vengeance.

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[66] Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, p. 357.

Chapter 3

Transcendent Worlds or, the Micro-Cosmos of Power

As we saw in the first chapter, according to Peter Sloterdijk, the first and second eras of globalisation – which both entailed a particular way of conceptualising the global – have been and gone. If we have abandoned what Sloterdijk calls the 'inclusive orb' of the cosmos which contains both heaven and earth,[1] and if we have also moved away from a concept of the globe which relies upon an outside internal to the Earth itself, then this would suggest a prevailing concept of the global which is characterised by immanence. This scenario is attested to throughout globalisation theory, from Roland Robertson, to Thomas L. Friedman, to Hardt and Negri's more openly conceptually-oriented account. It was also shown to be the case with the diverse materials examined in the previous two chapters. In this chapter, however, and in the chapter following this, we will trace an undercurrent in conceptualising the global, one in which the outside is still very much alive and well.

In the present chapter, the notion of the transcendent will mark the general point of departure from the forms of the global discussed in previous chapters. This, however, is not the transcendent cosmos which Sloterdijk evokes in his theory of an originary globalisation. Rather, what we will find are examples of a weak, or earthly transcendence. In other words, this is a version of the transcendent which remains ultimately terrestrial, which is folded into the bounds of the Earth, and yet, nevertheless, constitutes an outside in one way or another. Instead of being

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[1] Sloterdijk, *Spheres I,* p. 64.

formed in relation to the heavens, this is a form of transcendence which is erected in relation to the mundane, material aspects of the globe. What we are presented with, then, are a series of small transcendences; not a cosmos, but what we will call a ‘micro-cosmos’ which dips in and out of the world at-large. Two aspects of the global will be addressed then: both the micro-cosmos and the way in which this relates to global space as a whole.

The two texts that will form the initial basis of discussion here are Don DeLillo’s *Cosmopolis* (2003) and Will Self’s *The Book of Dave* (2006). After showing what concepts of the global can be extracted from these texts, and linking these to other ways of conceptualising the global, we will link up briefly with another two pieces: Iain Banks’ *Transition* (2009) and Neill Blomkamp’s *Elysium* (2012). In all of these pieces, there is expressed a discrepancy between small and large, between a micro-cosmos and the world at-large, a discrepancy which encodes a relation of power. The way this relation of power is negotiated and portrayed via the differing attitudes toward the transcendent will form one of the main tasks of elucidation. In fleshing out this relation, we begin to see some of the ways in which the global is conceptualised differently to that of the prevailing model of the immanent in contemporary culture. Thus, we will witness some of the ways of thinking about global relations which do not fit easily into the rubric of the immanent, such as the cosmopolitan, and its related, contemporary sibling, the ‘glocal’. The goal here is not to disprove in some way the previous chapters, and the materials explored in them. Rather, we hit upon another method of conceptualising the global here, one which sits alongside those versions which are without outside, and which contains its own problems and contradictions. As was pointed out in the Introduction, there is not one, overarching concept of the global which can be packaged neatly and presented without blemish or stain. This being said, there are two major features which continue to imprint themselves into

the line of argumentation here. The first is that the concepts extracted from the texts under discussion still maintain a terrestrial vision of the global, a feature which we will not escape from until the next and final chapters, and which itself perhaps has almost an unacknowledged monopoly on the conceptual rubric of the global. The second is that what all these texts, their inter-texts, and their parallels figure is a re-emergence of the totality, which in this case is figured via the motif of transcendence, along with all the political, metaphysical, and cultural baggage that this implies.

A Slow Mover

> There is something which causes motion without being moved, and this is eternal.
>
> Aristotle, *Metaphysics*

Don DeLillo's work has in recent years taken a transcendent turn, one which has largely gone unnoticed.[2] There are the angst-ridden debates and questionings which revolve around God in the wake of the attacks on the World Trade Centre in *Falling Man* (2007), for example.[3] Or, there is *Point Omega* (2010),[4] the title of which is a reference to Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's evolutionary-theological notion of the Omega Point, that 'one, true, irreversible essence of things' which humans, according to de Chardin, might be able to reach as a result of the terminus

[2] The classic reading of DeLillo's work is in relation to systems theory, and what has been called the 'systems novel'. See Tom LeClair, *In the Loop: Don DeLillo and the Systems Novel* (Urbana: Illinois UP, 1987). For a very different, rare treatment of the transcendent in DeLillo's work, see John Coyle, 'Don DeLillo, Aesthetic Transcendence and the Kitsch of Death', *European Journal of American Culture*, 26.1 (2007).
[3] Don DeLillo, *Falling Man* (London: Picador, 2007).
[4] Don DeLillo, *Point Omega* (London: Picador, 2010).

in the complexity of human relations and their ‘planetization’.[5] *Cosmopolis*, whilst it conforms in a less immediate way, can be included within this trend. In this case it is in the spatial dynamics that the transcendent theme can initially be detected.

The novel’s protagonist is Eric Packer, a highly wealthy financial trader, and head of ‘Packer Capital’.[6] Throughout the course of one day, he moves through New York (that ‘world city’, or ‘cosmopolis’) in his stretch limousine ‘at an inchworm creep’, being stuck in a huge traffic jam (*C* 64). Indeed, for most of the time, Packer does not move at all, and the limo is thus the predominant setting of the novel. The reason for undertaking such a journey is in order for Packer to get a haircut at a specific barber shop ‘crosstown’ (*C* 11). Various diversions are taken, however, in order to avoid an unspecified ‘threat’ to Packer’s security (*C* 19). This threat mutates throughout the course of the novel, and in its end state will result in Packer’s rather ambiguous death (*C* 209). The virtually inexistent movement across Manhattan renders Packer a static kind of explorer; events and people come to him throughout the course of the day, whilst he remains in the privileged, insulated space of the limousine. In some ways, then, Packer’s position is a passive one, in that he does not actively seek things out. On the other hand, he has quite an active role, achieved through the ability to pass judgement on his surroundings by virtue of a privileged, panoptic-like gaze.

If the novel relates Packer’s downfall, then it also relates the (potential) downfall of capitalism itself. Things, however, are rather more muddy, as what is ultimately referred to is that staple of the capitalist mode of production, whereby what appears as a crisis to end all crises is in fact just part of the normal functioning of the system itself, a structural anomaly which re-

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[5] Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, ‘Life and the Planets’, in *The Future of Man*, pp.111-116.
[6] Don DeLillo, *Cosmopolis* (London: Picador, 2011), p. 121. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

enforces the already-existing order.[7] As we will see later on, this scenario makes itself heard through two main aspects, which are the references to finance capital itself, and the hints at the evolution of technological environments and prostheses. Initially, however, it is necessary to provide a reading of some of the spatial configurations present in the novel.

Michael Naas has provided the most comprehensive interpretation of Packer's mode of travel. Playing on the etymology of 'auto' (which comes from the Greek word for self), he suggests that the limo is in fact a 'second self'.[8] According to Naas, when Packer abandons his limo at the end of the novel, this constitutes a deconstruction of the 'quintessentially American dream or ideology of autonomy and independence'. This autonomy (or 'law of the self'), in an analogous way to the automobile (or 'mobile self'), is that which 'prevents us from experiencing anything like an event', or put differently, that which stops us from opening up to an outside influence. By this logic, the shedding of the limo at the end of the novel signals a movement away from the ideology of the autonomous individual, and its mobile avatar.[9] The notion of the limo providing a shell with which to shelter the self is also expressed by Randy Laist, who suggests that 'Eric can drift through the city [...] without entering the scene in any existential way. He is in another kind of space than the world outside'.[10]

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[7] For the older version of this idea see Marx and Engels, who write that 'constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, ever-lasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones'. *The Communist Manifesto*, p. 6. In more contemporary terms, David Harvey has suggested that 'crisis creation, management, and manipulation on the world stage has evolved into the fine art of deliberative redistribution of wealth from poor countries to the rich'. David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (New York and Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005), p. 162. See also Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (London: Allen Lane, 2007), p. 4.

[8] Michael Naas, *Derrida from Now On* (New York: Fordham Press, 2008), p. 158.

[9] Ibid., pp. 153-154.

[10] Randy Laist, 'The Concept of Disappearance in Don DeLillo's *Cosmopolis*', *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, 51.3 (2010), p. 265.

Both Naas and Laist elucidate their readings with reference to the fact that Packer has had his limo 'prousted', cork-lined 'against street noise' (*C* 71).[11] Indeed, Packer's limo is in fact its own little world, and this is attested to not merely by the fact that most of the novel is set inside it, but also via a figurative touch in which the limousine's ceiling contains 'the arrangement of the planets at the time of his birth, calculated to the hour, minute and second' (*C* 179). Whilst the limo may be a second self, or even, as Naas suggests further, 'a kind of pod or second city',[12] it is clear here that what is actually at stake is a miniature world; the car, in other words forms its own cosmos, separated from the outside world of the city. Whilst it is certainly interesting to view the limo as a symbol of autonomy and isolation, this misses out a fundamental detail. The same goes for the supposed impenetrability of the limo, or micro-cosmos. For example, when Packer tells his wife that he has had the limousine sound-proofed she asks whether it works or not. 'How could it work', replies Packer, who moves on to say that 'the city eats and sleeps noise. It makes noise out of every century. It makes the same noises it did in the seventeenth century along with all the noises that have evolved since then' (*C* 71).

In sum then, from this angle Packer's limousine appears as its own miniature world, which dips in and out of its surroundings, of the world at-large. The fact that the car has been 'prousted' does not make it an impenetrable fortress but, rather, means that it interacts with the outside world at a more remote level than usual. Benno Levin (the character who eventually kills Packer) perhaps summarises this interaction best, albeit under a slightly different context. As he puts it, 'world is supposed to mean something that's self-contained. But nothing is self-contained. Everything enters something else' (*C* 60). If the word 'prousted' is an allusion to Proust's act of cork-lining his own room against street noise, we might at the same time read this

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[11] See Naas, p. 153; and Laist, p. 265.
[12] Naas, p. 158.

in relation to an aspect of Proust's literary oeuvre.[13] In *Remembrance of Things Past*, the text's initial, or primary setting is a bedroom, from which we branch out – through the aid of memory – to various different settings and points in time. Whilst *Cosmopolis* is not concerned with time or memory as such, a similar dynamic is in place with both novels, whereby from a fixed point in space there is an interaction with a much wider, fluctuating frame of reference.[14] In relation to the city which it moves through, the limo in *Cosmopolis* is a fixed point in time and space, around which things evolve over time; the city appears here as that which is always in flux, each element of change being layered on top of another to produce something qualitatively new, whereas the limo is a fixed, framed world, the static celestial bodies signalling the time of Packer's birth being the most evocative example of this.

If the limo forms a stable point in the midst of this city of becoming, then this is tied with Packer's reasons for having a preference toward limousines in the first place. Initially, he suggests that this is due to the anonymity they accord, in that they are something like a 'platonic replica', the connotation here being that all limousines look alike. 'But', as we are told immediately after, 'he knew this wasn't true. [...] He wanted the car because it was not only oversized but aggressively and contemptuously so, metastasizingly so, a tremendous mutant thing that stood astride every argument against it' (*C* 10). Instead of being a mere replica, then, Packer's car is something which stands above this category of being. The car somehow escapes the logic of imitation, bringing it into the domain of the immutable, the large, and the exceptional, the latter element figured through the description of the car as a 'mutant'.

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[13] Proust's room was apparently 'lined from ceiling to floor with cork, to keep out all irrelevant sounds and draughts. The windows were tightly shut, in order that no particle of pollen-laden dust should penetrate it'. Charlotte Haldane, *Marcel Proust* (London: Arthur and Baker Ltd., 1951), p. 22.
[14] See, for example, Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past: Vol I, Swann's Way, Part One*, trans. C. K. Scott Moncrieff (London: Chatto and Windus, 1969). The 'Overture' is particularly evocative of this.

Put together, these different descriptions of the limousine make it possible to read Packer's car as displaying some classic metaphysical symptoms. Whilst there is an evident reference to Plato and his theory of forms, the overall situation here is more readily analogous to Aristotle's theory of an unmoved mover, to which the epigraph above refers. Immovable and eternal, Aristotle's prime mover is that which causes motion in the material, everyday world, and is associated directly with the heavens.[15] This concept is part of what Hubert Krivine has called a 'dual vision of the world' formed from Plato onwards, whereby

> there was the 'perfect' world of the stars, eternal and infinitely regular [...]. This supralunary world was governed by a rationality that it was the mission of mathematics to express. At the base of the hierarchy there was the world in which we live, changing and corruptible.[16]

Of course, Packer's limousine does not quite attain the status of the Ancient, supralunary world. Nevertheless, it does have some similar features which will help us read further into DeLillo's text, and ultimately link the latter to the current geo-political situation. The car is a seemingly fixed point amidst the mutability of the city outside, to the point at which we even have an immutable image of the heavens within this miniature world. The limo itself remains virtually static, and sits at a remove from the outside world, thereby forming a version of the supralunary which is folded into the Earth itself. The limo, then, appears as a world apart from its surroundings, thus creating a dual vision of the world. All of these features contribute to imbuing Packer and his limousine with a transcendent status, an overarching presence which dips in and out of the world at-large.

But, of course, Packer does move, even if this is only 'at an inchworm creep' (*C* 64). He is, then, what we might call a slow mover, and this is a slowness which we can link to the micro-

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[15] Aristotle, *Aristotle's Metaphysics*, trans. Hippocrates G. Apostle (Bloomington and London: Indianna UP, 1966), pp. 206-207.

[16] Hubert Krivine, *The Earth: From Myths to Knowledge*, trans. David Fernbach (London and New York: Verso, 2015), p. 64.

cosmos which he inhabits. What the latter figures is a low-level form of transcendence, one which is contained within the bounds of the Earth. Similarly, Packer's status as a slow mover suggests a weak version of Aristotle's notion of the unmoved mover. Both of these elements, as we shall see, are linked ultimately to the political.

Robert Pattinson playing Packer in David Cronenberg's adaptation of *Cosmopolis* (2012).[17] In this shot, Packer is circled by a kind of halo, or divine radiance. In fact, the light emanates from the series of screens in the car. The association between these kinds of technology and the transcendent is explored later on.

Sovereign Travel

The mode of transcendence in *Cosmopolis* is related to power. What kind of power? The answer would seem to be relatively obvious, bearing in mind Packer's status: the power of finance capital, and the spatial and political impacts this has. Packer, in this light, is a 'Master of the Universe' to the nth degree (and with rather less irony), to borrow a phrase from Sherman McCoy, the financial trader in Tom Wolfe's *The Bonfire of the Vanities* (1987).[18] This, though, is a form of power which is rather different to some of the models evoked in previous chapters, such as the society of control and its movement away from the disciplinary. It would seem that,

[17] *Cosmopolis*, dir. David Cronenberg (Entertainment One, 2012).
[18] Tom Wolfe, *Bonfire of the Vanities* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1988), p. 12.

with the appeals toward the transcendent, we are closer to the mode of power of the sovereign. Hobbes' notion of the sovereign in *Leviathan* (1651) would be a key reference point here, as this not only has an overarching, transcendent status, but also achieves a point of stability in what would otherwise be the chaos, or state of war without a commonwealth.[19] But there is a further aspect to the form of sovereignty on display in *Cosmopolis*.

Staying for the moment with Packer's limousine, the traces of this can be located in one of the descriptions already quoted. When he admits that the sound-proofing of the limo is ineffective, Packer qualifies this by saying that 'it's a gesture. It's a thing a man does' (*C* 71). This is a gesture without direct function, something done not for utilitarian purposes, but merely for the sake of doing it. Similar gestures are found throughout the novel. There are a series of what Georges Bataille would term 'unproductive expenditures', moments which are figured as being beyond utility. It is the kind of sovereignty which Bataille once described, then, that is perhaps the most fitting to *Cosmopolis*, one in which 'we may call sovereign the enjoyment of possibilities that utility doesn't justify'. For Bataille, 'life beyond *utility* is the domain of sovereignty'.[20] The model fits in not only with those aspects of the novel which point toward that which is beyond utility, but also the transcendent nature of the limousine. As Bataille suggests, the King's or Monarch's is 'a life magnified by the veneration of which he has become the object on the part of an entire people', and it expresses 'the desire to see, at one point, sovereignty produced without limitation'.[21] That 'one point' at which sovereignty is produced confers upon the individual in question a transcendent status. This, of course, is a model which (at least in the West) is all-but a thing of the past and in this sense might initially seem not to fit with

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[19] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan, or The Matter, Forme and Power of a Commonwealth Ecclesiastical and Civil* (Oxford and New York: Oxford UP, 2008), pp. 2, 114 (for example).
[20] Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share: Volumes II & III*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Zone Books, 2007), p. 198.
[21] Ibid., p. 286.

Cosmopolis' contemporary setting. Nevertheless, it fits in with the events of the novel, with certain developments in contemporary capitalism, and points us toward the way in which the global is being conceptualised here.

The whole book might be read as one long series of exuberances, and this is most readily apparent in its erotic episodes, of which there are many. One example serves to prove a point here. Packer is having his prostate examined by his doctor (in the limo) whilst he converses with another colleague of his on the state of the financial markets. This moment, as if not absurd enough, turns into an erotic one. Whilst the prostate examination is ongoing, a connection is established between Packer and his colleague: 'something passed between them', we are told. Packer feels 'some vast sexus of arousal drawing him toward her, complicatedly, with [the doctor's] finger up his ass' (*C* 48). The episode continues for a couple of pages after this. Both a functional conversation and a clinical procedure are given the status of the erotic, then; the strictly utilitarian, in other words, passes into the realm of non-utility, whilst at the same time the realm of the financial is overlaid with the squandering of resources.

The link between the two is in fact a main element of the book, the financial squandering of resources being the most pronounced. Packer's self-inflicted demise is caused, in the main, by him hedging his bets on the financial markets that the 'yen will fall', against all odds. Predictably, this does not happen, and 'Packer Capital's portfolio' is 'reduced to near nothingness in the course of the day', Packer's 'personal fortune in the tens of billions' also being lost as a result (*C* 121). His wife offers to 'help [him] financially' (*C* 122), but briefly afterwards Packer ruins himself completely by transferring all of her money into his company account, and losing it purposefully: 'he did this to make certain he could not accept her offer of financial help' (*C* 123), we are told. Packer's own downfall causes a wider, global financial

crisis, due to his huge wealth and influence: 'there were currencies tumbling everywhere. Bank failures were spreading. He found the humidor and lit a cigar' (*C* 115). Packer's post-ruin smoke (analogous to a post-coital smoke) highlights the link here between a squandering of financial resources and the erotic. Further, we are informed, 'there was trembling pleasure to be found, and joy at all misfortune, in the swift pitch of markets down' (*C* 107). This squandering of resources on both an erotic and a financial level signals a move away from utility, one which confers on Packer and his limousine (in which the majority of these events take place) a sovereign status. At the epicentre of a crisis in the world-system, Packer becomes that single point on which all things hinge, and from where everything can be ruined.

Paul Crosthwaite has also examined the resonances between financial crises and the thought of Bataille, particularly in relation to *Cosmopolis*. There are libidinal forces at work when it comes to the contemporary financial crisis, the web of which can be thought about not only through the work of figures such as Bataille, Jean Baudrillard and Jean-François Lyotard, but also via novels such as DeLillo's.[22] According to Crosthwaite, the instance of Packer's wilful downfall not only points toward the 'death drive', but also to Bataille's notion of unproductive expenditure as being characteristic of today's crisis-driven economy.[23] Whilst Crosthwaite does not associate Packer and his limousine with the aspect of sovereignty described, this serves to further embed such a concept in the way the novel is being read here. Further, in this sense DeLillo's novel proposes, in relation to the figure of Packer, a much more general mutation in the sensibility and structure of present-day capitalism, whereby, as Jean-Joseph Goux has also pointed out, Bataille's model of unproductive expenditure – despite the latter's attempts to

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[22] Paul Crosthwaite, 'Blood on the Trading Floor: Waste, Sacrifice and Death in Financial Crises', *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*, 15.2 (2005), p. 8. On the related matter of waste in DeLillo's work in general, see Peter Boxall, '"There's no Lack of Void": Waste and Abundance in Beckett and DeLillo', *SubStance*, 37.2 (2008).
[23] Ibid., p. 8-9.

suggest otherwise – seems all the more valid, the increased emphasis on consumerism creating 'the paradoxical situation of postindustrial capitalism where only the appeal to compete infinitely in unproductive consumption […] allows for the development of production'.[24]

Packer's journey through the city is what we might term a sovereign journey, a day-long blow-out which occurs as he moves through the urban landscape in that transcendent micro-cosmos which is a limousine. The journey is, essentially, one of wealth and privilege. This, then, is not a godly form of transcendence, but, rather, a weak one which is concerned solely with the power resulting from the accumulation of capital. It is not merely Packer's super-rich status which confers on him and the limousine a transcendent status, though. Rather, it is the ability to squander the resources of the planet with ease, to send the effects of his actions ricocheting across the globe. Taking the link with the era of sovereignty (loosely defined) further, we might draw an additional parallel here with the way in which Zygmunt Bauman has described the current capitalist system in relation to the 'absentee landlords of yore'. According to Bauman, there is 'a new asymmetry emerging between [the] extraterritorial nature of power and the continuing territoriality of the "whole life"'. This is expressed best in relation to the absentee landlord, the difference for today's financial elite being that 'thanks to the new mobility of their now liquid resources, [they] do not face limits sufficiently real [...] to enforce compliance' (these limits being expressed best in the situated nature of the estate).[25] Whilst not strictly a reference to the idea of sovereignty then, one can see here how certain tropes associated with this era have become more potent. Bauman's analysis also conforms here to the notion of two separate

[24] Jean-Joseph Goux, 'General Economics and Postmodern Capitalism', *Yale French Studies*, 78 (1990), p. 219. Bataille thought the 'bourgeois world' was instead 'the expression of somnolence', as opposed to the exuberance associated with economies geared toward unproductive expenditures. Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share*, *Volume I*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Zone Books, 2007), p. 137.

[25] Bauman, *Globalization*, pp. 9-11. For similar arguments see Michael Hardt, 'The Common in Communism', *Rethinking Marxism: A Journal of Economics, Culture and Society*, 22.3 (2010); and Maurizio Lazzarato, *The Making of the Indebted Man: An Essay on Neoliberalism*, trans. Joshua David Jordan (Cambridge, MA and London: Semiotext(e), 2012), p. 99.

territories; that of the extraterritorial and the 'whole' or the world as such, and there are evident resonances here with Packer's miniature world.

In light of the reading of *Cosmopolis* advanced here we should, to an extent, read an additional aspect of the novel against the grain. Whilst Packer is in conversation with one of his colleagues, it is suggested that 'the market culture is total', and that any resistance to it is merely incorporated back into the system, thereby suggesting that 'there is no outside' (*C* 90). The formulation is of course by now familiar and we are reminded of the various instances in which it occurred in the previous two chapters. What *Cosmopolis* suggests instead – through a certain configuration of space – is a definite outside to the market culture, one which is situated at the power-end. This is expressed through the various appeals toward the transcendent in the text, whereby a small world reaches out to the globe as a whole, the former having the ability to determine the fate of the latter.

The Cab as Cosmos

Similar themes find their way into *The Book of Dave*. The novel's protagonist – Dave – is a London cab driver whose various journeys through the city form a major part of the novel, along with the loss of his son and wife through divorce. At some point, fuelled by depression resulting from being unable to see his son and having entered into a form of psychosis, Dave decides to commit some of his experiences to paper, in what he calls ' – unconscious of any precedent, devoid of any irony – [...] THE BOOK'.[26] Much of Dave's book is concerned with either the Knowledge (the area of London which cab drivers have to memorise) or ruminations on the loss of his son and his wife, and his proposed (rather misogynistic and bigoted) resolution to such

[26] Will Self, *The Book of Dave* (London: Penguin, 2006), p. 352. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

problems via 'a complete re-evaluation of the way men and women should conduct their lives together' (*BOD* 348). At one point, whilst writing about the Knowledge, Dave imagines himself 'ascending, chattering up over the wide river valley', and becoming a 'Flying I' (*BOD* 346). Whilst flying over London, we are told, Dave 'grasped the metropolis in its entirety, he held in his shaky, nicotine-stained fingers each and every one of the billions of tiny undertakings its inhabitants engaged in. Which, taken in sum, added up to chaos' (*BOD* 347). This fantasy of transcendence, of being able to grasp the totality from an overarching position, is linked to the fact that Dave imagines himself as his 'own prophet' (*BOD* 345) when writing his book; in his mind, then, Dave reaches the state of the divine by virtue of the memorisation of the streets and landmarks of London.

In addition to the episode here, transcendence develops into an overarching theme in other parts of the book.[27] The novel is split into two parts, each with a distinct time-frame. The part distinct from Dave's is set sometime in the future, in the 5th century AD, the acronym in this case standing not for Anno Domini, but 'After Dave' (*BOD* 1). By a strange turn of events, Dave's book has actually become a sacred text, its tenets and themes permeating the way life is lived in this future scenario. The first glimpse of this scenario is the main setting for this half of the narrative, that of the island of Ham (*BOD* 1), which stands where the now Hampstead does. On Ham, Dave's cabbie jargon and slang has been transcribed onto everyday speech and thought, to the point at which the sky is called a 'screen', and the Milky Way is a 'dashboard'. Dave himself is also up there, 'lookin froo ve screen', as one character says (*BOD* 22), at the inhabitants of Ham, and the whole of Ing, as England has come to be named. The common

[27] For another treatment of the other-worldly in Self's fiction, see Will Self, *How the Dead Live* (London: Penguin, 2001).

greeting in Ham is 'ware2, guv' (*BOD* 3), and the names of certain routes which pertain to the Knowledge are read out in the manner of prayer and incantation.

In what is perhaps a partial homage to Ballard's *The Drowned World* (1962), in *The Book of Dave* London has been completely transformed through flooding, turning Hampstead into an island, and the centre of the metropolis into a series of lagoons and expanses of ocean.[28] The inhabitants of Ham are part of a society which is markedly feudal, in which people are made to use up the majority of their resources in order to pay high levels of rent to the landowner, or as it is phrased 'substantial tickets' to the 'Hack'. They are depicted as 'beasts of burden' (*BOD* 174, 488), and are 'broken on the wheel', a huge torture device in the shape of a steering wheel (*BOD* 171, 187). Russell Hoban's *Riddley Walker* (1980) can also be cited as an influence here. But whereas Hoban's novel features a series of metaphysical tropes related to an apocalyptic event precipitated by nuclear war, the cause of such an event is left relatively unclear in *The Book of Dave*, at least in terms of the inhabitants' knowledge of it (even though we might well speculate that it has something to do with global warming).[29] The metaphysical and/or transcendent tropes are still present, but these are related almost solely to Dave, his cab, and as we shall see also the world in which he lived.

As with Packer's limousine, the taxi in Self's novel is given the privileged status of a micro-cosmos. The small world of the taxi-cab becomes a unifying force in which (rather like the cosmos of Antiquity) heavens and earth intermingle with each other. It is the disjuncture, however, between the space of Dave's cab and the sky and planets themselves, which leads us back to the idea of the micro-cosmos. The heavens in *The Book of Dave* are always related back to the small space of the automobile; indeed, for the inhabitants of the novel, the heavens are not

[28] J. G. Ballard, *The Drowned World* (London: Fourth Estate, 2011).
[29] Russell Hoban, *Riddley Walker* (London: Bloomsbury, 2002). As with Self's novel, the metaphysical elements in *Riddley Walker* are also worked into an imaginary dialect of English.

shaped like an orb at all, but like a car. This process is cemented by the constant exchange between chapters dealing with the roughly contemporary world of Dave and his work as a cab driver, and the future, post-apocalyptic world of the car-cosmos. M. John Harrison has suggested that *The Book of Dave* is 'a mapping that works both ways, not just of one topography on to another but one time on to another, one culture on to another, one psychic space on to another – a psychogeography summed up in the subtitle, "revelation of the Recent Past and Distant Future"'.[30] The same goes, then, for the space of the car, its topography being transferred (from Dave's narrative) onto the sky or heavens (in the future world), thereby transforming the heavens into a micro-cosmos in the shape of a car. The form of psychogeography identified by Harrison – a kind of science-fiction version of something like Ian Sinclair's own brand of psychogeography – is also one which would fit with the general model of transcendence being discussed in this chapter, expressed by divergent worlds (temporal, spatial, cultural, and so on) which dip in and out of one another.[31]

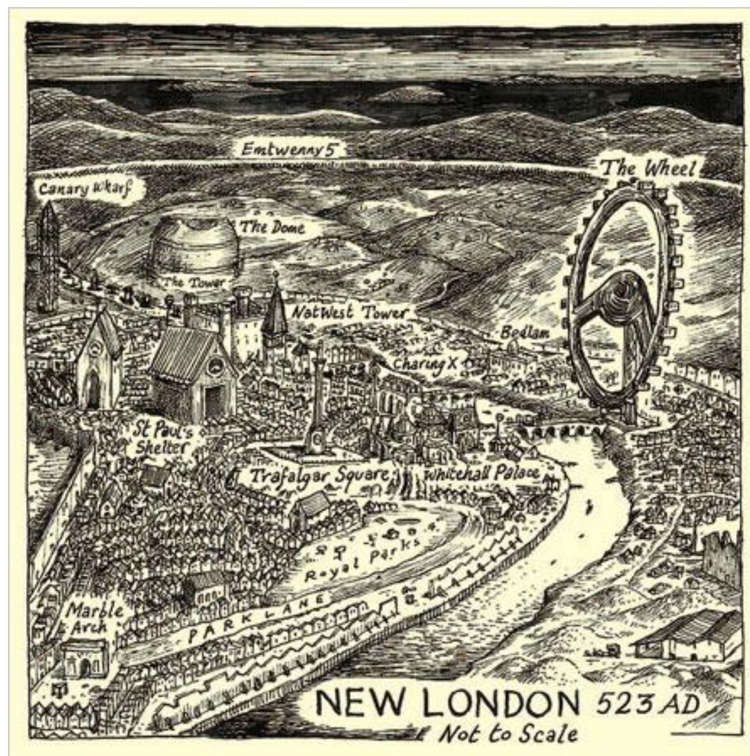
Botched Mimesis

That a taxi is elevated to the status of the transcendent is somewhat ridiculous in itself, and we might well leave any argument at this which seeks to explicate the way in which *The Book of Dave* mocks the notion of transcendence and its effects. But there is another sense in which the novel discredits, or undoes this. In some sense, *The Book of Dave* can be read as working out the logic and potential consequences of reconstructing events from their remnants, of a whole being

[30] M. John Harrison, 'The Gospel According to Dave', *Guardian* (May 2006), <http/www.guardian.co.uk/books/2006/may/27/fiction.hayfestival2006>.

[31] Iain Sinclair often views the contemporary space of London and its surroundings through the lens of historical events and structures. See Iain Sinclair, *Lights Out for the Territory: 9 Excursions in the Secret History of London* (London: Granta Books, 1998); and Iain Sinclair, *London Orbital: A Walk Round the M25* (London and New York: Penguin, 2003). For Self's own psychogeographical writings see Will Self and Ralph Steadman, *Psychogeography* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007).

created from a part. That part is Dave's book, along with its main subjects of the topography of London and the taxi. The novel, then, is not only concerned with the destruction of London, but also its rebuilding. What is termed 'New London' is constructed somewhere north of the archipelago, and makes for a very rough copy of the original (*BOD* 357). There are various alterations, including, for example, the millennium wheel being shaped like a huge steering wheel, as shown on the map below. What once partly inspired Dave's writings on the Knowledge has become a rather different city, built in a completely different location. Through being documented, or represented in some way, then, the structure of things (in this case London) is fundamentally altered. Rather than a strict mimetic system, we are dealing with an affective relationship with the city, in which the latter undergoes various alterations as a result of the impact it once had on Dave during a period of psychosis.



New London in *The Book of Dave*

From this point of view, then, the reconstruction of events and structures in the novel is also that which questions the notion of transcendence it puts forward. The association between the two in Self's novel, between mimesis and transcendence, is made clear through the fact that Dave becomes not only the resident deity of Ing, but also becomes the model, through his various writings concerned with the Knowledge and the jargon of the taxi driver, for the reconstruction and re-enactment of London and its navigation. We are very close here, then, to a Platonic system, in which there exists an ideal form of the object (say, a bed or in this case a city), one which is created by a God.[32] It is this particular model which is ultimately questioned in *The Book of Dave*, a task which is again achieved in general terms through the juxtaposition of time frames. As M. Hunter Hayes has pointed out, 'rather than a new Iron Age the residents of Ham, Chil, New London, and all of Ingerland exist in an Ironic Age, from the misprision stemming from the eponymous text to iron's renaming as "irony"'.[33] To add to this, we can say that the form of irony to be found in *The Book of Dave* hinges on the discrepancy between the two worlds of the novel, a discrepancy which ultimately undoes the form of transcendence proposed in it.

The questioning of the transcendent model in Self's novel allows us to reflect briefly on the situation outlined in *Cosmopolis*. We can read DeLillo's novel, broadly, as offering an exposition of the dynamics of power within the global, neoliberal model. This exposition, however, has its own, inherent drawbacks. To give something a transcendent quality, as is undertaken with Packer and his limousine, is to suggest that it is wholly necessary, to posit it as an immovable force. In uncovering a dynamic of power, then, DeLillo's novel runs the risk of suggesting that this form of power and the unequal relations it creates is part of the immutable

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[32] Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Desmond Lee (London and New York: Penguin, 1987), p. 424.
[33] M. Hunter Hayes, *Understanding Will Self* (Columbia: South Carolina UP, 2007), p. 173.

order of things, that any suffering which has arisen as a result was necessary and unavoidable. Whilst the model of transcendence in *Cosmopolis* serves to draw our attention toward the dynamics of power in operation in the contemporary climate, and provides a certain way of conceptualising them, this comes with its own risks. That *The Book of Dave* conforms to such a model, but simultaneously rejects it, provides a rather more sophisticated approach toward the transcendent, and its various spatial affinities. As outlined, this mode of transcendence is related directly to an oppressive regime, and in this sense the book might be said to be making a general comment on the falsity of totalitarian systems which often rely on such tropes (such as the transcendent, or a system of ideal forms) for the maintenance of power. But the standpoint toward the transcendent can also be read in relation to more specific aspects of the novel, and to some further aspects of the contemporary world-system.

World City

It is not merely the car which takes on a transcendent status in *The Book of Dave*, but also the city. This has already been touched on briefly. As a further example, we might cite what is called in the novel 'The Sentrul Stack', a series of large ruins protruding out of the sea, which are actually the remnants of old London's financial district. The tops of the skyscrapers are still visible to the people of Ham, who view them as 'natural features' and ascribe a 'brooding personality' to them (*BOD* 131). There are local legends about the stack, and visits to it are considered to be of a divine, or 'dävine' nature (*BOD* 60). There is a ritual carried out on these semi-submerged pieces of architecture, in which a male inhabitant must jump from one piece of The Stack to another. This marks both the passage to manhood, and confers on the person who undertakes the act a certain sense of privilege (*BOD* 129-130). The recounting of the jump

between the two towers becomes an integral part of the ritual also, it being ‘a vital addition to the story the community told itself, one of the humans spitting in the indifferent face of nature’ (*BOD* 139). All this suggests that the old financial area of the city is a definitive part of the transcendent aspect of this future world. This, however, also invites us to posit what kind of a take the novel provides on the current status of the city, the ‘Sentrul Stack’ not only being a site of ritual for the inhabitants of Ham, but also a recognisable aspect of London today. The transformed nature, in other words, of London’s skyscrapers allows us to extract a concept of the way in which urban space, in the relief of the capitalist world-system, is configured today.

If the city takes part in the transcendent aspects of the novel, then we are perhaps moving close here to the heavenly upper regions of the city in Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis* (1927). The spatial dynamics, however, are somewhat different. *Metropolis* gives us what is now perhaps a classic filmic model of a city which contains both an earthly, lower level and a heavenly one, the level of the workers and the leisurely ruling-class respectively.[34] This is a model of the city as cosmos, then, the lower part of the metropolis and its upper echelons forming together their own, integrated world. Self’s novel, by contrast, gives us a city which (through its transformation into an object of ritual) still retains an element of the transcendent and the overarching, and yet remains at a fixed point within the landscape. This is still, however, a point which spreads itself out, in the sense that it structures the ways in which the inhabitants of Ham experience their daily lives. From this point of view, the city becomes another micro-cosmos, another world which dips in and out of the world at-large, secreting its essence as it does so.

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[34] *Metropolis*, dir. Fritz Lang (Practice Communications, 2006).

The heavenly part of the city in *Metropolis*

But if the re-configured financial centre in *The Book of Dave* does not share the same spatial dynamics with *Metropolis*, it nevertheless makes a similar point when it comes to class, and power relations. If we view the version of the city in Self's novel as a comment on the current, actual city, then this would surely be in relation to its status as a capital of financial trade, from where the fate of the entire world-system can be determined. The transcendence in play, then, serves to highlight the position of dominance over and against an entire world population. Indeed, as we have seen, this is something that David Harvey has commented on in relation to the configuration of the current geo-political moment. As he puts it, 'the need for accurate information and speedy communication has emphasized the role of so-called "world cities" in the financial and corporate system'. The erasure of spatial barriers brought about through teletechnologies and the logic of capital brings about, according to Harvey, a 'reaffirmation and realignment of hierarchy within what is now a global urban system'.[35] In a similar vein, Saskia Sassen has posited that, contrary to the pervasive understanding of decentralised operations when it comes to multi-nationals and the like, the logic of today's global

[35] David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, p. 295.

economy goes hand in hand with 'centralised service nodes for the management and regulation of the new space economy'. Consequently, 'through finance more than through other international flows, a global network of cities has emerged, with New York, London and Tokyo and today also Frankfurt and Paris the leading cities'.[36]

Writing specifically in relation to London, Doreen Massey too has taken on this notion of the world city, tying this particular 'spatial reorganisation' with the economic reorganisation inherent in the birth of neoliberalism. But there are a number of problems with such a conceptualisation, and Massey charts these quite systematically. First, one would have to concede that this is an almost solely Western affair, the nevertheless huge cities outside of such a framework not figuring on the map of the world city. The discourse of the world city, then, 'mobilises universalist assumptions that obscure the fact of situatedness'.[37] If the world city is 'a global centre of command, playing a crucial role in framing the world economy in neoliberal form', then this picture is also a rather one-sided view of the urban environment, in terms of its status at a local and a global level. [38] Indeed, the reality for the majority of those who live in urban areas across the globe is one of extreme poverty. Mike Davis highlights this, in pointing out that across the world more than one billion people inhabit what he calls 'postmodern slums', located in and on the periphery of urban centres.[39] This is the dominant, world-wide reality of urbanisation according to Davis, under which, 'instead of cities of light soaring toward heaven, much of the twenty-first century urban world squats in squalor, surrounded by pollution, excrement and decay.[40]

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[36] Sassen, pp. 330-333. See also Paul L. Knox, 'World Cities in a World-System', in *World Cities in a World-System*, ed. Paul L. Knox and Peter J. Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995), p. 7.
[37] Massey, *World City*, pp. 33-35.
[38] Ibid., p. 39.
[39] Mike Davis, *Planet of Slums* (London and New York: Verso, 2006), p. 2.
[40] Ibid., p. 7.

If *The Book of Dave* fits in with the model of the world city as elucidated above, particularly via its elevation of a financial district of London to a transcendent status, then it also displays some of the scepticism proffered here. We have already seen how the novel discredits the notion of transcendence which it figures, via a botched form of mimesis. If we were to read this strategy in direct relation to the idea of the world city as outlined, then this would entail, simultaneously, a recognition of the way in which cities can become and are being conceptualised as a transcendent prominence, and a realisation that this prominence is if not merely reductive and/or one-sided, then also unfounded when we reach the full heights of an overarching structure of awe and inspiration. In terms of Davis' comments on the slum, one can trace a similarity here too with Self's novel. The village of Ham is, more or less, a slum on the periphery of the ruins of the financial district. It is in this sense, then, that we might interpret the feudal aspects of the novel in relation to the contemporary moment. The novel, in sum, proposes a model of a world city which soars above the everyday landscape of squalor, not unlike today's global make-up of the urban, in which the financial centre is privileged over the rest of both the urban and global geography. To reiterate, though: this soaring nature is one which is always discredited throughout the novel, and we will examine some of the broader, conceptual implications of this further down.

World Picture

Putting aside, for now, this discrediting of transcendence, what *The Book of Dave* and *Cosmopolis* display, in general conceptual terms, is a certain way of viewing the world which we might elucidate through Tim Ingold's questioning of the common phrase 'global environment'. It is evident that what is *not* meant by this phrase is the environment *of* the globe, or that which

encompasses the globe. Instead, as Ingold puts it, 'it is *our* environment' which is evoked here, 'the world as it presents itself to a universal humanity'. Yet this is still a strange, paradoxical formulation, as it suggests that we are surrounded by a globe, when in fact it is us humans who surround the particular globe we inhabit.[41] Ultimately, Ingold thinks the source of this paradox can be traced back to an increased separation of the human from its environment, which is concomitant with an increased awareness of the Earth as a globe, as an object of thinking: 'with the world imagined as a globe, far from coming into being in and through a life process, it figures as an entity that is, as it were, presented to or confronted by life. The global environment is not a lifeworld, it is a world apart from life'.[42] Ingold's view here is strikingly similar to Martin Heidegger's 'world picture', a concept which he used to articulate the Modern propensity to conceive of the world as picture.[43] This propensity can be exemplified through the advent of Modern scientific research, or even historical research, whereby, as Heidegger puts it, 'nature and history become the objects of a representing that explains'.[44] For Heidegger, the Modern age places a priority on 'man's knowing and of his having disposal', on relating to being as a whole through representing or placing things before the human, as opposed to the Medieval world view, whereby to relate to being as a whole means to be *within* a set order ordained by God.[45] Like Ingold's global environment which is a world apart from life, Heidegger's world picture denotes

[41] Tim Ingold, 'Globes and Spheres: The Topology of Environmentalism', in *The Perception of the Environment: Essays in Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 207.
[42] Ibid., p. 210.
[43] Martin Heidegger, 'The Age of the World Picture', in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper Torchbooks), p. 128.
[44] Ibid. p. 127.
[45] Ibid., p. 130.

a separation, an objectification which is at the heart of the way in which the totality of being and life are formed and apprehended.[46]

It is the micro-cosmos in DeLillo's and Self's novels which denotes this way of viewing the world; each way of interacting with the world involves a dynamic of transcendence, whereby the privileged viewpoint opens out onto the whole, and vice-versa. From this point of view, we are dealing not merely with an operation, or relation of power, but also a general mode of conceptualisation, whereby the standard metaphysical notion of transcendence is shrunk down, and folded into the terrestrial globe, whilst simultaneously retaining an inherent element of anthropocentrism.

Moving into the realm of full-blown science fiction, we find some similar means of conceptualisation. Ian Banks' novel *Transition* deals with a group of people who are part of 'the Concern', a world-wide organisation, established over thousands of years, and created to retain order across the globe.[47] World-wide, however, does not refer to just one world, but a multitude of possible Earths, each one being readily accessible to members of the Concern. The novel in this sense reads like a meditation on some of the possible implications of quantum physics. Cities, in this case, provide the prime areas for those members of the Concern who wish to 'transition from one reality to another'.[48] Whilst the universe in *Transition* is described as a 'sphere' which has 'no outside', there is in fact a rather different spatial dynamic in operation when it comes to the multitude of possible Earths available to the Concern.[49] There is one world – the world in which the Concern is based – which is 'close to unique', and is the 'ultimate Open

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[46] For more on this see Martin Heidegger, '"Only a God Can Save Us": *Der Spiegel's* Interview with Martin Heidegger', in *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader*, ed. Richard Wolin (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1998), pp. 105-106.
[47] Iain Banks, *Transition* (London: Abacus, 2011), p. 157.
[48] Ibid., pp. 99-103.
[49] Ibid., p. 122.

world', the prime place from which to make a transition. This is also where 'the true consciousness of a transitioner' remains whilst he makes the transition from this particular world to another; 'there could only be one world', we are told, 'that was perfectly Open, and that unique Earth was this one'.[50]

This 'Open world' is another example of the micro-cosmos; it forms the one privileged point at which one can dip in and out of other worlds, a unique vantage point in the midst of so many versions, mutations and replications. For all the attempts at imagining a world without outside, then, what we end up with is in fact a transcendent version of the quantum.[51] That cities are a site from which the transition to other worlds is best undertaken strikes another similarity with the type of world city described in Self's novel; the urban environment in *Transition* takes part in that privileged capacity which the Open world is endowed with in the novel. The transcendent nature conferred on the unique world in Bank's novel is mirrored, in other words, by the network of cities which facilitate the transition into other worlds. We get a similar view of the world-city here, then, as we did in *The Book of Dave*, and which is propagated in *Cosmopolis*, as we shall see shortly. This particular appeal toward the transcendent, however, is a disavowed one, stripped too of the incredulity on display in Self's novel. *Transition* does not offer an ironic, or even a very self-conscious meditation on the transcendent. Conceptualising the world-city in this way, then, runs the risk of creating a model which is transposed onto our own supposed centres of global command and control, of unwittingly imbuing the city, and the global force of control in our own world-system, with a transcendent status. Indeed, with their ability to flit in and out of other worlds, and even other peoples' bodies, the members of the Concern seem

[50] Ibid., p. 247.
[51] For a different, albeit related example of the mixture of the transcendent, the metaphysical, and the quantum in contemporary fiction see Jeanette Winterson, *Weight* (Edinburgh: Canongate Books, 2006).

like they have access to the extra-territorial potency of Being itself, a Being which would seem all too easily analogous to what Fredric Jameson calls ‘the massive Being of capital’.[52]

Neil Blomkamp’s *Elysium* offers another larger-scale version of the interplay between micro and macro.[53] In this case, the micro-cosmos is a satellite in a future Earth’s orbit, a satellite built to house the remaining minority of the super-rich, the rest of the population being left to wallow in an environmentally ravaged planet, along with severe levels of poverty and an oppressive police-state. The class dynamics could not be clearer here, then, along with the transcendent aspects of the micro-cosmos in question, with its overarching presence in relation to the whole of the Earth, and its other-worldly, heavenly title. There is even a properly eschatological ending, whereby the inhabitants of Earth and Elysium are united, both through gaining equal citizenship and having access to panacea technology which is itself denied or awarded through computer-network technology. We might follow, then, Christopher Holliday’s interpretation of the film, as being ‘not about the future, but about a world we already know’.[54] But the transcendent motifs on display here make it so that we have to view this world made up of two unequal worlds as a certain *conceptualisation* of our own world, or even the Earth itself.

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[52] Jameson, *Postmodernism,* p. 47. The claim gains further credibility through another of Banks’ novels. *The Business* (1999) deals with a capitalist organisation which has been around since the beginnings of the Roman Empire, and has its hand in various world-events. The Business, then, seems rather similar to The Concern in *Transition*. Iain Banks, *The Business* (London: Abacus, 2000). Whilst Phillip E. Wegner suggests that *Transition* gives us ‘a commentary on our own emerging global situation’, the perspective being offered here offers something different, in that it enables us to focus on the more general operation of the capitalist world-system, and how the novel fits in with this, as opposed to Wegner’s focus on US imperialism. Phillip E. Wegner, ‘Detonating New Shockwaves of Possibility: Alternate Histories and the Geopolitical Aesthetics of Ken MacLeod and Iain M. Banks’, *The New Centennial Review*, 13.2 (2013), pp. 19, 24.
[53] *Elysium*, dir. Neil Blomkamp (Sony Pictures, 2013).
[54] Christopher Holliday, ‘Elysium by Neil Blomkamp (review)’, *Science Fiction Film and Television*, 7.3 (2014), p. 434.

A view of Earth and Elysium in *Elysium*

Putting a transcendent cadence on things leads to two main implications. The first is that the suffering undergone by the inhabitants of the Earth appears in this light as a necessary ill on the road to the final eschatological terminus, and in this sense the film's political message would be one of a quiet stoicism, or better a Christian acceptance of the status quo in the belief that all of humanity will be levelled at the transcendent end-point. This viewpoint, of course, discourages political action in the here and now, and discourages from addressing the type of inequality which *Elysium* itself portrays. The second implication here is a more fully conceptually-orientated one. If *Elysium* and *Transition* both also take part in the schema of the world picture, then this would initially appear to be in a slightly different way to *The Book of Dave* and *Cosmopolis*, as the former two pieces offer a world picture from a vantage point outside the Earth, at a small remove from the planet's interior; in other words, they offer not just a version of the world picture, but also a picture of the world. A picture of the world and the world (as) picture cannot be directly equated with one another, but, as Charlie Gere points out, 'it would seem obvious that making pictures of the Earth is only possible in a time when the world is conceived as a picture, with the concomitant emergence of the human as subject, with the

world standing at its disposal'.[55] We can therefore incorporate Banks' and Blomkamp's works into the logic of the world picture, but the slight difference between these works and others makes clear the mutation of this logic in the contemporary world. The key point to be made here about these works is that they still remain, ultimately, concerned with the bounds of the terrestrial, albeit being at a very slight remove from this. Thus, the micro-cosmos in *Elysium* remains within the orbit of Earth, whilst the multiple planets in *Transition* are always just variants of our own planet. These works figure, then, a transcendence which remains ultimately within the bounds of the terrestrial, and, additionally, remains ultimately anthropocentric. The realm of infinite potential resides within the folds of the Earth, and in this sense what we have here is a variation of the incorporation of the infinite into the bounds of the terrestrial, as explored in Chapter 1. Indeed, the scenarios presented in all of the pieces thus far explored propose a similar scenario to what Hans Blumenberg sees as one of the main outcomes of what was originally set in motion by the Copernican revolution, which brought about the possibility of space-travel in the human conceptual apparatus.[56] Faced with the barrenness – organic, somatic, and noetic – of the world outside Earth, realised following the various space explorations undertaken in the twentieth century, Blumenberg thought that we were forced to turn back toward Earth, to accept that 'for man there are no alternatives to Earth, just as for reason there are no alternatives to human reason'.[57] By creating a world picture at a slight remove from the Earth, what *Transition* and *Elysium* draw our attention toward is the anthropocentrism and the

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[55] Charlie Gere, 'The Incredible Shrinking Human', in *Criticism, Crisis, and Contemporary Narrative: Textual Horizons in an Age of Global Risk*, ed. Paul Crosthwaite (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 50.

[56] Hans Blumenberg, *The Genesis of the Copernican World*, trans. Robert M. Wallace (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1987), p. 675.

[57] Ibid., p. 685. Benjamin Lazier has historicised this view, incorporating it into what he calls the 'Earthrise' era, named after the famous image of Earth, itself entitled 'Earthrise', released in 1968 following an Apollo space mission. As Lazier puts it, '"Earthrise" and its kin [...] "reterrestrialized" the globe. They turned the globe back into Earth'. Benjamin Lazier, 'Earthrise; or, The Globalization of the World Picture', *The American Historical Review*, 116.3 (2011), p. 623.

terracentrism still inherent in our conceptualisations of the global *despite* our knowledge of the outside of Earth, and our ability to produce an actual picture of the latter. Consequently, our view of the infinite remains folded within the bounds of the Earth, just as it is in the various other examples we have discussed in this chapter.

Singularity?

In response to the types of transcendence identified in *Elysium* and *Transition*, we can identify three main schemas of the transcendent, all of which have their own politico-philosophical implications. The first, most sophisticated schema is found in *The Book of Dave* which, whilst it appeals towards the transcendent in articulating a concept of the global related to power and class-relations, ultimately discredits the very basis on which this was formed. A transcendent motif is built up only to be destroyed, the ultimate message being that class and power relationships are not in themselves necessary functions within a pre-ordained, ordered cosmos. The second schema is found in *Elysium* and *Cosmopolis*, whereby a transcendent dynamic between the micro-cosmos and the world at-large is created, thereby producing a certain conceptualisation of the global, and of global power relations. Whilst this helps in identifying the sites of power and domination, however, there is a potential problem here, in that to give something a transcendent quality makes it appear wholly necessary, and the same goes for all the inequalities and suffering this may create. The final model is found in *Transition*, whereby a transcendent motif is set in place unwittingly, and has the potential to imbue our conceptual apparatus itself with the idea of a transcendent micro-cosmos, a site of privilege and command to which the rest of the earthly population reacts.

Cosmopolis, for its part, manages to retain a degree of complexity within its own schema, and this is made evident in two main aspects of the text, the second of which allows us to trace further a common theme running throughout the thesis. The title of the novel almost makes it mandatory for us to discuss what type of world city is given in *Cosmopolis*. A clue to this is given, again, in the form of some bank towers. These are described by Packer as being

> made to be the last tall things, made empty, designed to hasten the future. They were the end of the outside world. They weren't here exactly. They were in the future, a time beyond geography and touchable money and people who stack and count it (*C* 36).

The bank towers here take on a spectral presence, neither wholly in the present, nor wholly in the future, bridging the gap between the potential and the actual. Peter Boxall reads these buildings as the two towers which constituted the former World Trade Center. As he has it, these towers 'appear throughout DeLillo's oeuvre as a kind of delicate antenna, as a radio tuned in to tomorrow, a structure that can somehow negotiate between the spacetime of the twentieth century, and the unanchored time of electronic global capital'.[58] In this case, the towers can be read as preparing 'for their vanishing act', hence their spectral nature.[59]

Retaining Boxall's idea of the towers being 'a radio tuned into tomorrow', and yet setting aside the towers' possible allusion to the World Trade Center, we can suggest that, if the towers bridge the gap between the potential and the actual, then this would indeed (as Boxall implies) point to a scenario in which two time frames are in some way being negotiated. But it also confers on the towers the ability to enter into an alternative state, which is in this case framed as a potential state. With one foot in the present and another in the future, these buildings would

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[58] Peter Boxall, *Don DeLillo: The Possibility of Fiction* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 223.

[59] Ibid., p. 223. In some ways, this is similar to Jean Baudrillard's 'reading' of the twin towers, post 9/11. Baudrillard wants to make the point that the towers have become a total media spectacle, again tying in here with the 'unanchored time of global capital', to which we might add the unanchored time of global spectacle. As Baudrillard puts it, the twin-towers' 'end in material space has borne them off into a definitive imaginary space'. Jean Baudrillard, 'Requiem for the Twin Towers', in *The Spirit of Terrorism and Other Essays*, trans. Chris Turner (London and New York: Verso, 2002), p. 48.

seem to be in the process of entering another, alternate world, one which is rather like some of the descriptions of our current world. Again, though, we should read against the grain of the novel to an extent here. It is evident that the towers are not, in fact, the end of the outside world, but actually a site which bridges the gap between two qualitatively different worlds, between an actual present and a potential future. It is not, then, that the novel proposes here that geography has been wholly done away with, the bank towers appearing as 'immaterial "nodes" in the universe of digital capital', as Crosthwaite puts it.[60] What is at stake instead is an element of the city (in this case the financial centre) which is both part of the present world and not, both material and immaterial. If the scenario proposed here is one in which the gap between two worlds is bridged, then the city, or the financial centre, begins to take on some of the qualities of Packer's limousine. The financial centre in *Cosmopolis*, then, instead of being a thing of the past, is figured as something akin to the micro-cosmos in the novel, as a world city in the sense used above.

This contradiction, or discrepancy between two different worlds (one material and the other immaterial, one the locus of power and the other the world at-large, one the site or the ground of potential and the other the place where its effects are felt) is carried further in the more technologically orientated aspects of the novel. Throughout the novel, there are various moments in which it is suggested that the self is being fused with media and digital technologies, the scenarios whereby these technologies anticipate Packer's movements and the events in which he is involved being pertinent examples of this. This is most overtly expressed at the end of DeLillo's book, when Packer undergoes his ambiguous death. When Benno Levin shoots Packer, both the shot he fires and Packer's death are only ever realised in the screen of the latter's watch, the camera of which, we are told, is 'almost metaphysics' (*C* 204). In the final paragraph of the

[60] Paul Crosthwaite, 'Fiction in the Age of the Global Accident: Don DeLillo's *Cosmopolis*', *Static*, 7 (2008), p. 5.

novel, Packer is left ‘dead inside the crystal of his watch but still alive in original space, waiting for the shot to sound’ (*C* 209). There is a sense, then, that Packer’s actual death is trying to catch up with the screen of the watch, that the privileged domain of events is in fact a new, digital hinterland, a point of origin from which the everyday takes it cue. This view of the digital as another realm into which the human can be smuggled in fits with an attitude which Margaret Wertheim links with the history and development of religious cosmology. In the contemporary era, as Wertheim puts it, ‘the electronic gates of the silicon chip have become, in a sense, a metaphysical gateway, for our modems transport us out of the reach of physicists’ equations into an entirely “other” realm’.[61]

Whilst this parallel is a valid one, it misses out the particularly anthropocentric character of this interaction between the human and its prostheses. In order to tackle this, we are lead back to theorists like de Chardin, who as we have seen proposed a theory of what he called the omega point, that true essence of things which is reached through the increasing complexity and inter-relatedness of humanity and its prostheses on a global scale.[62] In effect, de Chardin saw the whole of the universe as a disparate form of consciousness, gradually being cobbled together into what he called a ‘super-Brain’, an alternative way of referring to the omega point.[63] Steven Connor has traced this idea back to Schelling’s and Hegel’s versions of the ‘world-soul’, or *Weltgeist*, and in general to the system of thought known as ‘Naturphilosophie’. As Connor puts it, ‘we have witnessed a remarkable return of Naturphilosophie in the twentieth century’, and this is exemplified best through thinkers like de Chardin and Vladimir Ivanovich Vernadsky, both of

[61] Margaret Wertheim, *The Pearly Gates of Cyberspace: A History of Space from Dante to the Internet* (London: Virago Press, 2000), p. 226.
[62] de Chardin, ‘Life and the Planets’, pp.111-116.
[63] de Chardin, ‘The Formation of the Noosphere’, p. 162.

whom employed the concept of the 'noosphere' in their thought.[64] A contemporary correlate of these ideas is the notion of the 'Singularity', which is what Ray Kurzweil (amongst others) has used to designate a future point at which humans break out of their biological constraints, and are able to undergo a fusion between mind and technological prostheses.[65] If we can see Packer's watch as being an emblem for the fusion between the human and its prostheses, then we can read this alongside de Chardin's omega point, or in more contemporary terms the notion of the Singularity. All of these instances are concerned with a moment of transcendence, an eschatological end-point at which human and machine, mind and information become one. *Cosmopolis* adds to this discourse by highlighting the power relations involved not only in a potential fusion between the technological and the human, but also in relation to the digital and the culture of information in general. Packer, at least in terms of the dynamic between him and Benno Levin, remains in a position of power, even at the point of his death, which itself is imbued with a transcendent status. This death, then, comes to be associated with the various other aspects of the transcendent in the novel, and the movement toward the fusion between mind and machine is thus put in the light of privilege and power, as opposed to a moment of liberatory levelling as it so often is.

To extrapolate the broader conceptual point here, it is clear that this moment in the text, along with its wider inter-texts, fits in with the idealist strain of the Global Brain, identified in the previous chapter. What initially seems to be an expression of human finitude and remoteness from the world in these contemporary versions of the world picture tips over into a

[64] Steven Connor, 'I Believe that the World', in *Cultural Ways of Worldmaking: Media and Narratives*, ed. Vera Nünning and others (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2010), p. 34.

[65] Ray Kurzweil, *The Singularity is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology* (London: Gerald Duckworth, 2009). For another fictional treatment of the idea see Charles Stross, *Accelerando* (New York: Ace Books, 2005). For a recent filmic treatment see *Transcendence*, dir. Wally Pfister (EV, 2014). For an essay dealing with some of the ideological problems of the Singularity see Steven Shaviro, 'The Singularity is Here', in *Red Planets: Marxism and Science Fiction*, ed. Mark Bould and China Miéville (London: Pluto Press, 2009).

conceptualisation of the global which has a radiant human at its centre, along with a transcendent end-point or transition. This is particularly clear in the case of *Cosmopolis*, through the hints toward technological fusion and the links with concepts such as the Singularity. But it is also the case with all of the materials discussed in this chapter. The over-riding issue here – as in previous chapters – is a development of a way of viewing the world in its totality, a re-instatement of the human on the level of the infinite within the horizon of our own historical juncture.

The Glocal, or Cosmopolitanism, pt. 1.

A final, more general spatial dynamic present in all of the materials discussed here allows us to demonstrate more fully the implications of the ways of conceptualising the global in this case. The incongruences identified between small and large in this chapter, between a micro-cosmos and the world at-large, indicate what many have termed a 'glocal' way of thinking, one which, as Roland Robertson phrases it, involves 'the inter-penetration of what are conventionally called the global and the local, or in more general terms the universal and the particular'.[66] The various small-scale transcendences identified (whether it be a limousine, a taxi, a city, or a planet) proffer a local site which is always embroiled in the global, and the converse; as stated a number of times now, we are dealing with a scenario in which two opposing, unequal worlds enter and exit one another. That Eric Packer is, by his own admission, 'a World Citizen with a New York pair of balls' (*C* 26) is not just an off-hand, chauvinistic remark. It also projects a glocal dynamic onto the body, one which emphasises a dynamic of power. It speaks of being at once part of the mass of the global and at the same time an autonomous and in this case testosterone-fuelled

[66] Roland Robertson, 'Globalisation or Glocalisation?', *Journal of International Communication*, 18.2 (2012), p. 196.

individual who is in a position of dominance. It also speaks of being a world citizen by virtue of a specific, local location, which is in this case New York. In this sense, also, and in the wider sense of the idea of the micro-cosmos, the local is that which defines the global. But this reverses the assumptions made by the theorists of the glocal, as local is usually defined as something like everyday relations, something set apart from universalist, capitalistic relations, a notion which is demonstrated by Robertson's evocation of the universal and the particular. That these two are mixed in the notion of the glocal is part of an effort to identify what influence the local has within global relations and how the former might be empowered, instead of putting the emphasis purely on the latter. It is in this spirit that Edward Soja suggests that 'interjecting the local into the global (and vice-versa)' poses 'a disruptive challenge to the widespread view that globalisation and localisation [...] are separate and opposing ways of thinking'.[67]

The local, in other words, is rendered in the figure of the micro-cosmos a site of power, that which configures overall global relations, that which functions as their driving-force. If the spirit of the local is altered here, then this has something further to do with the notion of a world citizen. Indeed, a brief examination of the connotations of this term and some of its history, will serve to establish a link between the glocal and the cosmopolitan outlook. This will in turn allow the concept of the micro-cosmos to be thought through more fully. From here, some of the implications of glocalism and its links with cosmopolitanism can be assessed.

It was Diogenes the Cynic who first declared himself a cosmopolitan. As Diogenes Laertius (the Ancient biographer) records, 'asked where he [Diogenes the Cynic] came from, he said, "I am a citizen of the world [*κοσμοπολίτης* – literally, world citizen, or cosmopolitan]"'.[68]

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[67] Edward Soja, *Postmetropolis: Critical Studies of Cities and Regions* (Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), p. 199.
[68] Diogenes Laertius, *The Lives and Opinions of the Eminent Philosophers*, trans. R. D. Hicks (London: William Heinemann, 1958), pp. 64-65.

As John L. Moles has pointed out, the statement can either be read as an affirmation of non-citizenship ('world' cancelling out 'citizen'), or as an affirmation of an intimate connection with the cosmos in its entirety, the 'Cynic "state" (*politeia*) or ground of citizenship' being 'nothing other than a moral "state": that is the "state" of being a Cynic'.[69] This latter connotation of the term was taken up by the Stoics, who thought that it was Reason, that spark of the divine in humans, which united all of humanity in an all-encompassing world-city.[70] The mass of humanity, then, spanning the globe, is connected to each citizen and its ground by virtue of universal Reason; from a single, individual point, the entire population of the cosmos is linked together. The Stoic concept of the cosmopolitan is made particularly stark in Hierocles' notion of an ever-widening series of circles, which start with the individual and their immediate milieu, moving onto the town and the nation, and eventually on to the 'whole human race'. The goal, then, for a 'well-tempered man' would be to 'draw the circles together somehow toward the centre'.[71] By drawing the circles of milieu together, by creating a form of world citizenship, one connects with the whole of humanity, and yet at the same time re-establishes the ground of the individual within the world-encompassing.

In this light, the glocal becomes very similar to the Cynic and related Stoic concept of cosmopolitanism. Both notions conflate the global and the local, the universal and the particular, the individual and the world. Drawing the cosmos into the ground of the individual and their intimate surroundings and thereby mixing them up, is akin here to the notion of the glocal in which (in contemporary terms) the global is drawn into the local and vice-versa. The main

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[69] John L. Moles, 'Cynic Cosmopolitanism', in *The Cynics: The Cynic Movement in Antiquity and its Legacy*, ed. R. Bracht Branham and Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé (Berkeley and London: California UP, 1996), p. 111.
[70] See, for example, Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, trans. Maxwell Staniforth (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964), p. 65; or, for a summary see Martha C. Nussbaum, 'Kant and Stoic Cosmopolitanism', *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, 5.1 (1997), p. 7.
[71] Quoted in A. A. Long and D. D. Sedley, eds, *The Hellenistic Philosphers: Translations of the Principal Sources with Philosophical Commentary* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge UP, 1987), p. 349.

difference, of course, is that we no longer believe in the cosmos, in the way that the Ancients did. Neither is there present in the conception of the glocal any form of divine Reason, providing the basis for the relation between the citizen and the cosmos, and the general order of things. To suggest that capitalism provides something akin to divine Reason in today's world in the way it conditions social and spatial relations is to add nothing new to the debate on the glocal. What the comparison with the Cynic and the Stoic version of cosmopolitanism brings to the discussion, however, is to highlight the elevation of capital in such discourses to a wholly natural, immovable force, one which takes on a quality of the transcendent.

A similar operation is under way in contemporary writings on cosmopolitanism, Ulrich Beck's writings on the subject being a case in point. Again, the driving force of a potential cosmopolitanism is openly acknowledged. Cosmopolitanism, as we are told, 'is accelerated by the dynamics of capital and consumption, empowered by a global market which undermines state borders'.[72] Cosmopolitanism is also, for Beck, directly correlative with the idea of the glocal: it is a 'dialectical process in which the universal and the particular, the similar and the dissimilar, the global and the local are to be conceived [...] as interconnected and reciprocally interpenetrating principles'.[73] It is only in a 'transnational framework', as Beck elsewhere suggests, that these 'glocal' questions, questions, that is, which are part of the cosmopolitan outlook, can be posed.[74] Whilst Beck is at pains to stress that his conception of the cosmopolitan is not philosophically orientated, it is hard not to assess it on these terms, not least due to the wealth of philosophical background which pertains to such a concept.[75] The equation made here

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[72] Ulrich Beck, *Cosmopolitan Vision*, trans. Ciaran Cronin (Cambridge and Malden, MA: Polity, 2006), p. 72.
[73] Ibid., p. 73.
[74] Ulrich Beck, *World Risk Society* (Cambridge and Malden, MA: Polity, 2005), p. 15.
[75] Beck states, for example, that cosmopolitanism 'has left the realm of philosophical castles in the air and has entered reality'. Beck, *Cosmopolitan Vision*, p. 2.

between glocalism and cosmopolitanism suggests already (in light of the above remarks) a link with the Ancient way of conceptualising cosmopolitanism in the era of a divine cosmos. The global and the local interpenetrate one another, and this is all by virtue of the now fully-formed international capitalist network. Beck even supplements the argument here with an appeal toward the dialectic. There is a trace of the dialectic, particularly in the Stoic conception of the cosmos (one which Hegel turns to, eventually, in his own philosophy): the movement and desired interpenetration between universal and particular, between the ground of the individual and the cosmos itself is perpetuated by Reason, that spark of the divine. That the motor of this dialectic in the cosmopolitan outlook is – almost unequivocally – identified as being capital itself, portrays not only a political-conceptual vortex, but also a way of viewing the current political system as itself entirely necessary.

In this respect, then, we find a concrete connection between theories of cosmopolitanism and the dynamics identified in the material throughout this chapter. What is viewed as a liberatory theory which places an emphasis on local, everyday interactions is merely another way of articulating the relations between the universal and the particular within the capitalist world-system. The local becomes merely a function of the very system of which it forms a part, to the point at which we can view its partial reconfiguration in the other materials discussed here not just as an oblique critique of the notion of the glocal or cosmopolitan (achieved through exposing its mirror image), but also as pushing things to their logical conclusion. Hanging over all of this is a conception of the global which is still definitively concerned with an outside, a way of thinking of the totality as that which has a series of infinite potencies folded throughout it. As was pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, this suggests an opposing way of conceptualising the global to the notion of a disappearance of the outside. Overall, we are

presented with a transcendent view of the global, one which ushers in a necessary outside that determines relations across the globe, whether this is in the guise of an all-powerful human figure, a micro-cosmic world, or a radiance of Reason in its various forms and transformations. This does not imply, however, that all of the materials discussed here adhere to a simple view of the totality; indeed, as we have seen, there are various different strategies when it comes to dealing with a conception of the global predicated on transcendence. In the next chapter, we will again encounter some different strategies which tackle some of the problems posed by viewing the global as characterised as an interplay between inside and outside. In effect, we will see again how transcendence can be transfigured, and moulded to suit various different agendas. The main source of transfiguration here, however, develops into its own theme, and that theme is the contingent.

Chapter 4

Contingent Worlds, or Reconfiguring the Absolute

In 1920, George Lukács published *The Theory of the Novel*, which contained that memorable line, proclaiming that 'the novel is the epic of a world abandoned by God'.[1] For Lukács, the novel expressed what he called a 'transcendental homelessness', a radical finitude in which the subject is cut loose from the intimate connection with the world, evident in the older epic forms.[2] Excluded from the previous interaction with the heavens and the world as a whole as in the epic form, the hero in the novel becomes 'merely a necessary secondary figure adorning a totality and contributing to its construction, but remaining only a brick in the edifice, never its centre'.[3] It is subjective interiority which prevails in the novel, and therefore we lose a sense of being connected with the cosmos, along with 'the ability to experience distances as realities'.[4] Almost a century since this book's publication, it would appear that the hero is beginning to break out of the restrictive finitude which Lukács identifies here, having gone through the various realist, modernist and postmodernist permutations of this state itself.

Amongst other instances, the previous chapter exemplified this particularly well, through its identification of the various motifs of transcendence associated with the subject, and the iterations of the idealist strain of a Global Brain which figure a human totality. This chapter is also concerned with a way in which the totality is being re-connected with, via a certain way of

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[1] Georg Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel: A Historico-philosophical Essay on the Forms of Great Epic Literature*, trans. Anna Bostock (London: Merlin Press, 1971), p. 88.
[2] Ibid., p. 41.
[3] Ibid., p. 106.
[4] Ibid., p. 97.

conceptualising the global, and the subject's place within this. The overarching concept in play here is the contingent. This, however, is not the straightforward, postmodern version of the contingent, whereby the absolute is stripped out and covered over.[5] Rather, what we will see in this chapter are some rather different versions of this state and concept, ones which bring back into play a principle of overarching necessity, via various different strategies.

Unlike the previous three chapters, this chapter will look predominantly at the work of one author, whose work ties in with some of the various ways of figuring the global alongside the contingent present in contemporary culture. That author is Ali Smith, and two of her novels – *The Accidental* (2005) and *There but for the* (2012), which in many ways can be read as companion pieces – will be focused on in the main. This being said, we will also follow a brief interval, where an analysis is given of the 2012 film *Cloud Atlas*, which is adapted from David Mitchell's novel of the same name. This will serve to further exemplify the prominence, across cultural forms, of the contingent in the current conceptual apparatus. But it also brings into relief two particular ways of figuring the contingent, which will initially be extracted from Smith's work. The first is to be found in *There but for the*, which gives us a model of contingency which is located at the point of necessity, the two terms undergoing an amalgamation. In the *Accidental*, however, the balance between necessity and contingency is tipped in favour of the former, and we are therefore presented with a version of contingency which always springs from a point of necessity, from an ultimate, seemingly immutable truth.

These two different versions of the contingent chime with, or react against various prominent issues and states inherent in the current world-system, such as a tendency toward

[5] Referring in particular to artistic production, Terry Eagleton makes this point on the postmodern succinctly when he states that 'whereas modernism experiences the death of God as trauma [...] postmodernism does not experience it at all. There is no God-shaped hole at the centre of its universe, as there is at the centre of Kafka, Beckett, or even Phillip Larkin. Indeed, there is no gap of any kind in its universe'. Terry Eagleton, *Culture and the Death of God* (London and New Haven: Yale UP, 2014), p. 186.

securitisation, global travel, and the discourse of cosmopolitanism. Showing exactly how these themes inter-relate, then, will constitute one of the main tasks in this chapter. This not only gives us a glimpse into some of the dynamics of the capitalist world-system, but also allows us to see how these dynamics are thought and thought differently. Further, we will also tease out from the pieces being analysed a recognisable ethics of global mobility, one which relates explicitly to the version of the contingent being employed in each case. But what the various appeals toward the contingent in this chapter also promote is another alternative to the predominant view of the world without outside. This is again expressed, in one instance, through an interplay between a micro-cosmos, and the world at-large. But it is also figured through the models of contingency being tracked themselves, in that, in one way or another, they reintroduce an outside to the world of everyday appearances, or at the very least impose an overarching principle to the way in which the world, and relations across the globe are structured. This outside, however, introduces a new theme to our discussions, and the thesis as a whole. In some instances, there is a tentative nod toward a concept of the global which breaks out of the bounds of the terrestrial, a mode of conceptualisation which will become the main issue at stake in Chapter 5.

The Room

The two variants of the contingent outlined above can be referred to using a single shorthand or concept, which seeks to capture the prominence of the interplay between necessity and contingency in contemporary conceptualisations of the global. That shorthand is what we will call the *necessary-contingent*, and it will be used throughout, both to designate a mode of (more

traditional) contingency which springs from necessity, and a radical amalgamation of the two states, both of which can be found in Smith's novels, and throughout contemporary culture.[6]

The central event in *There but for the* occurs when Miles, a guest at a dinner party in Greenwich, decides for no apparent reason to lock himself in a spare room. He proceeds to stay inside the room for a few months, without communication with the outside world, and relying purely on the whim of his hosts for sustenance.[7] If this is the central event, then the room in the novel also becomes a kind of axis upon which the rest of the text turns, a point from which other events and encounters proliferate. Before moving into a direct engagement with the Smith's text, we might consider from this perspective some of its literary lineage, a consideration which will in turn make clear some of the reasoning behind the concept of the necessary-contingent. The most obvious aspect of this is the locked room mystery, that strand of the detective genre which also designates the room as an axis from which the rest of the narrative maintains momentum.[8] Indeed, this genre helps us explicate further the distinction made above, between Lukács' identification of a restrictive finitude in the novel form, and the signs that this is being left behind in contemporary narratives.

The first fully-fledged detective story, of course, is also a locked room mystery. To reduce what is already a well-known tale to its bare essentials, Edgar Allan Poe's 'The Murders

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[6] Previous interpretations of Smith's work have taken a largely postmodern view of the contingent (from which this study departs) and have not really related this to any trends within contemporary culture itself. See Monica Germanà, *Scottish Women's Gothic and Fantastic Writing* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2010), p. 87; Emily Horton, '"Everything You Ever Dreamed": Post-9/11 Trauma and Fantasy in Ali Smith's *The Accidental*', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 58.3 (2012), p. 641; Patrick O'Donnell, '"The Space that Wrecks Our Abode": The Stranger in Ali Smith's *Hotel World* and *The Accidental*', in *Ali Smith: Contemporary Critical Perspectives*, ed. Monica Germanà and Emily Horton (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

[7] Ali Smith, *There but for the* (London and New York: Hamish Hamilton, 2011), p. xi. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text. Unlike Ulrike Tancke, who views Miles' occupation of the spare room as an 'aporia' in the text which we should simply pass over, this occupation is seen here as both a central event of the narrative, and as key to our means of interpreting the text. Ulrike Tancke, 'Narrating Intrusion: Deceptive Storytelling and Frustrated Desires in *The Accidental* and *There but for the*', in *Ali Smith*, p. 78.

[8] Another point of reference would be the (post?)modernist preoccupation with rooms, in works such as Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* and Beckett's *Malone Dies* (1956). See Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past*; and Samuel Beckett, *Malone Dies* (London: Faber and Faber, 2010).

in the Rue Morgue' (1841) finds its focal point in the mystery of a locked room. Two people have been murdered in this room, which was locked from the inside when the murder occurred. It seems impossible to offer an explanation as to how the killer escaped. The detective (in this case Dupin) takes it upon himself to solve the mystery by means of pure ratiocination. The reasoning proves successful, and the case is solved.[9] Whilst this is a description of Poe's story in particular, it can also be extended as a basic formula for all conventional locked room mysteries, providing we allow for some slippage as to the crime committed (from, for example, Poe's story to Wilkie Collins' *The Moonstone* [1868], and from Arthur Conan Doyle's 'The Speckled Band' [1892], to Agatha Christie's 'Problem at Sea' [1936]).[10]

The locked room and the event which occurred in it remains fixed in the past; it is an immovable and (until the final reveal) ineffable entity. Both the spatial and temporal fixity at issue here confirm Michael Cook's description of the locked room mystery as 'an ontological version of the wider genre, doubly removed, stripped of all contingency, a paradigm for the way the puzzle story concentrates on its central preoccupation'.[11] The locked room, by this logic, provides a stable, central point, which not only enables the narrative to branch out, but also functions as a truth to which the process of reasoning can work towards. The form of reasoning on display in the locked room mystery, and in detective fiction in general, has mainly been viewed as either deductive or inductive.[12] Two methods, then, of arriving at the truth of matters, and this is a truth which, as Deleuze puts it, 'was totally philosophical, that is, it was the product

[9] Edgar Allan Poe, 'Murders in the Rue Morgue', in *The Fall of the House of Usher and Other Writings* (London: Penguin, 2003).
[10] Wilkie Collins, *The Moonstone* (New York and Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999); Arthur Conan Doyle, 'The Speckled Band', in *Sherlock Holmes: The Major Stories with Contemporary Critical Essays*, ed. John A. Hodgson (Boston and New York: Bedford/St Martin's, 1994); and Agatha Chirstie, *Problem at Sea* (London: Harper Collins, 2014).
[11] Michael Cook, *Narratives of Enclosure in Detective Fiction: The Locked Room Mystery* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 156.
[12] On this – with particular reference to 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue' – see Loisa Nygaard, 'Winning the Game: Inductive Reasoning in Poe's "Murders in the Rue Morgue"', *Studies in Romanticism*, 33.2 (1994).

of the effort and the operations of the mind'. According to Deleuze, we would have to distinguish between two schools when it comes to the detective genre and its links with philosophy: the French and the English. The French school works on the basis of *deduction*, and would have as its philosophical counterpart the work of figures like Descartes. Here, we start with a fundamental, intuitive truth from which the rest of things are deduced. On the other hand, the English school generally works on the basis of *induction,* where the truth is derived from its effects, where we work backwards toward an overall point of necessity, an absolute truth or being which must exist in order for everything else to cohere. The counterpart in philosophy whom Deleuze names here is Locke.[13]

When it comes to the locked room mystery, induction is *the* paradigm in terms of the progressive stages of reasoning. We are always working backwards in time, toward a fixed event, toward an immutable truth. Evidence must be found of this truth, evidence which can point toward the ultimate answer. Such is the case when the event which occurred in the room is reproduced by the same means, or is shown to carry on working in the same way, as in Conan Doyle's 'The Speckled Band'. Here, Holmes and Watson must wait for the murderer to repeat an act which he had previously carried out, and which is the subject of the investigation. Only when what appears to be the same process is repeated can it be induced that this is, in fact, what had happened previously; the raw data which we are presented with proves the truth being tracked, which is induced in all of its immutability.[14] We are not only dealing with a fixed truth, then, but also something like an ultimate causal principle, a point of overall necessity without which none of the other facts collected during the case would make any sense, or at the very least would be

[13] Gilles Deleuze, 'The Philosophy of Crime Novels', in *Desert Islands and Other Texts 1953-1974*, trans. Michael Taormina (Los Angeles and New York: Semiotext(e), 2004), p. 81.
[14] Conan Doyle, pp. 170-172.

mere isolated incidents, drained of any wider significance, and separated from any discernible, causal chain.

In this sense, the locked room mystery has as its philosophical counterpart not only forms of induction, but also the ontological principle of necessity in general. From one perspective, we are concerned with a causal chain of events, each of which must remain part of the chain, or must, to use Leibniz's famous phrase, have a 'principle of sufficient reason' in order to cohere. But – sticking with Leibniz – we also encounter here the need for an overall point of necessity, or 'ultimate reason' in order for the chain of events to be pinned down to a stable, coherent pattern, to close down what would otherwise be an infinite amount of possibilities, a flux of indeterminate possible scenarios. For Leibniz, this ultimate point of necessity is God,[15] whereas in the locked room mystery, it is the event-cause of the room itself. Both scenarios, then, end with contingency being fully, or ultimately kept at bay; there must be a point of immutable necessity in order to guarantee the stability of coherent events, and this stability is what is eventually proven. A key point of difference when it comes to the locked room mystery, however, is that this manoeuvre is shown to be possible only through the operations of the mind. In other words, it is reason (in its narrower sense), which gives us access to immutable truths, and if the locked room mystery is an appeal toward the latter, then it also figures a world in which God has been muffled or obscured. From this point of view, we can say that the traditional locked room mystery adheres almost perfectly to Lukács' notion of a transcendental homelessness, in which the totality is only grasped tentatively from the point of view of a compartmentalised, bourgeois subject.[16]

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[15] Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, 'Monadology', in *Philosophical Writings*, trans. Mary Morris and G. H. R. Parkinson (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 1979), p. 185.

[16] On the relation between bourgeois life and transcendental homelessness see Lukács, *Theory of the Novel*, p. 12.

In *There but for the*, the dynamics are shifted. The locked-room is wrenched out of the Modernity of the detective story into our own age, and we are presented with a rather different state of affairs. This is not to say, however, that Smith's narrative presents us with an anti- or even postmodern version of the locked room. As we shall see, in many senses the room in Smith's book brings us back to the Modern, albeit a rather different *version* of this.

Miles' occupation of the room in the novel constitutes a central event in the narrative, a point from which the rest of the story unfolds. After his instalment in the room, the owners of the house (the Lees) are presented with a problem when it comes to getting Miles out. Not wishing to be 'unpleasant', and not wanting to ruin their eighteenth-century doors and door-handles, the Lees decide to take the 'softly-softly approach', and to simply coax their guest out through a few delicate, and ultimately ineffective means (*TBF* 11). One of these is to ask one of Miles' ex-acquaintances – Anna Hardie – to try to persuade him out. Although unsuccessful, this serves to spawn a shoot-off narrative, in which we meet another character, Brooke, an eight-year-old girl (*TBF* 3-4). Brooke too has a portion of the book dedicated to her, at the end of the novel. There are two more protagonists with their own shoot-off stories, which spring up as a result of and cluster around Miles' inhabitation of the room. These are Mark, the person who brought Miles to the dinner party in the first place, and May, the mother of one of Miles' ex-girlfriends (*TBF* 111, 273). All of these people are connected to Miles in some way, but they also become embroiled in the central focus of the narrative as a whole: Miles' occupation of the Lees' spare room.

The room and Miles' occupation of it – in an analogous way to the locked room mystery – is the point of necessity for a series of events which take place around it and which are linked with it. Without this central point, the events which encircle it would simply fall apart into isolated occurrences, devoid of any point of connection. This, however, is where the similarities

with the conventional locked room narrative end. There is no reference to any process of reason, and no emphasis is placed on discovering the motives for Miles' act, motives which, anyway, are totally lacking. If Miles locks himself in the room for no reason, then this lack of reason is part and parcel of the contingency which surrounds the whole of his act. Miles comes, as it were, from nowhere; he is a stranger, who ends up at the dinner party only by virtue of a chance encounter with Mark at the theatre. Mark, like the other guests, has never met him before (*TBF* 108). Further, when it comes to the event-cause of the room, this is not something which remains fixed in the past, an immutable entity. Rather, it is something which is synchronous with the narrative, is shown to be part of the ebb and flow of other events, part of the general movement of the narrative and the vicissitudes contained within it. All of these elements of the contingent, then, mark an extraction of reason, or fixed necessity from the focal point of the locked room.

The point of necessity in *There but for the* thus appears as if it had been injected with contingency, as if it had some of its core elements removed, only to be replaced by the very things such a figure would be trying to combat. The locked room no longer functions in a state which is stripped of contingency but, rather, one in which contingency is placed at the point of origin, an origin which proceeds to radiate throughout the course of the narrative. Contingency elevated, then, to the point of ultimate necessity. A contingency which hollows out necessity as such, which maintains the shell of necessity but which totally reconfigures its core.

It is in light of this that we can read the novel's enigmatic title. At first glance, this odd formulation seems to refer to a presence which is 'there', and yet lacks a determinate quality, a definite article ('the'). Looking closer, the 'the' in the title is rendered itself indefinite through the absence of a referent. The definiteness of the article, then, is cancelled out in the process of referring back to itself, in becoming itself the referent, rather like Brooke's own linguistic

experiments at the end of the novel where she uses two definite articles to produce sentences which read 'The the' (p. 334), the first thereby cancelling out the second. When one considers that the title is in fact a shortened version of the well-known phrase 'there but for the grace of God (go I)', this indefiniteness takes on a more concrete meaning.[17] God, here, has been cut off; the necessary, and defining force has been done away with leaving only a definite article. 'The' refers, then, not only to an indefinite-definiteness, but one which takes the place of conventional necessity. We therefore find an analogous process underway here to that of the room in the novel, whereby necessity is hollowed out by contingency; indefiniteness takes the place of a fixed, necessary referent, is itself elevated to the status of necessity.

What is the counterpart in philosophy for this necessary-contingent? One of the most prominent theorists of the contingent in recent times has been Quentin Meillassoux, who has grappled extensively with the relationship between this and necessity. In *After Finitude* (2008) Meillassoux constructs a model of contingency which allows us to return to what he calls the '*great outdoors*' of philosophy.[18] This is a radical version of contingency which, in its 'irreducibility to all pre-registered possibilities', opens up a new outside to the human and its experience of phenomena.[19] Essentially – according to Meillassoux – if we think contingency as necessity we are able to overcome the impasse in philosophy which posits, simultaneously, that there must be an ultimate reason or point of necessity for this world, but that we are unable to fully elucidate this reason.[20] Contingency, then, not only helps us think an outside to human thought, but also to think the reasons for this world's existence, and the possibility of its existing

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[17] The phrase in question can be traced back to the 16th century reformer John Bradford, who is supposed to have used the personalised version 'but for the grace of God there goes John Bradford', when seeing people being taken for execution. Aubrey Townsend, 'Biographical Notice', in *The Writings of John Bradford*, ed. Aubrey Townsend (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1853), p. xliii.
[18] Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, p. 7.
[19] Ibid., pp. 107-108.
[20] Ibid., p. 90.

otherwise. Whilst there would seem to be some similarities here, then, with the necessary-contingent figured in *There but for the*, there are also some significant differences. The strain of contingency on display in Smith's novel is, after all, not one which remains separate from the current laws of this world; whilst Miles' act is a rather strange one, is stripped of reason and therefore contingent in a certain sense, we cannot claim that it partakes fully in the extreme version of contingency articulated in *After Finitude*. Whilst it does figure a sudden 'advent', this is not registered on the same level as Meillassoux's version of contingency which is totally 'incalculable and unpredictable', and 'grabs us by the throat'.[21]

If we turn to another of Meillassoux's books, we find a figure much closer to the one we are tracking here. *The Number and the Siren* (2012) is a reading of Mallarmé's poem '*Coup de Dés*' (1897), in which Meillassoux discovers a code present throughout the poem, which he proceeds to decipher. The code, or number, is 707, a number in the poem which – for various reasons – is associated with chance, or '*the unalterable eternity of contingency itself*'. This is a version of chance in absolute form, which the number is shown to partake directly in.[22] If, as the title of Mallarmé's poem itself states, 'a throw of the dice will never abolish chance', [23] then in the poem this is because the number – through the various significances with which it is imbued – is itself a proxy for chance in its absolute form. But the poem itself is involved in this dynamic of chance and contingency, in that the very act of deciphering its code is open to the latter. One of the final confirmations for Meillassoux of the number's existence and signification in Mallarmé's poem comes down to a simple count of its total number of words (which is 707). The

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[21] Ibid., p. 108. On the 'advent' in this context see Quentin Meillassoux, 'Excerpts from *L'Inexistence Divine*', trans. Graham Harman, in Graham Harman, *Quentin Meillassoux: Philosophy in the Making* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2011), pp. 176-177.

[22] Quentin Meillassoux, *The Number and the Siren: A Decipherment of Mallarmé's* Coup De Dés, trans. Robin Mackay (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic/Sequence, 2012), pp. 67, 39.

[23] Stéphane Mallarmé, '*Un Coup de Dés Jamais N'Abolira Le Hasard*', in *Igitur, Divagations*, *Un Coup de Dés* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), p. 403.

decipherment of the poem's number, then, might well have relied simply upon someone counting up the poem's words, for no particular reason.[24] But this is further compounded by the fact that the amount of words in the poem is to an extent open to debate, depending on whether one counts a certain hyphenated word (*peut-être*) as one, or two.[25] For Meillassoux, this is the ultimate confirmation of the number and the poem's involvement in chance-as-absolute, as the poem's decipherment is itself reliant upon a chance confrontation with its number, which may or may not be, or which is only perhaps (*peut-être*), 707.

In the conclusion to his book, Meillassoux suggests that, through Mallarmé's poem, we can glimpse a triumph of Modernity, a breakthrough of extracted 'messianism from its Christian matrix' from the age of the Moderns into our own era. Thus, out of 'all that our masters have instructed us to regard as outmoded', all of those 'dead Grand Narratives' epitomised by the likes of Hegel, Marx, Hugo and Zola, one seems to have escaped, only to be revealed in the twenty-first century in the guise of Mallarmé's text and its decipherment.[26] Whilst we cannot claim such a breakthrough status for Smith's text, this nevertheless fits in to an extent with the model of secular messianism proposed in Meillassoux's work. In essence, we can say that Smith's work takes us back to something like a grand narrative, one in which contingency is elevated to the level of necessity, and in which the central character is shown to be the catalyst for such a process. Consequently, it can be claimed that Smith's work exhibits a fundamentally *Modern* trait, one which re-introduces a form of the absolute into our own times, and which simultaneously suggests something different from the type of subjective finitude suggested by so

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[24] Meillassoux, *The Number and the Siren*, p. 123.
[25] Ibid., pp. 186-187, 207-208.
[26] Ibid., p. 221.

many thinkers both past and present.[27] Of course, in *The Number and the Siren* and Mallarmé's poem it is chance-as-absolute which is at issue. For our own purposes – and despite the correlation between chance and contingency when used in everyday parlance – it is *contingency* as an absolute, or necessary force which is at stake, whereby one of the key processes is an extraction of a point of reason in its usual guise.

The model of contingency proposed in Smith's novel therefore brings us closer to understanding how the model of being in the world sketched out by Lukács has been altered in this particular version of a locked room narrative. The novel, in effect, re-connects with a form of the totality, in which contingency is elevated to an absolute point of necessity, and in this sense it has parallels with a different view of the world associated with Modernity, but also links – although not directly – with a more contemporary way of conceptualising the contingent, which comes in the guise of Meillassoux's own philosophical project.

But it is in this novel's appeals toward the global that we get a further sense of the way in which the subject connects with the totality. At the end of the book, Brooke goes up the stairs in the Lees' house, and is to her surprise let into the room by Miles. Having been stationed in the room for months, it turns out that Miles has been riding on an exercise bike, to keep himself occupied. Throughout his occupation, he has managed to cover 3,015.78 miles, minus the six miles which were already on the speedometer when he started (*TBF* 340). As Brooke aptly points out, Miles is 'Miles by name and miles by nature' (*TBF* 340). To give a rough estimate, we can calculate that, had Miles actually moved in space around 3,000 miles, then to the south-east he

[27] Friedrich Engels is another thinker that Meillassoux does not mention, whose ideas on chance, contingency and necessity are relevant to this study. Engels had begun to develop a theory based around the idea that 'chance [...] is absolute necessity'. The idea was formed through a reading of Hegel, who Engels saw as bringing forth the radical notion that 'the accidental is necessary, that necessity determines itself as chance'. For Engels, this provided a fruitful way of thinking about natural processes, such as Darwinian evolution, in that it allowed for a less rigid distinction between different species, whilst at the same time retaining a framework from which to view the various evolutionary dynamics in play between and within species. Friedrich Engels, *Dialectics of Nature*, trans. Clemens Dutt (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1976), pp. 220-221, 306.

would have easily made it over the Iraqi border. If he had gone west, he could have reached Canada. If he travelled east, he could have made it way past Moscow, and if he had gone south he could have reached Tamale, in northern Ghana. Miles covers these miles, then, which could allow him to reach all of these far-flung places, and yet remains in the same place, in Greenwich. It is in this vein, then, that we can add Miles to our list of anti-nomads, and by way of illustration it also helps to add Eric Packer from *Cosmopolis*. Both of these characters remain in a fixed place, and yet perform a kind of virtual movement across the entire Earth. The space that both of these characters inhabit can also be brought under the rubric of a micro-cosmos, a site from which the rest of the world is dipped into. Finally, both introduce the outside into the way in which the global is conceptualised. But Miles is a very different kind of anti-nomad to Packer, in that the reverberations he sends flying across the Earth are not permeated by finance capital. Rather, Miles sends out a burst of contingency by virtue of the status with which the room he inhabits is imbued. The Earth itself is thereby enveloped in the absolute principle of contingency located in Smith's novel thus far. As we shall see toward the end of this chapter, this burst of contingency has at the same time political and novel conceptual elements, whilst also acting as an (albeit abstract) antidote to some of the perceived ills of the current world-system.

The Stranger

Miles is a stranger, but he is also a certain *type* of stranger. This type is signalled through the parallels made between him and Melville's famous character, Bartleby.[28] The reference to Melville's tale occurs during the dinner party. Miles is offered a glass of wine, which he refuses, and is subsequently, repeatedly told that a taxi can be rung for him. The replies with which Miles

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[28] Whilst he misses out the Bartleby allusion, Dominic Head provides an overview of the allusions to be found in the novel. Dominic Head, 'Idiosyncrasy and Currency: Ali Smith and the Contemporary Canon', in *Ali Smith*, p. 103.

furnishes these offers are refusals, but rather odd ones: 'no, really, Miles keeps saying, I'd prefer not to' (*TBF* 114). This is an evident allusion to Bartleby's incessant repetition of the same phrase, when asked to carry out tasks in the clerk's office. Bartleby is perhaps one of the most famous strangers in Anglophone literature. As the narrator of Melville's tale states, 'while, of other law-copyists' an entire life might be written, 'of Bartleby nothing of that sort can be done'.[29] In fact, 'Bartleby was one of those beings of whom nothing is ascertainable, except from original sources, and in this case, those are very small'.[30] Bartleby, then, is assignable to nothing, has no traceable history or precedent as such. As Deleuze puts it, Bartleby's absolute vocation is '*to be a man without references*, someone who appears suddenly and then disappears, without reference to himself or anyone else'.[31]

If Bartleby is without references, then we can also say that he is not bound to any strict laws, and spurns incorporation into any fixed symbolic structures. Such a position gives us opportunity to look at another theorisation of Bartleby and his famous phrase, one which will allow us to see the connection more fully between Miles and the necessary-contingent at work in *There but for the*. This is Giorgio Agamben's essay on Melville's tale, in which he locates a link between Bartleby's formula ('I would prefer not to') and the various permutations of the concept of potentiality. Looked at from this angle, Bartleby refers to 'potentiality as such, that is, something that can both be and not be', in that he neither agrees to participate in something (and actualise his potential), nor declines. He simply *prefers not*.[32] Consequently, Bartleby reformulates the standard notion of potentiality, and brings it in line with contingency. Things

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[29] Herman Melville, 'Bartleby', in *Billy Budd, Sailor and Other Stories*, ed. Harold Beaver (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), p. 68.
[30] Ibid., p. 59.
[31] Gilles Deleuze, 'Bartleby; or, The Formula', in *Essays Critical and Clinical*, p. 74.
[32] Giorgio Agamben, 'Bartleby, or On Contingency', in *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1999), p. 266.

either occur or they do not, potential is either actualised or not: this (at least for Agamben) is the meaning of potentiality as such, but also of contingency. If Bartleby's formula refers to a state in which something can both be and not be, it also 'emancipates potentiality [...] from both its connection to a "reason" (*ratio*) and its subordination to Being'.[33]

For Agamben, potentiality as such (Bartleby's strain of potentiality) is 'beyond the taking place of either of the two possibilities', that is the possibility of being or non-being, occurrence or non-occurrence.[34] A novel dynamic is at work here. Potentiality and/or contingency resist subordination to an overarching Being or principle of reason, and yet still retain something of the very structure that the latter promotes; if, in other words, potentiality as such takes place in a 'beyond', then this sets up a structure whereby it is in fact contingency which functions as an overall point of necessity. This form of potentiality, then, is not merely emancipated from a subordination to Being, but in fact supplants Being.

Whilst there are differences in circumstances between Miles and Bartleby, we can associate Miles' status as a stranger with that of Bartleby's. In fact, Agamben's remarks on Bartleby's formula – particularly under the rubric of the reading undertaken here – provide another way of thinking about the necessary-contingent at work in the novel, in this case via the figure of the stranger. If Bartleby's, and by extension Miles' formula gives us a state in which contingency supplants Being, and extracts reason, then this is analogous to the way in which the room functions as a necessary-contingent in Smith's book. Miles, through the repetition of one of the most famous phrases out of the literature of Modernity, takes on further qualities of a stranger who is aligned directly with contingency, a being who appears for no reason, and disappears following the same course.

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[33] Ibid., p. 258.
[34] Ibid., p. 266.

There is a different type of stranger to be found in *The Accidental*. A woman called Amber turns up without warning at the holiday home of the Smarts. The Smarts have never met Amber, and yet they allow her into their home, whilst at the same time concocting various reasons for her presence which Amber neither dismisses nor confirms.[35] Each member of the Smart family is in some sense troubled, and Amber manages to solve these troubles through various different means. In essence, this is a crisis in the contemporary, upper-middle class, nuclear family, a crisis which is resolved via the rupture of a stranger ostensibly arriving from nowhere.

If 'Bartleby' is in some sense a model for *There but for the*, then Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Theorem* (*Teorema*) (1968) operates in the same way for *The Accidental*.[36] As in Smith's novel, at the beginning of this film we are presented with a stranger turning up at the house of an upper-middle class family home. Again, the family accept the (unnamed) stranger into their home without question, and – as in *The Accidental* – the narrative deals with each member of the family's engagement with the stranger until the latter's eventual departure.[37] Whilst the narrative events in Smith's novel create a clear enough parallel with Pasolini's film, we are given a further nod toward the latter in the opening of the book, which contains a description of Amber's birth. This takes place in a cinema, in 1968, where the film being shown is Ken Loach's *Poor Cow* (1967).[38] During the screening, we are told that Amber's mother begins giving birth to her, partly, and bizarrely, due to Terence Stamp (who plays Dave in *Poor Cow*) being 'an actor of

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[35] Ali Smith, *The Accidental* (London: Penguin, 2006), pp. 20, 80. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.
[36] On this connection see also Horton, p. 641. Whilst the focus here is on Pasolini's film, there is also a novel version of the tale. See Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Theorem*, trans. Stuart Hood (London: Quartet Books, 1992).
[37] *Theorem*, dir. Pier Paolo Pasolini (BFI, 2003).
[38] *Poor Cow*, dir. Ken Loach (Studio Canal, 2008).

such numinousness' (*TA* 1). Whilst Terence Stamp acted in *Poor Cow*, he also played the stranger in *Theorem*, which was released in the year when Amber is supposed to have been born.

Terence Stamp in *Theorem*

What are we to make of this strange birth? From the angle being pursued, we can say that Amber is born, or is from the beginning a stranger in the same vein as Terence Stamp's character in *Theorem*. In Pasolini's film, the appearance of the stranger and his eventual withdrawal causes a rupture in the bourgeois family unit. The father hands his factory over to the workers, whilst the maid becomes a religious icon; the mother loses her previously held sense of propriety, and drives around cruising for younger men, whilst the daughter is left paralysed when the stranger leaves. Whilst there is a religious aspect to the stranger in Pasolini's film, there is also, lurking in the background, a political figure. That figure is Machiavelli's prince, who is an unknown entity too, and who comes to effect political change. Famously, in *The Prince* (1532), Machiavelli sketches out his various ideas for a new ruler of Italy (how power might be acquired and maintained, and so on), one who will be able to re-unite the various city-states of which sixteenth-century Italy comprised.[39] We are never told exactly who this prince might be, an element in Machiavelli's treatise which has lead Louis Althusser to describe him (the prince) as

[39] Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Russell Price (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988).

‘*a man of nothing who has started out from nothing starting out from an unassignable place*’.[40] Rather like the strangers in *Theorem* and *The Accidental*, then, the prince was to be someone who came from a place unknown, who alighted by pure chance. It is in this sense that Althusser puts forward Machiavelli as part of a long line of philosophers of the encounter, who posit a form of aleatory materialism which is distinct from other philosophies which rely upon notions of ‘Cause or End’, intrinsic ‘Meaning’, or ‘principles of morality or theology’.[41]

According to Althusser, we can read Machiavelli’s system alongside quintessentially materialist philosophies, and in particular the Epicurean theory of the atom. In this regard, the prince is cast in the light of that tiny swerve (or *clinamen*) in the Epicurean void of atoms, a swerve which is responsible for the collision of the latter (hence the emphasis on encounter in Althusser’s work), for change in the universe, and is independent of a pre-determined cause or meaning. The prince, then, as *clinamen*, as that swerve in the void which effects political change.[42] There is a sense, however, that Machiavelli’s system runs contrary to the principles of any materialism of the encounter, in a quite simple way. The prince’s arrival may well be a contingent one, one which happens on the basis of what Machiavelli would have termed *fortuna*, but it comes in order to serve a set, pre-ordained purpose: the unification of Italy.[43] From this angle, rather than fulfilling what Althusser terms ‘the subordination of necessity to contingency’,

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[40] Louis Althusser, ‘The Underground Current of the Materialism of the Encounter’, in *Philosophy of the Encounter: Later Writings, 1978-1987*, trans. G. M. Goshgarian (London: Verso, 2006), p. 172. See also Louis Althusser, *Machiavelli and Us*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London and New York: Verso, 2000), pp. 53-80, for further elaboration on the figure of the prince.
[41] Ibid., pp.168-173.
[42] For Althusser’s treatment of the atom, the *clinamen*, and its relation to Machiavelli see Althusser, *Philosophy of the Encounter*, pp. 168-170, 171-174. For Epicurus’ take see Epicurus, ‘Epicurus to Herodotus’, in *Epicurus: The Extant Remains*, trans. Cyril Bailey (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926), pp. 31-39. For Lucretius’ famous elaboration on all this see Lucretius, *On the Nature of the Universe,* trans. Ronald Melville (Oxford and New York: Oxford UP, 2008), pp. 39-44.
[43] On *fortuna* in Machiavelli see Machiavelli, pp. 84-87.

Machiavelli's prince is an example of a chance, *fortuitous* event which springs from an overall point of necessity.[44]

If the stranger in Pasolini's film acts as a type of prince, then this would seem to be one whose mission has failed, unless the goal was merely to create disruption in a world of bourgeois relations which appear as vapid throughout. Smith's narrative gives us a third type of prince: as we shall see, Amber is a figure who re-enforces the *already established* order. From this point of view, we can say that Amber is a prince in the same vein as we have just sketched out with regard to Machiavelli, in that she serves as a contingent, fortuitous event which springs from necessity. It is in relation to this, also, that the stranger, and the overall model of contingency in *The Accidental* can be read; as opposed to a form of contingency located at the point of necessity, what we have here is a contingent event which is beholden to a higher necessity. An overall model, then, of a necessary-contingent, but one in which the balance is tipped in favour of necessity, where necessity always comes before contingency.

Globetrotting

Emily Horton has suggested that *The Accidental* figures a more positive outcome for the family unit than Pasolini's film, the rupture of the stranger entailing here 'a new psychological and cultural understanding, which develops in suggestive (utopian) ways'.[45] It is difficult not to notice, however, that Amber – at various points – functions as a point of stability for the already existing family relationship of which she becomes an incidental part. The mother in the tale (Eve) is the only character who temporarily disappears from the family unit by taking a 'gap year', travelling the world and eventually replicating the antics of Amber (*TA* 286). Eve, then,

[44] Althusser, *Philosophy of the Encounter*, p. 170.
[45] Horton, p. 645.

becomes Amber, becomes the stranger. The rest of the family become more integrated, more of a unit, and look forward to Eve's return (*TA* 276-282 and 290-292). Taking this into account, the stranger's role becomes clear as one that functions to hold things together in Smith's narrative, to re-unite a family unit previously in the process of shattering. If Eve's travelling across the world suggests a foray into the alternative, then this also functions as a means of stability, a means of maintaining the status quo. Both Eve and Amber function in this regard as necessary supplements to the rest of the family's happiness; they provide, in other words, a shock which allows things to carry on as normal.

The point is made rather starkly in regard to Amber at a specific moment in the text, in which Magnus describes her as being 'like an axis […] holding them all together [...], keeping everything going round, stopping everything from fragmenting into an exploded nothing that shatters itself out into the furthest reaches of the known universe' (*TA* 152). Whilst there is a hyperbolic tinge to this comment (Magnus is infatuated with Amber), it nevertheless fits in with the variant of the necessary-contingent being pursued here. Amber is someone who comes from nowhere, who ostensibly causes chaos in her sudden appearance in the Smart household. But this accidental event also belongs to a broader picture, in which the former becomes part of an appeal toward a larger necessity which – up until now – we can say is the maintenance of the upper-middle class way of life, but which as we shall see further is rather more wide-ranging than this.

When it comes to Eve, her transformation into an Amber-like figure is what allows us to read the motifs of contingency and the relation to an overall point of necessity in broader terms. As already mentioned, Eve not only becomes a stranger in the mode of Amber, but also disappears to go around the world. This supposed plunge in into the alternative, we can argue, functions in the same way as the more low-level antics of Amber, looked at so far. Eve's

globetrotting, in other words, functions to keep things ticking over in relation to a certain, pre-ordained model. At first glance, Eve's is a journey of discovery, during which she is awakened to some of the more stultifying and damaging effects of global neoliberalism. For example, at one point we get a huge list of countries and cities in which Eve has drunk Coke, from Rome to Cape Town. Finally, she finds a Coke vending machine in Ethiopia, around which 'there is nothing but scorch, nothing but flies, nothing to eat, nothing to farm' (*TA* 287). The locals club together to buy Eve a Coke, and, after experiencing this, she decides that she will never drink Coke again (*TA* 288). Whilst this example to an extent gives a critical stance as regards both the huge discrepancies in wealth inherent in the global, neoliberal system, and the way in which large corporations often profit from the drastically poor under this same system, there is another shade to this. If Eve – like Amber – functions as a source of stability in her capacity as a stranger, then this function can be transposed onto her movements across the globe. As an upper-middle class Londoner and best-selling writer, Eve comes to resemble in her travels part of that class of nomadic, fluid individuals who criss-cross the earth, part of what – as we saw in Chapter 1 – Peter Merriman terms 'the kinetic elite of Western nations'.[46]

Taking things further, and remembering the associations with Machiavelli's prince, Eve appears here as something like what Deleuze and Guattari call a 'celestial Stranger', who 'arrives to re-establish the territory or reterritorialize the earth'. According to the two authors, such a process is related specifically to imperial states, where the Stranger, in this case, comes not only to re-territorialise the earth but also, in a related sense, comes to re-ignite the mode of transcendence upon which such states are reliant.[47] Whilst they do not name him, Machiavelli's prince would surely be an example of this, as would Eve in this context. In the case of the latter,

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[46] Merriman, p. 33.
[47] Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 86.

however, it is not the unification of Italy which is at stake but the whole capitalist world-system. When it comes to the overarching point of necessity to which Eve/Amber appeals, then, this moves from the family unit, up to and including the whole world-system of which this is a part. In both instances, it is the shock event, the contingent occurrence which appears on the scene of the novel in the guise of the character-pair who become the cure, the means of stability for a unit and a world-system. This notion of the shock-as-cure, of contingency as being merely an inherent part of everyday life finds its way into various theories of the actual world-system. With digital, computer-powered finance, we are presented with a world 'in which our previously relied-upon means of mitigating chance and contingency have failed', a fact which seems not to have done anything to change unequal distributions of wealth.[48] Or, in the broader sphere of capitalist expansion, there is what Naomi Klein famously characterises as 'the shock doctrine', where chance environmental and economic events are exploited as a means for the further entrenchment of neoliberal economics, across the globe.[49] More generally, as Robin Mackay points out, the prevalence of the contingent in philosophical and artistic projects is not really any surprise, since we are faced continually with 'world events that just *strike*, that *befall* us, from outside any pre-registered set of possibilities', whether this is in the realm of the economic, the technological, the political, or the ecological.[50]

If Eve's globetrotting spells out some of the ills of global capitalism, then they should also be read in the above context. Despite its seemingly utopian bent, this journeying becomes another way of reterritorializing the earth, of re-establishing the embedded relations of inequality

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[48] Charlie Gere, *Community without Community in Digital Culture* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 137. For a philosophical theory of finance and contingency see Elie Ayache, *The Medium of Contingency: An Inverse View of the Market* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).
[49] Klein, p. 4.
[50] Robin Mackay, 'Introduction: Three Figures of Contingency', in *The Medium of Contingency* (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2015), p. 3.

across the globe, of enacting the status of a celestial Stranger on a planetary level. As regards her namesake, then, Eve is not a celestial Stranger who brings about a radically different order. Instead, her function is to provocatively re-iterate the same, to create a shock in the service of a system which ultimately remains stable as a result. In this regard, whilst we cannot count Eve as an anti-nomad, she displays some similar characteristics to Eric Packer from *Cosmopolis*. In both cases, what is alluded to is a world-system which relies upon disorder so as to re-affirm order. Further, though, this world-system in *The Accidental* begins to appear like a fixed, immutable realm, one which separates itself out from the contingent events occurring on the plane of the everyday, rather like Packer's micro-cosmos. That the Eve/Amber pair is also given a celestial status confirms this dynamic further, in that they arrive from nowhere, from a realm seemingly outside everyday relations. And this leads us back to Mackay's description of world events which apparently befall us from outside the realm of pre-registered possibilities. This description is, in fact, a direct reference to Quentin Meillassoux's version of the contingent, to which we alluded above. What is worth pointing out here, is that neither the version of the contingent expounded in Smith's novel, nor those versions of the contingent associated with political economy, can be bracketed under the kind of radical contingency which Meillassoux refers to. These kinds of events may befall us unexpectedly, but they are nevertheless subservient to a higher, fixed order. In all of these cases, the global is conceptualised as being structured though an outside influence, one which acts without prior notification, but which paradoxically maintains the status quo.

The Master and the Slave: An Interval

Cloud Atlas, the cinematic adaptation of David Mitchell's novel of the same name, gives us another version of the necessary-contingent whereby necessity always comes before contingency.[51] What this film also introduces to the discussion here is a movement away from the Earth-centred view of the global, a factor which we will again pick up on in the closing remarks on Smith's *There but for the*.

The film (like the novel) articulates the interplay between contingency and necessity from the point of view not of a single character or family unit but of multiple subjects, who are all connected with each other across a lengthy period of time, and in disparate geographical locations across the Earth. We are therefore in similar territory to the mode of subjectivity outlined in Chapter 2, whereby each individual is connected with, and substitutable for another, to the point at which we have a mass, interchangeable web of subjectivity. Indeed, as with the novel version, it is suggested that each character has something like the same soul, or essence, one of the main vehicles for putting this point across being an identical birth-mark which each character possesses.[52] The point is made much more forcibly, however, with the film version, in which it is not just the main characters inhabiting each distinct time-frame who are connected to one another, but also all the other characters who surround them, and this is achieved through the use of the same actors, in slightly different attire and with slightly different facial make-ups, in each time-frame. As Donna Peberdy puts it, the kind of subjectivity on display here, coupled with the fact that *Cloud Atlas* is set in locations all over the globe, can be seen as 'a radical

[51] *Cloud Atlas*, dir. Tom Tykwer and others (Warner Home Video, 2013).
[52] For the allusions to this in the novel version see David Mitchell, *Cloud Atlas* (London: Sceptre, 2004), pp. 85, 124, 319, 361. Each page number relates to a different character's birthmark.

example of the ensemble as a metaphor for global interconnectedness'.[53] For these reasons, we might well scrutinise this film on the bases done so in Chapter 2, in which the vision of a fully homogenised human totality was interrogated in the light of media and network theory, and the relation this bears to the current world-system. But there is a further element to *Cloud Atlas* which bears particular relation to the form of contingency at issue here, and so it this that we will focus on here predominantly.

The film can be bracketed under the category of the mosaic, or network film, in which there are a series of characters in different locations across the globe, who are all connected to each other in one way or another, the narrative usually moving toward explaining this connection. Notable examples include Alejandro González Iñárritu's *Babel* (2006), Steven Soderbergh's *Traffic* (2000), and Edward Zwick's *Blood Diamond* (2006).[54] We might also refer here to a similar phenomenon in literature, which involves the same basic dynamic, into which various themes are interjected, but in each case the over-riding feeling is that of a planetary connection. Here works such as the already-discussed *Generation A* would be a good example, along with Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* and *Ghostwritten* (1999), and also Roberto Bolaño's epic *2666* (2004).[55] What makes *Cloud Atlas* – along with *2666*, to an extent – intriguing is the introduction of a world-historical element to the mosaic narrative. Thus, there are 6 time-frames in play, each containing its own narrative. The first follows Adam Ewing (Jim Sturgess) on a trade journey in the South Pacific during the nineteenth century. The second is an epistolary narrative featuring Robert Frobisher (Ben Wishaw), composer and amanuensis to the tyrannical composer Vyvyan

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[53] Donna Peberdy, 'Narrative Trans-actions: *Cloud Atlas* (2012) and Multi-Role Performance in the Global Ensemble', *Transnational Cinemas*, 5.2 (2014), p. 171.

[54] *Babel*, dir. Alejandro González Iñárritu (Paramount Vantage, 2006); *Traffic*, dir. Steven Soderbergh (USA Films, 2001); *Blood Diamond*, dir. Edward Zwick (Warner Brothers Home Entertainment, 2007). For a detailed study of this genre see Neil Narine, 'Global Trauma and the Cinematic Network Society', *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 27.3 (2010).

[55] David Mitchell, *Ghostwritten: A Novel in Nine Parts* (London: Sceptre, 1999); Roberto Bolaño, *2666*, trans. Natasha Wimmer (London: Picador, 2009).

Ayres (Jim Broadbent), and is set in 1930s Edinburgh. The third narrative is set in San Francisco during the 1970s, and follows journalist Luisa Rey (Halle Berry) who is investigating a corrupt network surrounding a nuclear power plant. The fourth is set some time in London in the near future, and follows the trials and tribulations of Timothy Cavendish (Jim Broadbent) who is imprisoned in a care home. The fifth is set a few hundred years off into the future, in a dystopian, totalitarian-capitalist South Korea, and features a clone, or 'fabricant' called Somni~451 (Doona Bae). And, finally, the sixth narrative is set in a distant-future, post-apocalyptic Hawaii (or Big Isle, as it comes to be known), and features the struggles of Zachry Bailey (Tom Hanks), in the face of various clan-wars.

There are three main differences between the film and the novel version of this tale, differences which will eventually lead us to the film's version of the necessary-contingent. The first is to be found in the order of temporality given. The novel presents each historical segment in chronological order, only to then move backwards through this order after the end of the sixth segment, which consequently acts as the centrepiece of the book. Whilst this suggests a cyclical version of historical progression, it nevertheless conforms to a separable, linear sequencing of time, which, whether we are going backwards or forwards, still maintains the notion of progression.[56] The film, on the other hand, mixes these segments up, cutting from one time-frame to another throughout. Whilst the narrative structure of the film, then, would seem to suggest a wholly postmodern version of the historical, whereby a linear sequence and an overarching principle of progression are disrupted, there is a sense in which this is countered, which leads us on to the second difference between the two versions of the tale.

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[56] For a similar argument see Jo Alyson Parker, 'From Time's Boomerang to Pointillist Mosaic: Translating *Cloud Atlas* into Film', *SubStance*, 44.1 (2015), p. 125.

Throughout both versions, there is an emphasis on relations of domination, which are evident in the description above of the different narratives which make up each version. Each character, in other words, has their own master-slave dilemma, one in which the character either overcomes their master, or ultimately fails to do so. In some cases, the classic dialectical confrontation is tacit, such as in the relationship between the master and the protégé in the case of Robert Frobisher and Vyvyan Ayres, or the incarceration of Timothy Cavendish and his struggle to gain both recognition and freedom. In other cases, it is all-too explicit, as in the case of Somni~451 and her struggles for both recognition and the freedom from slave labour, or the narrative of Adam Ewing, whereby we have the actual setting-free of a slave, a master-slave dialectic between Ewing and Henry Goose (who is trying to poison Ewing), and the overall context of the emancipation movement. In the film, however, these dilemmas are accentuated to such an extent that they – and the overall principle of a struggle for domination and recognition – become an overriding principle, connecting all the characters across time and geography.

This, then, leads us to the third, main difference between the novel and the film version of *Cloud Atlas*, which is that in the film the various nods toward the contingent are ultimately subordinated to this overarching principle of struggle. In the novel, each character is connected to another through a chance encounter with an artefact of the one preceding them, whether this is in the guise of, say, a journal, a film, or a friend who knew the character in question when they were still alive. Whilst this is still the case to an extent in the film, this process is distinctly muted in favour of the various master-slave dilemmas present in each segment. Thus, the moving picture has its own centrepiece, which connects two of the most prominent master-slave dilemmas in the film, namely Somni~451's and the slave Autua's (David Gyasi) in Adam Ewing's narrative. Whilst being hunted down by some futuristic police officers, Somni~451 tries

to escape over a make-shift bridge, leading into another building. When Somni~451 is being shot at, we get a jump-cut from her feet running across the bridge, to Autua's feet running across one of the horizontal masts of a ship. Autua has been made to prove he can rig a sail (at gunpoint) in order to either become free (if he succeeds) or be killed (if he fails). This centrepiece serves, then, to further embed the preoccupation with the master-slave dialectic in the film, one which runs across geographical and temporal borders.

Somni~451 being hunted down in *Cloud Atlas*

Autua in the firing-line in *Cloud Atlas*

The version of the necessary-contingent in *Cloud Atlas* is thus rather like the one to be found in *The Accidental*, whereby the contingent encounter is subordinated to a higher necessity, which in this case comes in the guise of the struggle between master and slave. It is this latter

element in the film which is privileged to such an extent that it becomes its dominant factor. Struggle, in this instance, becomes something like an animating principle, which connects the entire network of characters in the film, across the vast historical expanse which the narrative covers. This dynamic takes us back to Hegel again, but in this case a rather different *version* of Hegel. The master-slave dialectic is, of course, one of Hegel's most famous contributions to philosophy. Hegel uses the struggle to the death between master and slave, or lord and bondsman, as an illustration of the way in which consciousness attains ultimate recognition of itself through outside objects. Through overcoming another human in battle, the victor gains recognition, but this is a recognition predicated solely on the vanquished. The vanquished, or slave, thus actually has within them the germ of true freedom, or 'independent consciousness', in that they are not only forced to withdraw into themselves in order to gain recognition, but also to configure themselves in relation to that which they externalise. More specifically, the slave creates a negative relation, an external point from which full self-realisation and recognition is possible, and this comes, for Hegel, predominantly in the guise of work.[57] Alexandre Kojève raised this dynamic to the level of a guiding, abstract principle of historical development. For Kojève, 'universal history, the history of the interaction between men and of their interaction with Nature, is the history of the interaction between warlike Masters and working Slaves'. This led Kojève to believe that, when the opposition between master and slave ended, universal history itself would have ended also.[58] In fact, Kojève thought that history had already ended back in the nineteenth century, with none other than Napoleon and Hegel himself. Napoleon, in this instance, figures the dissolution of the master-slave dialectic, in that he is, in being bourgeois, a slave to capital, and therefore a slave to himself (i.e., his own capital). The final

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[57] Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, pp. 111-119.

[58] Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. James H. Nichols, Jr. (London and New York: Basic Books, 1969), p. 43.

moment of liberation comes in the guise of the Terror and the Battle of Jena, which for Kojève was a kind of final synthesis, a moment at which the slave is liberated from himself in mortal combat.[59] As for Hegel, the fact that he is able to comprehend this moment of finality, and situate it within the annals of that ultimate expression of self-consciousness which is philosophy, means that he too, in writing the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, is part of the end of history.[60]

It is entirely on this theoretical basis that Francis Fukuyama proposes his own vision of the end of history. Here, however, the end is not punctuated by Napoleon or Hegel, but instead by the triumph of global capitalism – or what Fukuyama alternately calls 'liberal democracy' – and the concomitant demise of communist states.[61] Whether or not one agrees with the philosophical frameworks employed here, it would be fair to suggest that *Cloud Atlas* signals a return of the movement of history on the basis of the master-slave relationship, and that it envisages this on a global scale. In this light, we can situate the film within the broader context of a re-emergence of world-forming, social and environmental antagonisms. The first is summarised succinctly by Alain Badiou, and what he calls the 'rebirth of history', whereby various riots and uprisings signal the possibility of a world-historical event.[62] The second is almost a self-evident fact, in that humanity is now engaged as a whole with that struggle between nature and labour which has resulted in potentially catastrophic degrees of climate change. As McKenzie Wark puts it, 'a world-historical moment of considerably more general significance' than the Hegelian one 'is the discovery of the totality of effects of human activity on its material support, on what we now call the *biosphere*'.[63]

[59] Ibid., p. 69.
[60] Ibid., pp. 69-70.
[61] Fukuyama, pp. 49, 26-28.
[62] Alain Badiou, *The Rebirth of History: Times of Riots and Uprisings*, trans. Gregory Elliot (London and New York: Verso, 2012).
[63] McKenzie Wark, *Molecular Red: Theory for the Anthropocene* (London: Verso, 2015), p. xv.

In the film, the struggle for recognition and the march of history is seemingly inescapable. Indeed, this is made all the more acute through the fact that each time-frame is mixed, or cut-up with the others. From this angle, the film version of *Cloud Atlas* subscribes to Kojève's and Fukuyama's vision of the struggle between master and slave as the motor of history, but simultaneously rejects it, in that it suggests that this motor is still well and truly ticking over. The struggle for dominance is deafening, screaming out across all historical epochs, always there to be heard, to be replayed and started anew. Indeed, the only possible escape the film offers is to remove itself completely from Earth, onto another planet outside our own solar system. The film is framed by this existence outside Earth, in that it starts and ends with it. As we learn at the climax, Zachry has managed to escape Earth with a high-tech companion he met whilst still there. The new planet seems relatively benign, and the threat from mortal combat banished. When it comes to *Cloud Atlas*, then, (to adapt Jameson's phrase) it is easier to imagine our migration away from the Earth than to envisage a scenario whereby the struggle for dominance between an oppressed and an oppressor comes to an end. But, viewed from a more thoroughly conceptual angle, this film also suggests that the ends of history lie outside our terrestrial horizon, that the human's mastery of itself can only be achieved through starting with a totally blank orb. The obverse side to this, of course, would be the image of the Earth and the human's total destruction. This is a preoccupation which has most recently, and notably, been attested to in the world of cinema by something like Lars von Trier's *Melancholia* (2011),[64] and in a philosophical register by something like Ray Brassier's book *Nihil Unbound: Enlightenment and Extinction* (2007), which interrogates extinction as a philosophical problem in relation to a

[64] *Melancholia*, dir. Lars von Trier (Artificial Eye, 2012).

whole range of works.[65] Through *Cloud Atlas*, and these other examples, we see the stirrings of a mode of conceptualising the global which gets rid of some of the terrestrial ties outlined so far.

The view from the new planet in *Cloud Atlas*

Security

There but for the also tackles relations between the oppressed and the oppressor from a global point of view, but in this case from a somewhat more concrete perspective. The novel has a deep concern with the opposite dynamic of movement to the well-heeled class of global nomads, whereby, as Étienne Balibar puts it, 'the movements of men are the object of heavier and heavier limitations'.[66] As far as Balibar is concerned, one of the main limitations faced here is the border, and this is something which is also borne out in Smith's text.[67] In effect, the border in *There but for the* comes to signify a general operation of security, a form of security which serves to combat any instance of the contingent. If we were to designate an opposing, spatial term for the room in Smith's novel, then, it would be the border, and in more general terms a movement of securitisation.

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[65] Ray Brassier, *Nihil Unbound: Enlightenment and Extinction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).
[66] Balibar, 'World Borders, Political Borders', p. 111.
[67] For another treatment of the border by Smith see Ali Smith, *Artful* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2012), p. 125.

One of the borders mentioned in *There but for the* is the Meridian Line in Greenwich, part of that imaginary line which divides the entire earth, and which has itself been part of past geopolitical wrangling.[68] This border is conflated, however, directly with the national border. Whilst Brooke Bayoude stands on the Meridian Line, she is reminded of another time that she and her parents were on a border, located at a British airport. The Bayoudes were taken aside, and left in a 'bare office with cameras in the ceiling [...] and the screen thing that looks like a mirror but which is a secret wall people can look at you through' (*TBF* 307). The family are kept there for hours, without being told why, until their eventual release. The border in this instance begins to appear more in the light of the terms Balibar uses to describe it, as an authoritarian limit, that is. There is another treatment of the border during the dinner party. During a discussion on the 'global business market', Richard (one of the guests) states that the world is, 'well, a more or less borderless world. And that's as it should be'. When Brooke points out the way in which borders operate for some, Richard's reply is that 'everywhere needs some defence against people just coming in and overrunning the place with their terrorisms and deficiencies'. In other words, the logic is, as another of the characters points out (ironically) and Richard agrees (earnestly), 'keep all those bad refugees out. The ones looking for a better life' (*TBF* 146). This logic is explored further in the novel through Anna Hardie's job, in which she is encouraged to reject appeals for asylum (*TBF* 59-61).

Laid bare in this brief symposium on the nature of the border, along with the other allusions made in Brooke's and Anna's narratives, is the absurdity of conceiving of the world as borderless. Whilst such rhetoric might well ring true for a certain class of people, and for multi-

[68] See Mattelart, p.10.

national corporations, it clearly does not for others, as the Bayoudes' experience suggests.[69] Indeed, the border, and a general movement towards securitisation would seem to have proliferated in recent years, to the point at which it is not only national borders (including borders at airports) which place restrictions and monitors on people's movements, but a whole series of checks and measures situated across the landscape of contemporary life. One of these measures would be the installation of CCTV, something which is referred to explicitly in the novel, not only in Brooke's recounting of her experience of border crossing, but also elsewhere (*TBF* 62). In sum, such methods of securitisation form part of a movement which is intimately linked with the border, or, as Stephen Graham suggests, have their point of origin *in* the border. As Graham puts it, 'ultimately there is a point at which borders cease to be geographical lines and filters between states [...] and emerge instead as increasingly interoperable assemblages of control technologies', for which 'the imperative is the permanent anticipation, channelling and monitoring of flows so that proper ones can be distinguished from improper ones'.[70]

Such is the movement being outlined in *There but for the*, in which the process of filtering (keeping the 'bad' out) carried out by the border begins to open out onto a more general movement of what Graham calls control, but what can also be thought from the point of view of security. What Smith's novel in these instances points toward is the other side of the borderless world, whereby the carceral is also a defining factor, which leads us back to the discussion of this in Chapter 2. The form of security presented in Smith's novel, however, is given an extra edge when we consider the way in which the room begins to function, or is appropriated at a certain moment in the text. Through this, we can extend the definition of security to encompass not only a process of filtering, but also one in which any contingent events are neutralised, or

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[69] For a critique and analysis of the notion of the 'borderless world', see Étienne Balibar, 'What is a Border?', in *Politics and the Other Scene*, trans. Christine Jones and others (London and New York: Verso, 2002), p. 85.

[70] Stephen Graham, *Cities under Siege: The New Military Urbanism* (London: Verso, 2010), p. 132.

made almost impossible. Such a definition would correspond to the way in which Michel Foucault once used the word. Rather than ‘prohibiting or proscribing’, the function of security as Foucault defines it is ‘to respond to a reality in such a way that this response cancels out the reality to which it responds – nullifies, or limits, checks, or regulates it’. For Foucault – and he is here talking in a very different context, but the definition still proves useful – what security focuses on is ‘a possible event, an event that could take place, and which one tries to prevent before it becomes a reality’.[71]

Miles’ occupation of the Lees’ spare bedroom serves to usher in a form of (loosely defined) political solidarity, and a large number of people set up a permanent camp outside the Lees’ house (*TBF* 187). After a period of dismay, the Lees eventually realise that all of this could work to their advantage. They set up a merchandise stall outside their house, and assist in turning the whole thing into a media spectacle (*TBF* 314-315). Even after Miles is gone, they continue to capitalise on the whole affair, making out that Miles is in fact still there. In short, the act of contingency which is Miles’ inhabitation of the room is incorporated into the normal running of things here; the Lees harness Miles’ act to such a point that it becomes just another aspect of commoditised relations. Present in the novel, then, is a kind of mechanism, whereby – to use Foucault’s phrase – the *possible* is always headed off, where the contingent is filtered, checked and limited. Such is the case with the room, but also with the various borders and security techniques alluded to in the novel. If the diagnosis of the contemporary, global situation in Smith’s novel is one which is characterised by a form of security which seeks to reign in the possible, then this is also a scenario in which the arrival of an unexpected stranger is sought to be done away with, or at the very least neutralised in some way.

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[71] Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977-78*, trans. Graham Burchell (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 47, 33.

Taken together, *There but for the* and *The Accidental* – along with *Cloud Atlas*, to an extent – allow us to read one of the fundamental contradictions of contemporary capitalist states, and the world-system of which they form a part. On the one hand – as we saw in the previous section – they produce and rely upon contingent events. On the other hand, they are always seeking to rein in these kinds of events through the various apparatuses and techniques of security and control. Whilst there is not space here to analyse this contradiction in-depth, we might point out that the victory of one of these elements over the other may well signal the beginning of a very different type of capitalist system, and a very different world.

Cosmopolitanism, pt. 2

The Lees' appropriation of the room and its status, however, does not prevent us from investigating further the novel dynamic of contingency outlined at the start of this chapter; indeed, paying closer attention to this allows us to extract a counter-ethics of movement from that put forward in *The Accidental*, and from the rhetoric of the borderless world. As we have already seen, Miles is a certain kind of anti-nomad, as a result of the virtual movement across the globe which he sets in motion. This form of anti-nomadism is directly tied with the form of contingency with which Miles himself and the room he occupies are imbued; from Greenwich, Miles sends out a burst of contingency which ripples across the globe. But something else is thrown into the mix here, and that is the way in which Miles effectively converts a form of privately owned property into a communally owned one. We will see the full implications of this shortly.

One other way of interrogating Miles' status, however, is to view it in the light of a cosmopolitan dynamic, and we therefore find another link here with Chapter 3. The relationship

between the individual and its ground and the rest of the world is again exemplified well in *There but for the*, and we might well analyse this along similar lines to some of the materials discussed in the previous chapter. Miles is, from this point of view, not only an anti-nomad, but also a certain kind of world-citizen. This kind of dynamic is explored further by Smith herself. In *Hotel World* (2001), the room is again a key figure, in this case a hotel room. The hotel is part of a chain called 'Global Hotels' and the room inside it becomes a central point, enabling a series of encounters between divergent social groups.[72] Present here, then, is a means of encountering the other by virtue of a set of pre-determined rules, in this case linked to the multinational corporation. This serves to further distinguish between the type of cosmopolitanism on offer here, and the one given in *There but for the*. By virtue of the contingency with which the central point is infused in the latter, we cannot relate this to a situation whereby global relations are determined by an outside, market force, as was shown to be the case in the analyses of texts like *Cosmopolis*, *The Accidental*, or more theoretical work on cosmopolitanism such as Ulrich Beck's.

It is in response to this that we might consider the form of cosmopolitanism in *There but for the* from a slightly different point of view. From one angle, we can say that this is a cosmopolitanism which explodes the very notion itself; without a driving-force, and a fixed, absolute principle which allows for the connection of the human across space and time, this version of the cosmopolitan would surely disintegrate as a result of its openness to the contingent. Alternatively, we can see this as a redefinition of the cosmopolitan outlook, one which is tied to the secular, Modern versions of necessity alluded to at the start of this chapter. This involves a dual strategy, in which both the common and the contingent are thought simultaneously. Firstly, to say that world-citizenship is contingent, and that this is in fact a point

[72] Ali Smith, *Hotel World* (London: Penguin, 2002).

of necessity – as is suggested in Smith's novel – amounts to an affirmation that the inhabitation of the Earth is purely contingent, and that this is in fact a driving force for such habitation, as opposed to an overall principle of reason. Secondly, Miles' appropriation of the room as a place to live infuses this principle of contingency with a form of common ownership. If, in other words, the room in *There but for the* is a site of necessity, then this necessity is that which imbues, across the globe, a form of common ownership which exists by virtue of our being here through purely contingent means. Rather like water in Smith's *Girl meets Boy* (2007), which 'belongs to everyone' (a fact which Imogen realises after quitting her job at a multi-national water company), the Earth as such is put in a similar light in *There but for the*, through the burst of contingency which is sent reverberating across the globe.[73]

It is worth adding that it is the Earth *in its present state* which is infused with that which is common to all in *There but for the*. In pointing this out, we find a significant break with perhaps one of the most famous thinkers of the cosmopolitan: Immanuel Kant. As Jacques Derrida usefully summarises, Kant's theory of the cosmopolitan in *Perpetual Peace* (1795) appears contradictory, in that, initially, it affirms the law of universal hospitality – on which any theory of cosmopolitanism, for Kant, ought to be based – as being predicated on an original, (in Kant's words) 'common possession of the surface of the earth',[74] an affirmation which serves (in Derrida's words) 'so as not to exclude any point of the world or of a spherical and finite globe'.[75] But, as Derrida rightly points out, this is all ultimately to 'expel' from this economy of common ownership 'what is *erected, constructed, or what sets itself up above* the soil: habitat, culture,

[73] Smith, *Girl Meets Boy*, p. 129.
[74] Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace*, trans. Lewis White Beck (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1957), p. 21.
[75] Jacques Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, trans. Mark Dooley and Michael Hughes (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 21.

institution, State, etc'.[76] Part of Derrida's conclusion to his reading of Kant is to suggest that we need to think of ways in which this contradiction might be thought through, whilst attending to the various problems in privileging one element of it over another.[77] Whilst it does not involve the rigorous 'thinking-through' that Derrida has in mind, Smith's novel does seem to address this contradiction, offering as it does a different way of conceptualising the global and the cosmopolitan, where the common remains (or can be made) present and spreads itself across the globe. In the next chapter, we will see some more ways in which the notion of the common – again, present across the globe – has become a key factor in conceptualisations of the global.

There but for the also provides another glimpse of the overthrowing of a terrestrial, anthropocentric version of the global, but in this case (almost paradoxically) by reference to the Earth itself. By framing the inhabitation of the Earth in light of an absolute principle of contingency, Smith's novel invites us to imagine a world in which human habitation might well never have existed, and which exists today only conditionally. In this sense, the novel begins to move closer to Meillassoux's radical version of contingency, outlined in the beginning of this chapter. In both cases, the link is severed between the Earth and the human, and it is in this sense that we start to depart from an Earth-universe, and its concomitant, idealist version of the Global Brain. In other words, the human in this scenario can no longer enjoy the protection that the Earth-orb was once seen to provide. Instead, it is torn open by the thought of contingent events which have the ability to totally reconfigure the world in which we live. In the next chapter, we will continue to see how concepts of the global which move beyond the bounds of the terrestrial are again articulated most interestingly from the domain of Earth itself, as opposed to narratives of space travel and the like. Here, we have seen not only a glimpse of this, but also a glimpse of

[76] Ibid., p. 22.
[77] Ibid., p. 23.

how contingency has been moulded to fit various forms in contemporary culture, all of which have an impact on the ways in which the global is conceptualised today. All of the materials discussed suggest a return in one way or another to the potency of a principle of the absolute, whether this is an absolute which effects change from another realm outside, or a radically reconfigured absolute, one which has been hollowed out and injected with contingency. In all cases, it would seem our ability to – as Lukács puts it – 'experience distances as realities' has been re-ignited.

Chapter 5

Beyond-Measure

Like the first two chapters, this chapter will deal with ways of conceptualising the global which have as their main feature the lack of an outside. In some ways, then, we have come full-circle, gradually moving back toward some of the main features of Chapter 1 and 2. But there is also a fundamental difference – which the title of this chapter seeks to articulate – between a concept of the global which is characterised by immanence, and one which is beyond-measure. Previously, we have seen various structures which figured a way of conceptualising the global through their discrete nature, whether this was the house in *House of Leaves*, Sloterdijk's evocation of the Crystal Palace, or Caden's theatre project in *Synecdoche*, *New York*. The outside had been jettisoned in these cases through an inability to escape the structure in question, or a process of internalisation which appears as a key feature to the structure itself. It is the discrete nature of these structures which have no outside that pins down one of the main differences at issue here. By contrast, the sites discussed in this chapter resist this demarcated dynamic of the global: they are constantly spilling out of their confines, forever expanding, and resisting spatial demarcation. In short, the space beyond-measure is rather more difficult to quantify than the immanent spaces located in chapters 1 and 2. Whilst the ways of conceptualising the global examined here still remain without outside, they nevertheless re-introduce the *promise* of an outside through their constantly expanding nature, and this is something which we will be paying particular attention to toward the end of the chapter, where another variation of the world-historical is explored.

There are two further aspects of the beyond-measure, both of which will mark the start of our investigations. The first is to be found initially in the purely conceptual-aesthetic realm, where we will locate a way of thinking that disrupts the relation between universal and particular, those two categories which, as we have seen in previous chapters, are so much involved in the way the global is conceived of today, particularly in relation to discourses of the glocal and the cosmopolitan. This mode of thinking will be located through a discussion of Deleuze's notion of the any-space-whatever, along with Patrick Keiller's film *Robinson in Ruins* (2010). As it turns out, Keiller's film depicts a mode of space which correlates directly with the way of thinking identified. That mode of space is the common. We therefore begin to trace some similar themes to those found in Smith's *There but for the*, and we are again in a situation whereby the entire world-system is infused with the common. The common, it will be suggested, can be brought under the rubric of the beyond-measure, in that it resists and deforms the traditional universal-particular mode of thinking and dwelling.

Keiller's film leads us on to the second additional aspect of the beyond-measure, and that is an introduction of the non-human to conceptualisations of the global. Again, we are on similar grounds to Smith's novel here, but Keiller's film will point us toward some other material which figures a more thoroughgoing element of the non-human, and which links up predominantly with media and network technologies, and networked phenomena in general. All of the material in this instance suggests a way of conceptualising the global which has at its core an element of the non-human, an aspect which signals something very different to the versions of the Global Brain, and the terrestrial-universe traced so far. This will initially become apparent in an analysis of David Lynch's *Lost Highway* (1997) and Bernard Stiegler's work on technics, where we will begin to sketch out an alternative to the Idealist Brain. We will call this alternative the 'Unhuman

Brain', borrowing Eugene Thacker and Alexander Galloway's sense of 'unhuman', which designates an element of the 'nonhuman that *traverses* the human, that *runs through* the human'.[1] This phrase allows one to think the human and the nonhuman at their point of conjunction, as opposed to thinking about the human and the nonhuman always in terms of their separation. Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Unconsoled* (1995) offers another example of this strain of the Global Brain, and we will locate here a series of parallels with other materials which are concerned with network and media technologies, and the way in which these might trouble a human-centred universe. Again, this version of the Global Brain can be brought under the rubric of the beyond-measure, in that it defies usual methods of measuring in terms of familiar and unfamiliar, human and non-human, organic and prosthetic. Taken together, all the aspects of the beyond-measure add up to some rather troubling versions of the global, not just by virtue of their blurring of demarcation and categorisation, but also in relation to their other-worldliness. It is this troubling nature which brings with it all sorts of conceptual and practical problems, which we will enumerate in due course.

Any-space-whatever

Robinson in Ruins forms part of a trilogy of films, the first two being *London* (1994) and *Robinson in Space* (1996).[2] The initial, striking feature in all these films is Patrick Keiller's distinct directorial style, each film being comprised of a series of immobile shots, and each shot bearing no immediately apparent relation to the previous one other than its function as a document of the protagonist's wanderings.[3] Rather than a chain of continuity, in other words, the

[1] Thacker and Galloway, p. 141.
[2] *London*, dir. Patrick Keiller (BFI, 2005); *Robinson in Space*, dir. Patrick Keiller (BFI, 2005); and *Robinson in Ruins*, dir. Patrick Keiller (BFI, 2011).
[3] Similar methods are used in *The Dilapidated Dwelling*, dir. Patrick Keiller (Illuminations, 2006).

overall cinematic effect of Keiller's work is a chain of *discontinuity*. From a purely spatial perspective, this discontinuity could be linked to what Marc Augé has termed the 'non-place', which he views as characteristic of what he calls our era of 'Supermodernity'. These are spaces which are devoid of any sense of history, ceremony or community, in which it is the passing through which is of importance rather than the dwelling, and Augé uses the examples of the motorway, the airport, the shopping centre, and so on.[4] However, whilst it is possible that this association might stand in relation to some of Keiller's other films, it does not when it comes to *Robinson in Ruins*. This is not only due to the film's setting – which is rural Oxfordshire – but also the overall cinematic effect, the way in which this can be read, and, as we shall see, the way in which it connects up with another main aspect of the film.

Keiller's style is evidently heavily indebted to the Situationists, and in particular Guy Debord, whose films follow a similar method of assembling seemingly disparate images.[5] But whilst the latter's films follow the method of *détournement* – which involves wrenching out of context existing images and shots from film and other media in order to give them a new meaning – Keiller is concerned with actually-existing landscapes.[6] In this regard, we might view Keiller's films as vehicles for the creation of what Deleuze called the any-space-whatever, on an intense scale. For Deleuze, this mode of space is characteristic of the time-image but can also be seen as a response to the breakdown in cohesive space after the Second World War and the 'rise of situations to which one can no longer react, of environments with which there are now only chance relations, of empty or disconnected any-space-whatevers replacing qualified extended space'. And so Deleuze talks about abandoned warehouses, urban wastelands and bombed-out

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[4] Marc Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, trans. John Howe (London and New York: Verso, 1997), pp. 78, 106.
[5] The best example here is Debord's 1973 film *Society of the Spectacle* ([n.p.], [n.pub.], [n.d.]).
[6] On *détournement* see Guy Debord, '*Détournement* as Negation and Prelude', in *Situationist International Anthology*, ed. Ken Knabb ([n.p.]: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1999), pp. 130-132.

buildings. These spaces which lacked cohesion were neither specific nor general, just whatever, as is the case with the cinematic version of the any-space-whatever; they were merely fragmented sites within a landscape which itself seemed alien.[7] In more general terms, the any-space-whatever is rendered through a discontinuity in shots, so that each shot and the space it depicts is cut off from the one preceding it, and the one following it. As Deleuze explains, this creates 'a perfectly singular space, which has merely lost its homogeneity'.[8]

The any-space-whatever, then, is that which comes to be individuated, or recognised as a singular entity not through relation to an overall schema or sequence, but simply in relation to itself, to its singularity as such. If we take the spaces found in each shot of *Robinson in Ruins*, then these would certainly seem to be versions of the any-space-whatever. The proliferation of cuts to different shots with no attempt at establishing continuity gives a pervasive feeling of disconnection throughout the film; we move, for example, from shots of cruise missile bunkers to combine-harvesters, and from disused quarries to manor houses. The journey enacted here is an anti-linear one, in which we receive only portions of the terrain covered, each portion forming an any-space-whatever in relation to the next shot, and the way in which it is presented itself. The spaces rendered in Keiller's film, then, are stripped of their homogeneity, or universality to the point at which each shot appears to stand fully for itself, it being deprived of the linkages that would normally provide the effect of a progressive whole. Indeed, this lack of universality is a productive way of reading the Deleuzian/Keillerite any-space-whatever. If the image in this light is stripped of its universality, it also, by implication, is stripped of its particularity, its ability to stand out as an individuated part of an overall whole. From this point of view, the any-space-whatever would be that which murders the standard relational model of the universal and the

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[7] Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, p. 272.

[8] Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement Image*, trans. High Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (London: Athlone Press, 1986), p. 109.

particular, and replaces it with a radical singularity, a 'whatever' which defies incorporation into classical metaphysical categories.[9] Keiller's entire film is made up of any-space-whatevers, which means by extension that the whole landscape, and the subjects which the film treats, are subsumed under this movement which banishes universal and particular.

[9] In this regard, the link between the Deleuzian any-space-whatever and Giorgio Agamben's concept of a 'whatever singularity' is made explicit. Agamben's concept has all sorts of applications, but in each case the main object is to describe a state which departs from the distinction and interaction between universal and particular, thus opening up onto a realm of 'pure singularities'. One example here would be the very concept of example itself. Agamben: 'On the one hand, every example is treated in effect as a real particular case; but on the other, it remains understood that it cannot serve in its particularity. Neither particular nor universal, the example is a singular object that presents itself as such, that *shows* its singularity'. Or there is what Agamben calls a 'politics of whatever singularity', whereby one is no longer defined by a community-set (Communist, Fascist, etc.), nor by an absence of a set, but by 'belonging itself'. For Agamben, this provides the theoretical rubric for thinking outside the relations between State and individual, another version of the universal and the particular. See Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community*, trans. Michael Hardt (London and Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 1993), pp. 1, 10, 84-86. As opposed to a mode of community, in this chapter we will be identifying – in relation to Keiller's film – a mode of space and ownership which fits into Agamben's model, and which is also tied to the Deleuzian any-space-whatever.

Four consecutive images taken from *Robinson in Ruins*

There is, however, an incongruence between the backdrop which Deleuze gives the any-space-whatever and the one which we will give to Keiller's enactment of this. Rather than having as an historical context the Second World War, *Robinson in Ruins* provides an aesthetic which offers an antidote to some of the stultifying and more sinister aspects of the contemporary world-system. This is already evident, to an extent, with the contrast set up above between Augé's 'non-places' and the forms of space rendered in Keiller's film; as opposed to a meaningless, totally homogeneous space, the any-space-whatever resists such enveloping states, which, as we have seen, are both part of and emblematic of the neoliberal world-system, and what some see as the latter's tendency to standardise everything, or create what Jean-Luc Nancy in a similar vein calls an 'un-world'.[10] As we shall see, though, the antidote is rather more potent than this, in the main due to its connection to a model of space and ownership.

Anti-Crusoe

We never actually see Robinson, the protagonist of Keiller's three films, and his remarks are only ever reported to us via a voice-over from one his travel companions, leaving the camera to simply register their places of visit. In *Robinson in Ruins*, Robinson turns up in Oxford around the beginnings of the 2008 financial crisis. He commences a newly-conceived exploration in a car park of the same city, and we get the following explanation, partially taken from one of his journals:

> he surveyed the centre of the island on which he was shipwrecked; 'the location', he wrote, 'of a great malady [neoliberalism, and by extension the financial crisis], that I shall dispel, in the manner of Turner, by making picturesque views, on journeys to sites of scientific and historical interest'.

[10] Nancy, *The Creation of the World,* p. 34.

As we shall see, whilst Robinson might initially appear to be a kind of surrogate Robinson Crusoe, he is actually quite distant from this character, and the triad of hardy individualism, protestant work-ethic and land-ownership that the latter has come to connote.[11] Robinson's anti-Crusoism, largely founded through his ramblings but also (as we shall see) through the film's form, becomes an attempt not only to dispel the malady of the financial crisis, but also to think and uncover an alternative side to the current neoliberal model, one which involves implicitly an overturning of the triad of elements which Crusoe embodies. Keiller himself puts this at its most wry in a discussion of the film's origins: 'In May 2009', he says, 'when pressed for a preliminary description of the film, I offered: "In early 2008, a marginalised individual sets out to avert global catastrophe, hoping to trigger the end of neoliberalism by going for a walk"'.[12]

With the benefit of hindsight, we can announce that this goal was not achieved. This being said, *Robinson in Ruins* does conceive the neoliberal world-system in a distinctive way, and we have already begun to glimpse this through the film's form. We might now turn, then, to some of the various landscapes depicted in the film, which, taken as a whole strike one as rather odd meditations on contemporary capitalism and its global impact. Occasionally, these landscapes are contextualised through an appeal to the place of agricultural production in the global economy. But the most detailed description and contextualisation comes in relation to the privatisation and enclosure of various sites and lands. What develops is an uneven history of

[11] Keiller says that he takes the name from Kafka's *Amerika* (1927), Robinson being one of the itinerant workers Karl Rossmann encounters when on the look-out for work. Patrick Keiller, *The Possibility of Life's Survival on the Planet* (London: Tate Publishing, 2012), p. 6. This in itself takes us away from the Crusoe model, as Kafka's Robinson has no colonial pretensions, and is far from a subscriber to the protestant work-ethic, which would not really be of much use to him anyway. Franz Kafka *Amerika, or The Man Who Disappeared*, trans. Michael Hoffmann (London and New York: Penguin, 2007), pp. 66-87. As regards Robinson Crusoe, the most famous articulation of his individualism is perhaps Marx's, who saw Defoe's novel as providing a prime example of commodity fetishism, whereby the commodity is disavowed of its social relations. Marx, *Capital*, pp. 47-50. On Crusoe and the protestant work-ethic see Peter Mathias, 'Economic Growth and Robinson Crusoe', *European Review*, 15.1 (2007), p. 30.

[12] Keiller, *The Possibility of Life's Survival on the Planet*, p. 12.

enclosure within rural Oxfordshire, a history which brings us up to the present day, with shots of gas pipelines owned by multinational interests, cycle paths sponsored by banks, and private weapons manufacturers. Layered over this is a constant referral to the overall state of the global economy, and in particular the development of the 2008 financial crash. These present day elements, along with various others, amount to a general picture of the current neoliberal state of affairs. Keiller's film, however, focuses not merely on the enclosure and privatisation of public, or state land and resources, but also on the appropriation of common land. One example of this occurs when Robinson makes his way to Otmoor Common, on which we are given some brief historical background. In the 1830s, we are told, landowners appropriated the common in order to redirect the river Ray. Dismayed by the impact this had on their farms, the local population took part in 'possessionings', occupying the land in order to reinstate it as a common.[13] Another example comes from more recent times. We get various shots of Greenham Common, and, again, a short history to go with it. As the voice-over informs us, Greenham Common was enclosed during the Second World War, and from then, up until 1991, it was a US nuclear missile base. During the eighties, it was established (mainly via the efforts of the women's peace camp) that the common was under illegal occupation for the duration, and public access was restored around ten years ago.[14]

The tendency toward enclosure which Keiller's film is dealing with here offers a counterpoint to the way in which we read the any-space-whatever above. The enclosure is at odds, in other words, with the form of *Robinson in Ruins*, and the impact this generates on the landscape depicted. To use the terminology of classical political ontology, when the common is

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[13] For an account of this see David Eastwood, 'Communities, Protest and Police in Early Nineteenth-Century Oxfordshire: The Enclosure of Otmoor Reconsidered', *The Agricultural History Review*, 44 (1996).

[14] On the women's peace camp and Greenham Common see Jill Liddington, *The Long Road to Greenham: Feminism and Anti-Militarism in Britain since 1820* (Bury St. Edmonds: Virago, 1989).

enclosed it enters into either a universal framework when appropriated by the state, or a particular one when appropriated by private interests.[15] The common itself is more readily analogous to the any-space-whatever, in that this too (when left untouched) exists outside of the relation between universal and particular, or between state-owned and privately-owned. In fact, the common actively troubles this model and the forms of ownership entailed in it, and in this sense we find a concrete link between the particular sites depicted in the film, and the way in which it produces at the same time a series of any-space-whatevers. If we see the form of *Robinson in Ruins* as being linked to the conceptual status of the common, then the landscapes which are rendered in the film, and which bear the marks so much of the global, neoliberal system, begin to take on a quality not only of a radical singularity, but also become infused with the logic of the common. We begin to glimpse, in other words, the way in which the film offers a counter-narrative to the current logic of global capitalism.

Cesare Casarino has attempted to articulate a similar counter-narrative, suggesting that ‘nowadays the common no longer has any outside’. Evidently, Casarino’s remark refers to a mutation in the very nature of the common, and so this would initially appear to disqualify us from making parallels with Keiller’s film, the latter focusing predominantly on traditional forms of the common. Indeed, Casarino is interested here in ‘intellectual, linguistic and affective communication’, which are all part of what he sees as being the most important aspect of what is held in common today.[16] However, instead of prohibiting a link with *Robinson in Ruins*, Casarino’s remarks enable us to see a further nuance to the overlaying of the logic of the common onto the various landscapes which Killer’s film depicts.

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[15] For this classic dynamic, see, for example, Jean Bodin, *Six Books of the Commonwealth*, trans. M. J. Tooley (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1939), pp. 25-27.
[16] Cesare Casarino, *In Praise of the Common: A Conversation on Philosophy and Politics* (London and Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 2008), pp. 14-15.

For Casarino, to say that the common has no outside means that it has now become 'virtually indistinguishable from that which captures it, namely, capital understood as a fully [...] global network of social relations'.[17] Casarino's point is, in essence, that global capitalism is now so reliant on communicational, affective, and cognitive labour that it is shot-through with common forms of ownership. Hardt and Negri take a similar view, suggesting that 'our communication, collaboration, and cooperation are not only based on the common, but they in turn produce the common in an expanding spiral relationship'. According to the two, it is this interaction with and production of the common which constitutes 'the primary characteristic of the new dominant forms of labor today', which range from modifying genetic information to creating and engaging with media, and from forming relationships and styles to programming software.[18] Not unexpectedly, all this occurs for Hardt and Negri within the ultimate context of Empire. But it also signals the potential for the multitude of singular actors within Empire 'to create an alternative global society'.[19]

The above concepts of the common demonstrate two ways in which the idea of an outside is being eroded in this instance. The first comes in the way in which the common flattens out the relation between universal and particular, a process which permeates the subject matter of Keiller's film. The second is articulated through the fact that common practices permeate contemporary, global capitalism, and become indistinguishable from the means of capturing surpluses. Whilst *Robinson in Ruins* is more overtly concerned with the spatial aspects of the common, it nevertheless forms part of a more general feeling that contemporary social and

[17] Ibid.
[18] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin, 2004), pp. xv-xvi.
[19] Ibid., p. xvii.

economic relations within global neoliberalism have become saturated with the common, a feeling which we saw enacted previously in Smith's *There but for the*.

New Natures

Keiller's film, however, is also concerned with the enclosure, or the obverse side of the common. Indeed, Keiller manages to capture, via the charting of these two disparate phenomena, another tint of that double movement of the boundless and the restrictive, the nomadic and the carceral, which has been a recurrent theme throughout this thesis as a whole – a movement which finds its subjective correlative in the figure of the anti-nomad. This dynamic between the common and the enclosure, however, projects us into a slightly different scenario than the ones previously discussed, particularly when we consider the fact that Keiller would initially appear to be more interested in versions of the common rooted in land. In many ways, this takes us back to what Marx termed primitive accumulation, that process which he sees as instrumental in the beginnings of capitalist society, and involved 'the wholesale expropriation of the agricultural population from the soil', and from common lands.[20] This created a mobile wage-labour force, one freed from the soil, but one now wholly reliant on the capitalist mode of production.

In some ways then, Keiller is referring to this epochal shift. But there is a further element to all this in the film, and this is evident through the fact that, for example, the enclosure of Greenham common is not part of a genesis of capitalism proper. The same point is put forward all the more forcefully through the way in which different historical periods are juxtaposed during the film, whilst talking about the common and its appropriation. And so, in another exploration of a previous common, Robinson and the camera make their way to Hampton Gay,

[20] Marx, *Capital*, p. 752.

which was, we are told, enclosed during the later period of Elizabeth I's reign, a process disastrous for the local population (and, incidentally, a period which Marx refers to explicitly in his work on primitive accumulation). We are also told that when the enclosure reached its peak, a group banded together in order to resist the state of enclosure. Immediately following this, and whilst the camera still lingers on the scenery of Hampton Gay, the voiceover moves to giving us some information about the present-day financial crisis: following the rapid intensity in the financial crash, a fifty-billion-pound fund had been sanctioned by the British government in order to part-nationalise the largest banks. Following this, we move to a shot of what we are told is the hub of the Cable and Wireless global satellite network. The site of the hub was also the meeting place for the organisers of the uprising against the enclosure of Hampton Gay, back in 1690.

From Hampton Gay to the Cable and Wireless Satellite hub in *Robinson in Ruins*

The juxtaposition in time frames has the effect of welding the two together, of creating an image which is pregnant with the past, and yet which still retains its present orientation and content. The effect of this coagulation of time is to allow us to transpose the current state of affairs in the world-system onto the historical enclosures of the common. More specifically, it allows us to situate the financial crisis and the subsequent 'bailouts' which were enacted as a response to this in conjunction with the idea of enclosure, the interplay between the shots and the voice-over (giving information on the 2008 crisis) being the vehicle for this. In this respect, Keiller is in agreement with a whole host of political-economists, who view the large-scale bank bailouts not only as 'socialism for the rich', but also as a means to ultimately transfer huge amounts of public wealth into private hands.[21] The process of the enclosure of land, then, is

[21] The phrase 'socialism for the rich', whilst it has now entered into common currency, has been taken from John Lanchester's book on the 2008 crisis, which also claims that after the banking bailouts, across the West 'we have been left with these grotesque hybrids, privately owned banks which are able to generate boggling profits because all the risk is underwritten by the taxpayer'. John Lanchester, *Whoops! Why Everyone Owes Everyone and No One Can Pay* (London: Penguin, 2010), p. 199. As Yanis Varoufakis puts it in relation to the US economy, whilst average citizens 'have been scrapped like discarded appliances', 'the small minority who produced worthless paper assets and brought the world to its knees with their immense pay packets [...] received more than $10 trillion worth of tax propelled assistance'. Yanis Varoufakis, *The Global Minotaur: America, the True Origins of the Financial Crisis and the Future of the World Economy* (London and New York: Zed Books, 2011), p. 162. For a similar view see also Christian Marazzi, *The Violence of Financial Capitalism*, trans. Kristina Lebedeva and Jason Francis McGimsey (Cambridge, MA and London: Semiotext(e), 2011), p. 97. From a traditional Marxist perspective, all this

transposed onto the process of contemporary financial dispossession, a transposition which offers both a way of understanding some of the outcomes of the global crisis, but also a form of critique. To extrapolate the full meaning here, however, would be to acknowledge the fact that Keiller's film deals with an epochal shift not merely in relation to the transition from feudalism to industrial capitalism, but also the epochal shift from the industrial to our own, late stage of capitalism. This entails all the various technological mutations and changes in the state of labour, some of which we have already touched on, along with this stage's largest crisis, which is simultaneously its most significant event. This is further embedded through the image of the Cable and Wireless satellite hub, which brings us back into the realm of world-wide communication, that aspect of the common which is facilitated through private, multi-national corporations and state entities. The thesis of the film in this instance, when boiled down, would be that today's strain of world-encompassing capitalism is still that which operates on the basis of a proclivity toward enclosure, be this of the common or the public. Primitive accumulation, in other words, is posited as less an originary process and more one which is always occurring, continually being carried out on a global scale, to the point at which capitalism appears to be expanding beyond-measure. To put it in more general terms, the dynamic between enclosure and common, the boundless and the carceral which Keiller pinpoints, is less one which can be located in a specific historical period of capitalism, and more that which continually proliferates through the latter, the juxtaposition in time frames being the means through which this is conveyed in the film.

But, as we have seen with the references to the common, Keiller's film to an extent imagines a world outside the logic of primitive accumulation and the capitalist world-system. In

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merely proves, as David Harvey puts it, 'that state and capital are more tightly intertwined than ever, both institutionally and personally'. David Harvey, *The Enigma of Capital and the Crises of Capitalism* (New York and Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010), p. 219.

other words, it registers, as Mark Fisher puts it, some of our 'inconceivable futures'.[22] Another aspect of the film relevant here are the various images of nature. These long shots, which contain no human life or commentary, and which focus merely on the activity of various plants and other aspects of the natural world, are scattered throughout the film, and become an almost over-bearing aspect of it. Paul Dave has suggested that these drawn-out images, coupled with a distinct lack of the human in the film, point toward a new, non-anthropocentric way of viewing the world, which creates 'an image of the nonhuman', and which allows us 'to push beyond what Quentin Meillassoux refers to as Kantian correlationism'.[23] Fisher makes a similar point, but brings capitalism into the mix, suggesting that the ecological and capitalism as such are the two 'totalities' with which the film is concerned. Whilst capitalism might be shown in Keiller's film to 'saturate everything', 'from the [...] inhuman perspective of a radical ecology, capital – for all that it may burn out the human environment and take large swathes of the non-human world with it – is still a merely local episode'.[24]

To deal with Dave's point first, we here find a point of slight disagreement, but one which nevertheless opens up onto a point which will become a main theme for the rest of the chapter. It is difficult to agree fully with Dave's link between Keiller's film and the reestablishment of 'the *great outdoors*' which Meillassoux seeks to instantiate through his theory of radical contingency, the latter being that which supposedly puts an end to the need to think of the relationship between consciousness and the world, and which forces us to think the potential

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[22] Mark Fisher, 'English Pastoral', *Sight and Sound*, 20.3 (2010), p.24.

[23] Paul Dave, '*Robinson in Ruins*: New Materialism and the Archaeological Imagination', *Radical Philosophy*, 169 (2011), p. 33. Dave's reading of the film is in turn inspired by Massey's suggestion that, again in reference to the images of nature, 'the power of the nonhuman is strong in the film', an attribute which forces us to think the 'marginality of the human in relation to the planet'. See Doreen Massey, 'Landscape/Space/Politics: an essay', *The Future of the Landscape and the Moving Image*, <http://thefutureoflandscape.wordpress.com/landscapespacepolitics-an-essay./.

[24] Fisher, 'English Pastoral', p. 23.

of the world to be radically otherwise.[25] Firstly, we ought to note that cinema is not only inherently reliant upon human consciousness to be experienced as medium, but has also been seen by thinkers such as Bernard Stiegler, and even Jacques Lacan as an externalisation, or prototype of consciousness itself.[26] But if this argument is bordering on the obtuse, then we might consider alternatively that Keiller's landscapes are in no way different from our own; they simply proffer an absence of the human form, whilst retaining the image of the world as it still remains for us. To view this as a return to a great outdoors, then, is a step too far. Rather, *Robinson in Ruins* fits better with what Eugene Thacker has named the 'world-without-us', which offers a mid-point between what he calls the 'world-for-us' and 'the-world-in-itself'. The world-for-us is the world as it is in the eyes of the human subject and in the context of its habitation of the Earth. The world-in-itself is the world as it exists independently of human thought and habitation. The world-without-us is what allows us to think of the world-in-itself 'without getting caught up in a vicious circle of logical paradox', whereby the world-in-itself is always brought back or reduced to the world-for-us, being as it is both thought and restrained by human consciousness.[27] For Thacker, the prominence of the figure of the 'world-without-us' is documented by the horror genre in its various forms, which in turn forms part of a broader picture in which 'the world is increasingly unthinkable – a world of planetary disasters, emerging pandemics, tectonic shifts, strange weather, oil-drenched seascapes, and the furtive, always-looming threat of extinction'.[28]

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[25] Meillassoux, *After Finitude,* p. 7.

[26] See Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time 3: Cinematic Time and the Question of Malaise*, trans. Stephen Baker (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2011), pp. 23-28; and Jacques Lacan, 'A Materialist Definition of the Phenomenon of Consciousness', in *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book II: The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis 1954-1955*, trans. Sylvana Tomaselli (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge UP, 1988), pp. 46-47.

[27] Eugene Thacker, *In the Dust of this Planet: Horror of Philosophy Vol. I* (Alresford: Zero Books, 2011), p. 5.

[28] Ibid., p. 1.

Whilst Keiller's film links up with Thacker's concept of the world-without-us, it also incorporates the capitalist world-system into the fray, and from this perspective we can return to Fisher's comments. According to this reading, the possibility of large-scale environmental catastrophe and a radical form of ecology usurps global neoliberalism as the master totality. In this sense, Jameson's famous formulation (quoted in Chapter 1, adapted in Chapter 4) to the effect that it is now easier for us to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism is confirmed, and indeed the very phrase is quoted in the film. Unable to imagine a new totality in this human-oriented world of ours, we might say, the film turns away from the human toward the world-without-us.

There is an alternate view, however, in which the film's triad of capital, nature and the common are brought together. The juxtaposition of nature and capital at various points in the film occurs at a more or less similar rate to that of the common and capital. Thus, we receive various details of the impending financial crash whilst in the midst of pastoral shots, along with other shots focusing more closely on flora and fauna. In one instance, we get a shot of a spider spinning a web, whilst the narrator proceeds again to report details of banks going under, and bailouts being provided. This shot returns us to the theme of enclosure in the film, and in this sense the triad begins to become visible. If the film posits, in other words, a capitalist world-system which is saturated with the common, it also deals with the common and its enclosure from the point of view of the natural world. This becomes further apparent through Robinson's own views on the natural world, as we are told that he

> inclines toward biophilia, having discovered Lynn Margulis's view that symbiotic relationships between organisms [...] are a primary force in evolution. He was inspired by her endorsement of the Russian botanists who had formulated the theory in the 1920s, and by her denunciation of neo-Darwinism, and all capitalistic, competitive, cost-benefit interpretations of Darwin.

This is a view of evolution, and of nature, which rejects the analogies between capitalism and the natural world, and which sees life, as Margulis herself puts it (with Dorion Sagan), as 'not all divergence and discord but also the coming together of disparate entities into new beings'.[29] This symbiotic view of nature comes close to the dynamics of the common, in which various singularities group together to produce something held in common, which in this case is being itself. Nature thus becomes a shorthand in the film not for expressing a 'survival of the fittest' rhetoric, but rather for further infusing the totality of global neoliberalism with the logic of the common.

The spider spinning its web in *Robinson in Ruins*

Machinic Consciousness

If it is nature in Keiller's film which introduces a non-human element into of way of perceiving the world, then in David Lynch's *Lost Highway* it is the machine. More specifically, this is a media machine, one which is associated with video and real-time technologies.

[29] Lynn Margulis and Dorion Sagan, *What is Life?* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: California UP, 2000), p. 214.

At the beginning of the film, something strange happens: Fred Madison (Bill Pullman) is woken up in his house by the intercom buzzing. When he answers, he is told simply that 'Dick Laurent is dead', without any further explanation as to who this is, or why Fred is being told this. This occurrence is not dwelt upon again until the end of the film. Shortly afterward, a video-tape is dropped off at the house of Fred and his wife, Renee (Patricia Arquette).[30] The footage, when played on the VCR, is a rough shot of the house's exterior. Over time, video-tapes continue to appear, and they begin to show images of the inside of the couple's house. Shortly before the final video-tape arrives, Fred and Renee go to a party, at which Fred meets a strange demon-like man, who is dubbed in the film's credits the Mystery Man (Robert Blake). The man claims that they have met before, but Fred maintains that they have not. When Fred asks where the Mystery Man thinks they have met, the latter replies that it was at Fred's house. Fred asks if the man is sure, to which the latter replies 'of course. As a matter of fact, I'm there right now'. To prove this, he gives Fred a phone, and asks him to call him there. Impossibly, the Mystery Man answers after Fred dials his home number, and a bizarre conversation between the two/three of them, with Fred still on the phone, then ensues, the Mystery Man disappearing shortly afterwards. The first part of the film reaches its final stage with a last video-tape being dropped off. It shows Fred killing Renee, an occurrence which it transpires actually happened, even though Fred remains unaware of this until he watches the tape.

Before providing a reading of these various, bizarre occurrences, we will first look at how we can extract a concept of the global from the film, in order to then read the two things in tandem. To give a very basic outline of the plot, Fred goes through a series of events and encounters throughout the film, for a significant part of this having transformed into an alternative self, existing in a mirror world which has been interpreted as a regression into

[30] *Lost Highway*, dir. David Lynch (Universal Pictures, 2012).

fantasy, and a restoration of the potency of the masculine subject, but which also follows and re-shapes the contours of some of the classic tropes of film-noir.[31] Near the end of the film, Fred Madison returns to his house. He rings the intercom, and says into it 'Dick Laurent is dead', immediately afterward returning to his car to speed off into the distance, with police cars chasing behind. In Lynch's film, then, we have a potentially eternal repetition of events. In relation to the circuitous nature of the narrative, we are lead to the conclusion that the story unfolded will repeat itself infinitely, that Fred Madison will be given anonymous video-tapes again and again, and that he will return to his own house again and again to utter the same words. With a proliferation of the same events, then, we would also have a proliferation of the character of Fred Madison, and of all the other characters in the film. Narrative is repeated potentially interminably, then, to the point at which the events in *Lost Highway* appear to take place in their own, insular world, the outside of which we are only given a brief idea of at the end of the film, with Fred driving off into the distance. But this hint at an outside can also be read as conforming to the logic of a world which has no outside. As Michel Chion has suggested, 'the highway of the title is physically present in the credit sequence and in the final images as a ribbon of space-time perpetually looping back on itself like a Möbius strip'.[32] In light of the comments above, we can say that the highway-as-Möbius strip is yet another aspect of the film's theme of eternal repetition. *Lost Highway*, then, figures a world without outside, a form of the global from which there is no escape.

To come back to the video-tapes and the Mystery Man, both of these lead us to view the global figure which Lynch creates as one in which an inhuman element has been inserted. The

[31] On this see Slavoj Žižek, *The Art of the Ridiculous Sublime: on David Lynch's Lost Highway* (Seattle: The Walter Chapin Simpson Center for the Humanities, 2000); and Todd McGowan, *The Impossible David Lynch* (Chichester and New York: Columbia UP, 2007), pp. 154-176.
[32] Michel Chion, *David Lynch*, trans. Robert Julian and Trista Selous (London: BFI, 2006), p. 194.

filming of the house is undertaken by an unknown entity. Is it the Mystery Man? We never find out for sure, but he is definitely associated with the tapes, not least due to the video-camera which he carries around at a later appearance in the film (see image below). The Mystery Man, though, has some additional features, which are not merely the propensity to intrude and scare, but also a form of real-time presence, whereby one can be in two different places at once (as in the telephone sequence). In this sense, the Mystery Man becomes further associated with satellite and telecommunications technologies, which allow an image to be projected at the same time an event is occurring. Both of these media-related aspects of *Lost Highway* have the ability to deeply affect the protagonist, to the point at which his actions are even pre-figured (as in the case with the murder of Renee and the video-tapes), and his whole mode of being in the world is completely reconfigured.

The Mystery Man in *Lost Highway*

In this regard, Michael Haneke's *Caché* (2005) offers a striking parallel with Lynch's film. Here, we again have a series of mysterious video-tapes being dropped off at a house, filmed, it is subtly suggested, by an agent that is not entirely human. Again, the intrusion of the non-human, of the technological into the space of the family home, precipitates all sorts of traumatic affects and events, and we are left with the feeling that memory and life itself, and the

web of human interactions, is conditioned by media and media-related technologies.[33] The claim which will be made here is that these intrusions of the non-human in the guise of media-technologies can be read alongside the variations of the concept of 'schema', a reading which will eventually lead us to an analogous, philosophical scenario in which the schema takes on global proportions.

In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, one of Kant's aims was to show how the various, heterogeneous apprehensions of consciousness were related to fixed, *a priori* concepts of the understanding. For Kant, this was achieved via what he termed schemata, which provided a general rule by which the apprehensions of consciousness in the imagination could then be related to concepts. So, for example, the schema of quantity is number; to move from the general apprehension of five, to the concept of five, a schematism must take place, which makes possible any form of understanding of the number five, and which therefore guarantees the stability, and permanence of perception. The schemata are, for Kant, 'hidden in the depths of the soul, whose true modes of action we shall only with difficulty discover and unveil'; they remain firmly lodged within the subject, an internal mechanism which guarantees the categorisation and understanding of phenomena.[34] Throughout the twentieth century, and into the twenty-first, the schemata started to migrate outside the depths of the soul, and began to be seen as being situated outside the subject. The most famous example of this is in Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944). Here, the two authors argue that, with the establishment of a culture *industry* across modern capitalist states, Kant's transcendental system has to be revised. It is no longer that the individual carries out schematisations internally; the culture industry, as they have

[33] *Caché*, dir. Michael Haneke (Artificial Eye, 2006). It is possible that Haneke makes an overt nod toward *Lost Highway*, in naming the protagonist of *Caché* Georges Laurent, the second name being the same as Dick Laurent's in Lynch's film.

[34] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, pp. 272-275.

it, 'robs the individual of his function' and 'does his schematizing for him'.[35] Moving closer to our own times, Slavoj Žižek has developed his own theory of the schema, which for him sits squarely in the realm of fantasy. This is used to develop a theory of ideology, whereby fantasy is that which provides a schematic relationship between the subject and the Real, or the means of production; the schema, in other words, is an outside force (which takes the form, in Žižek's work, of various cultural artefacts) which provides the rules and coordinates which sustain a given mode of production.[36]

In Bernard Stiegler's work, the Kantian schema is taken to similar heights, in order to articulate a philosophy of technics and their relation to the human as such. This is not to say that Stiegler is not interested in the political side of things, but that this is where he starts. In *Technics and Time 3* (2011), Stiegler gives a reading of Kant's notion of the schemata in an effort to square it with his own philosophical system. For Stiegler, it is not, as Adorno and Horkheimer claimed, that the schema has suddenly migrated outside the subject, forming what he calls 'a monstrous schematics'. Rather, he thinks that the schema has *always* been external, whether this is in the case of simple number systems, writing, or indeed the cinema and other contemporary media technologies.[37] All of these form the basis for part of a 'transductive', two-way relationship between the human and its prostheses, between internal and external forms of memory, and between the flux of experience and the recordings, or markers of that flux. This two-way relationship is, for Stiegler, what makes possible human consciousness, memory, and time.[38]

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[35] Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment,* trans. John Cumming (London and New York: Verso, 2010), p. 125.
[36] Slavoj Žižek, *The Plague of Fantasies* (London and New York: Verso, 1999), pp. 6-8. For another contemporary example of a concept of the schema as external, and from a Marxist perspective, see Christian Lotz, *The Capitalist Schema: Time, Money and the Culture of Abstraction* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014).
[37] Ibid., pp. 49-51.
[38] Ibid., pp. 71-72.

In our own era, or what Stiegler calls the era of ‘hyper-industrialisation’, ‘consciousness itself is for sale’, as a direct result of an always-already externalised schematics.[39] In other words, the culture industry simply exploits the already existing, exterior mode of schematisation, and in contemporary societies we witness this exploitation proliferate, it being ‘aimed at going beyond all barriers, at becoming global’.[40] If we are all tuned in to the same channel, so to speak, then this means that we are all exposed, or subjected, to the same criteria for consciousness, and to the same temporal unfoldings. The point is made here in reference not only to television and the cinema, but also to computer and real-time technologies, which Stiegler lumps together. This possibility represents, then, an end of self-consciousness, in which we undergo a process of what is termed ‘disindividuation’ on a global scale. We ‘dissolve’, as Stiegler puts it, ‘into a globalized, impersonal *One*’.[41] Because this form of exploitation has reached such dizzy heights, it bears much responsibility for what Stiegler sees as the problems to be found in contemporary capitalist societies, such as a loss of spirit, disaffection, and again rampant disindividuation.[42]

Despite Stiegler’s protestations to the contrary, it is difficult to imagine a more monstrous version of the schema, whereby media completely hijack human consciousness, and the balance between the two is decisively tipped in favour of the former. This, of course, is similar to the case of *Lost Highway*, where we again have a form of monstrous schematics, which not only causes traumatic events, but also causes the individual to morph into another subject and thereby lose his identity, all under the back-drop of a world which has no outside. And this is also the

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[39] Ibid., p. 78.
[40] Ibid., p. 74.
[41] Ibid., p. 5.
[42] See on this matter not only Stiegler’s *Technics and Time, 3*, but also *The Lost Spirit of Capitalism: Disbelief and Discredit, Volume 3*, trans. Daniel Ross (Cambridge and Malden, MA: Polity, 2014); and *Uncontrollable Societies of Disaffected Individuals: Disbelief and Discredit, Volume 2*, trans. Daniel Ross (Cambridge and Malden, MA: Polity, 2013).

case more generally speaking for the migration of the schema to the outside of human consciousness. In the cases of Stiegler's philosophy and Lynch's film, we have returned to the motif of the subject as interchangeable, or as Stiegler describes it 'disindividuated', traced in Chapter 2 and 4. But whilst this was seen previously to be associated with the Global, Idealist Brain, in this instance we have departed from this, in that the vision being set out here is one in which the centrality of the subject and of human consciousness is undermined by an invasion of the inhuman in the guise of media technologies and the affects these create.[43] This is not to say that the human subject disappears completely in this version of the Global Brain, but rather that it is mixed up with the inhuman to such an extent that it moves away from the Idealist strain, toward what we will call the Unhuman Brain.

In this respect, Lynch's film, Stiegler's work and the externalisation of the schema in general link up with the previous chapter which provided a glimpse of both the uncoupling of the Earth itself from the global (as in *Cloud Atlas*), but also the (potential) uncoupling of the human from the Earth (as in *There but for the*). Although we do not receive a complete abandonment of the Earth-universe in any of these pieces, the distance established from the Idealist Brain figures a movement away from the purely human totality, and a way of conceptualising the global which is not contingent upon the bounds of the terrestrial. Whether this mode of conceptualisation is ever fully realised remains to be seen, but its germ is certainly here. The same is true for *Robinson in Ruins*, which gives us a version of the totality infused with the non-human, here in relation to ecology. But whilst Keiller's film attempts to see a positive alternative to our current predicament, *Lost Highway* and Stiegler's diagnoses are rather more reactionary; essentially,

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[43] For a different exploration of this matter see David Roche, 'The Death of the Subject in David Lynch's *Lost Highway* and *Mulholland Drive*', *E-rea: Revue Électronique d'Études sur le Monde Anglophone*, 2.2 (2004), <http://erea.revues.org/432>.

they offer a critique of the Unhuman Brain without recognising any of its potential, and without suggesting any alternatives.

Expanding World

Whilst it is tempting to view these versions of the Global Brain and their associations with ecology and media technologies as the beginnings of a post-capitalist world (a view which some have already begun to develop), it is nevertheless self-evident that these figurations of the totality are at the same time at one with our own, current stage of late capitalism.[44] In other words, even if, as in *Robinson in Ruins*, a new way of figuring the totality is being proposed, it is still incumbent here that this be related to our own, current situation. In this respect, we are able not only assess the visions of the future, but also the visions of the present, and the connection these have to current, material relations. Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Unconsoled* offers an opportunity to undertake just this. As we shall see, if we were to place something on the other side of the camera in *Robinson in Ruins*, *Lost Highway*, or *Caché*, then this might well be the protagonist in *The Unconsoled*. This is not only because this protagonist gives us another example of the welding of the human and the inhuman, but also because he operates beyond the boundaries of human constraints in perception. As might be expected, these aspects of the inhuman tie in with the way in which the global is being conceptualised in the novel. It is to this last aspect of the novel that we will turn to first, then, eventually linking up with the vision of the Unhuman being offered.

[44] For contemporary writings on post-capitalism along these lines see Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams, *Inventing the Future: Postcapitalism and a World Without Work* (London: Verso, 2015); Paul Mason, *Postcapitalism: A Guide to our Future* (London and New York: Penguin, 2015); and J. K. Gibson-Graham, *A Postcapitalist Politics* (London and Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 2006).

The novel opens with Ryder, the protagonist, arriving at a hotel in an unnamed city. Ryder is an apparently famous pianist, the reason for his visit being to give a recital. As becomes apparent, however, what is expected of him is 'something more than a simple recital', and he is drawn into various aspects of the lives of the city's inhabitants in order to fix what is referred to in consistently vague terms as a 'crisis'.[45] We never really find out what this crisis is, but the city's various problems mean that Ryder spends most of his time hopping about, dealing with different people, following a plethora of tangents, and being continually obstructed in achieving the final goal of performing his recital.

This is an urban environment which contains various permutations and distortions in time and space. Temporal and spatial distortion features immediately at the novel's start, in which there is an impossibly long lift journey, for half of which someone remains inexplicably concealed (*TU* 5-11). Moving out into the terrain of the novel's setting, there is one particular moment in the book which best captures the distortions in space. Ryder is taken outside of the city. He and his host drive for some time and eventually end up in 'a substantial residence' which functions as the setting for an event they are attending (*TU* 123). At the end of the event, Ryder follows another of the guests through the dining hall. Miraculously enough, when they have walked through here it becomes apparent that they 'were in the atrium of the hotel' from where he had started his journey, in the unnamed city that is (*TU* 148).

Another, significant example is to be found at the end of the text. Having finished (albeit unsuccessfully) his duties in the city, Ryder gets onto a tram, in pursuit of two people who appear to be his wife and son. The three have a row, and the mother and son disembark from the tram (*TU* 528-532). Ryder is then left on his own, and strikes up a conversation with an

[45] Kazuo Ishiguro, *The Unconsoled* (London: Faber and Faber, 2005), pp. 12-15. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

electrician, who informs him that the tram goes round in a 'circuit' and will take you 'anywhere' (*TU* 533). Ryder discovers a buffet whilst on board, and as the novel ends imagines himself staying there for some time with the electrician, each of them 'delay[ing] getting off until the next time his stop came round' (*TU* 534). Getting off the tram is only an imagined scenario for Ryder here, one which is ultimately never carried out: 'We would shake hands, wish each other a good day [...] and I would go off to join the crowd of cheerful passengers gathering around the exit' (*TU* 535). As the novel ends with Ryder still going round in a circuit, we can say that Ryder never really leaves the tram, that he is bound, it would seem, to ride it interminably. Viewed from this angle, this would be the pinnacle of a series of obstructions and hindrances encountered throughout the novel.

The distortions in the space-time of the novel and the happening on continuous obstruction on the part of the protagonist have led critics to draw parallels between *The Unconsoled* and some of Kafka's work.[46] Whilst these parallels are surely valid, what is at stake for this discussion is how the unnamed city in Ishiguro's novel presents a conception of the global. To a very limited extent, this is also something which has been discussed by commentators on the novel, but this is in relation to what is perceived to be the novel's ethical response to globalisation (loosely defined), rather than in relation to any conceptualisation of a global space, and how this might in turn relate to a more general mode of conceptualisation.[47] Similarly, the novel's shifting spatial dynamics have been related to the shifting borders of Europe, from both a contemporary and a more historical perspective.[48] Again, the question which

[46] See Wai-Chew Sim, *Globalisation and Dislocation in the Novels of Kazuo Ishiguro* (Lewiston and Queenstown: The Edwin Muir Press, 2006), pp. 172-173; and Richard Robinson, 'Nowhere, in Particular: Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Unconsoled* and Central Europe', *Critical Quarterly*, 48.4 (2006), pp. 119-127.

[47] See Bruce Robbins, 'Very Busy Just Now: Globalization and Harriedness in Ishiguro's "The Unconsoled"', *Comparative Literature*, 53.4 (2001), 426-441. See also Sim, p. 199.

[48] See Robinson, pp. 119-127; and Stanton, pp. 19-20.

will be asked first here is how the global is being conceptualised as such in these instances of spatial and temporal distortion.

The novel presents an ever-expanding world, one which begins to constitute a world beyond-measure. The example in which Ryder ends up back in the hotel from what he thought was a separate residential area attests to two poles which have been joined together, or rather an act under which the first pole swallows up the second, brings it under its jurisdiction. A similar instance occurs when Ryder takes another trip out into 'countryside' (*TU* 179). He is there for some time, and begins to worry about his son Boris, whom he has left alone in a cafe in the city. He decides to head back from the countryside cafe he is in, and is directed toward a door which looks like it can only conceal 'a broom cupboard' (*TU* 203). Somehow, though, when he walks through a tight corridor Ryder ends up back at the cafe in the city where he had left Boris (*TU* 204). Again, it is not really a shifting of borders and lines of demarcation which is taking place here, but instead a subsumption within an ever-expanding area. In order to get somewhere Ryder must travel by normal means. But whilst he is there, the point of departure creeps back up on him, as if it had overtaken him during his stay. The unnamed city in *The Unconsoled*, then, is a structure which would appear to be eroding that which is outside it. But rather than being a self-contained structure like those discussed in the first two chapters, this is one which subsumes potentially everything which was previously outside itself, which swells beyond-measure. That which is outside is continually being incorporated into the inside, in an on-going process, in this version of the global. The fact that the city is unnamed in *The Unconsoled*, and is a melting pot of cultures and locations, lends itself well to this way of conceptualising the global; if this is a non-specific environment, then it is also one which is all-encompassing, always catching up on

Ryder when he thinks he has eluded it. As Katherine Stanton puts it, ‘perhaps the novel’s placelessness [...] is a metaphor for a new global homogeneity, a grey sameness’.[49]

It is in this vein that we might also read the interminable, circuitous journey which Ryder undertakes on the tram. If Ballard’s ‘The Concentration City’ provided a template for what would later be brought under the rubric of immanent spaces, then Ryder’s circuitous journey suggests something slightly different. By virtue of its circuitousness, Ryder is always brought back to the same place, but this is within an environment which is always expanding; the circuit, then, considering it goes ‘anywhere you like in the city’ (*TU* 533), becomes a way of riding the expansion, of following the ever-extending line of the city’s external boundary. Time is brought back into play here then; instead of a recurrence of the same, a dead time in which one not only returns to the same place but also the same time, there is a sense of progression in *The Unconsoled*. Time may go fast, it may be distorted, but there is nevertheless a (cyclical) progression in play on the tram, the passing of each stop still being registered, and the progression of the sun, rising ‘higher and higher in the sky’ being a feature which is picked out in particular by Ryder (*TU* 535).

The form of the global in Ishiguro’s novel is thus one which is all-encompassing in the sense that it is continually subsuming the outside, rather than the process seemingly having already taken place. As with Ballard’s story, we might well view this as a vision of the expansion of the urban environment across the globe, one which correlates with the actual expansion this environment has undergone in recent decades. But this expansionism can also be linked with some of the more general mutations in the capitalist world-system, which begin to make their presence felt around the 1990s. *The Unconsoled* also links up here with a way of conceiving the global which is related to the technological, and a network-oriented way of seeing things. In

[49] Stanton, pp.18-19.

order to demonstrate this, we must first examine the attention paid to the non-human in the novel. For now, though, and as a taste of what is to come, we might point out that Ishiguro's text has some similar traits to what Michael Cronin also calls 'the expanding world'. In his book, Cronin is concerned with outlining an alternative to the 'small world' hypothesis associated with most theories of globalisation. Cronin's view is that, rather than viewing the world as a compressed, static entity, one should frame the discussion in terms of 'expansion'.[50] One concrete reason for this is the digital and the network-oriented technologies in use today. As Cronin puts it, 'any point in physical space can open up into the continuously expanded spaces, say of internet connectivity', and the 'vastness of computer networks'. From this perspective, the computer is a kind of 'portal', which allows us to experience not only far-flung places, but also to enter into the continually expanding world of 'ubiquitous computing'.[51] This is not to say that *The Unconsoled* replicates this view entirely, but that the motif of an expanding world which is accessed via portals evidently strikes a chord here. What the comparison begins to allow us to see is a way of conceptualising the global which is related to network and computer technologies, and yet puts some of the tropes of this into a much more general proposition, one which brings into play the themes of the network and expansion, but in addition cognition and affect.

Cognitive Landscape

There are various moments in the novel which lend themselves to a psychoanalytic reading. Predominantly, when this has been undertaken it is in relation to how Ryder is seen to project his

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[50] Michael Cronin, *The Expanding World: Towards a Politics of Microspection* (Alresford: Zero Books, 2012), pp. 7-8.
[51] Ibid., p. 15.

conscious and unconscious memories and drives onto his surrounding environment. This process, then, is seen as a direct evocation of the Freudian theory of displacement.[52] Rather than reading these moments as confirmations of psychoanalytic theory, however, the purpose here will be to uncover how they are tied with the concept of the global in the novel. This is made possible by paying attention to a feature of the novel which has been curiously elided by commentators, especially considering the mass of material which has accumulated already on the text. This feature is that strange capacity of consciousness to reach outside of itself in the novel.

There are two particularly evocative examples of memories being found inscribed in the landscape. One occurs when Ryder goes with his son Boris to a block of flats where they supposedly once lived. Eventually, they come across what Boris cryptically suggests might have been the place in question. As it turns out, the room into which Ryder peers through from the outside window in fact 'resemble[s] exactly the back part of the parlour in the house' where he had lived with his parents, 'for several months in Manchester' (*TU* 214). Similarly, when Ryder is about to enter a function in a house he has never been to before, he discovers the 'remains of the old family car [his] father had driven for many years' (*TU* 261).

One might well interpret these instances as ones in which the wreckage of the unconscious has been displaced onto the topography of the surrounding landscape. Ryder, in this case, is engaged in a classic case of solipsism, and his environment is merely a large-scale fantasy, a way of overcoming various unspecified traumas. It is possible, however, to read these examples in a different way, if we disregard (at least classic) psychoanalytic methods here. The question still to be posed is what might be being articulated through the strategy of having various aspects of Ryder's memory registered on an unknown landscape to which the

[52] For explicitly Freudian interpretations along these lines see Sim, p. 191; and Barry Lewis, *Kazuo Ishiguro* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2000), pp. 105-113. For Freud's work on displacement and condensation see Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. James Strachey (London: Penguin, 1991), pp. 383-419.

protagonist, as far as we know, has never travelled. Indeed, these are not the only two examples; similar instances are scattered throughout the text, the main ones being the fact that Ryder has a son and a wife in the city, and that he comes across various old school and childhood friends whilst there (*TU* 31-52). In essence, it is the disjuncture between an unknown environment and the intimate aspects of Ryder's life – his memories, and so on – which is at stake here. The landscape becomes a mixture of the unknown and the intimate, the external and internal, the non-human and human.

It is in conjunction with this that Ryder's strange capacity to project perception and/or consciousness beyond spatial confines should be read. One example of this occurs when Ryder has a meeting with a Miss Collins in her house, a rendezvous arranged in order to smooth things over with the conductor-turned-alcoholic Brodsky, who is due to perform with Ryder. At one point, Brodsky leaves the house, and walks down the road. Miss Collins follows him, and Ryder is able to track both their movements and their speech, even when they are out of sight, and he remains inside the house (*TU* 319-327). This is a talent which goes unexplained throughout the novel. A similar incident occurs toward the end of the book. Just before his planned performance, Ryder finds some people 'waiting their turn to climb into a small black cupboard' (*TU* 476). As he finds out when he climbs into it, the cupboard, once one is inside, opens out onto the auditorium, and offers a 'commanding' view of the events going on at the concert (*TU* 476-477). From here, Ryder can make out Stephan Hoffman, another character coming out to begin a recital (*TU* 477). But, curiously, he can also tap into the emotions Hoffman is experiencing. Ryder perceives Hoffman's distress at the latter's parents having not been present at the recital, and continues to ('virtually') follow Stephan through the backstage doors, and

eventually out into the lobby, from where we get an account of the conversation which takes place between him and his parents (*TU* 478-479).

The narration in *The Unconsoled* remains in the third-person, but in these instances it is Ryder's ability to break out of his own perceptive confines which facilitates the process of transference from one character's inner thoughts to another's. Further, this transition also entails Ryder's own experience of that which would ordinarily be inaccessible. At one end of the scale, we have Ryder, meeting the model of the humanist protagonist at the centre of the universe of the novel, whereas at the opposite end there is a non-human capacity, a propensity to enter into the general flow of things, to break out of a fixed frame of perception. In this sense, we might well place Ryder on the other side of the camera, or posit him *as* the camera in Keiller's or Lynch's film, which is as much as saying that he is a kind of non-human recording device. Human and non-human are confused to such an extent here, then, that the centrality of an albeit questionable human memory and perception which is a staple of Ishiguro's texts (from *An Artist of the Floating World* [1986] and *The Remains of the Day* [1989], to the more recent *Never Let Me Go* [2005]) is decentred, and done away with in *The Unconsoled*.[53]

The landscape in *The Unconsoled* is one in which objects pertaining to the memory of the protagonist are mysteriously registered or make themselves present, whilst at the same time there is this strange effacement of distance in terms of the same protagonist's perception, which is tied to the ability to access other consciousnesses. To take the first element, one might posit that it is the landscape itself which produces the objects which Ryder encounters, rather than this being a

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[53] See Kazuo Ishiguro, *An Artist of the Floating World* (London: Faber and Faber, 2001); Kazuo Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day* (London: Faber and Faber, 1990); and Kazuo Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go* (London: Faber and Faber, 2005). In *When We Were Orphans* (2000), Ishiguro engages in a similar experiment whereby the barrier between an 'external' memory and an 'internal' one, or between a memory which is noetic and one which is registered in the physical world is blurred. Kazuo Ishiguro, *When We Were Orphans* (London: Faber and Faber, 2000).

case of Freudian displacement. From this angle, the topography which the novel lays out would itself be a kind of non-human consciousness, one which is in turn intimately involved with Ryder's. In this regard, Ryder becomes a kind of node within an overall structure of landscape-consciousness. We can say something similar about the second element in question here; if Ryder is a node, then the ability to enter other consciousnesses and to perceive far-flung spatio-temporal settings would be an instance of connecting up with other nodes in the landscape-consciousness. Here then, we can say that Ryder becomes a neuron in the overall topography of consciousness in the novel, and that each connection made with another consciousness or setting is an operation similar to that performed by a synapse in the brain.

We have already extracted a concept of the global from Ishiguro's novel, one which has as its basic identifying features a constant tendency to expand, thwarting any attempt to reach an outside. These additional analyses of the novel allow us to identify some of the more complex elements of this concept. Ultimately, what *The Unconsoled* presents is a form of the global which is populated by a cognitive landscape, a landscape which is continually expanding each time a connection is made between one node and another. But this landscape of cognition is not just human; indeed, the landscape itself becomes a kind of sentient being, whilst at the same time the protagonist himself takes on some thoroughly inhuman qualities. This, then, is another example of the Unhuman Brain, whereby we have a global, cognitive connection into which is incorporated an inhuman element. In what remains of this chapter, we will pick out three of the main themes we can draw from this reading of Ishiguro's novel, in order to assess their implications in relation to the mode of conceptualisation being tracked, to relate this to a wider framework, and to return to some of the previous analyses provided in this chapter.

Networked, pt. 2

If Ryder functions like a node within an overall, cognitive landscape, then this also allows us to return to the novel's similarities with some of the ways in which the figure of the network is thought today. Whilst this figure is used mainly to talk about the internet, it has also been given a much more general usage by some authors. In Chapter 2, we saw how Christopher Vitale has developed a whole philosophy around networks, suggesting that the entire world-as-system is comprised of a series of networks, from the natural to the man-made, the internet being just one example.[54] The opposing view to this would be something like Darin Barney's, which states that the proliferation of digital 'technologies of networked communication and information management' have engendered the use of the network as the 'basic form of human organization and relationship across a wide range of social, political and economic configurations'.[55] For our own purposes, we will take a view in the middle of these two, whereby it is acknowledged that the network form – from road-systems, to television networks – was already present before the advent of the internet, but that the latter has increased our recognition and preferment of the network as such, whether this is in its material guise, or as a means of conceptualisation. The internet is, one might say, the paradigm of the network form, amongst a proliferation of variations on the form itself.

Ishiguro's novel is one example of this, in that we have a networked landscape, whereby each node connects with another, which is also a cognitive landscape. Manuel Castells has made an explicit connection between the brain and the network form. As he puts it, 'we are networks connected to a world of networks', thereby implying that the billions of connections between

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[54] Vitale, p. 4.
[55] Darin Barney, *The Network Society* (Cambridge and Malden, MA: Polity, 2004), p. 25. For an almost entirely internet-centred view of the network form see Jan van Dijk, *The Network Society: Social Aspects of New Media*, trans. Leontine Spoorenberg (London: Sage, 1999).

neurons in the human brain is analogous to the connections between nodes in the networked globe.[56] *The Unconsoled*, on the other hand, puts forward a cognitive network which has become part of the landscape itself, and in this sense we might well link this to the previous comments regarding the externalisation of the schemata in recent years. From this point of view, the landscape in Ishiguro's novel is a site where the inhuman comes to haunt the human protagonist, to structure their consciousness from the outside, thus providing a link with the global proliferation of digital and network technologies, as in *Lost Highway*. Again, Stiegler's term 'disindividuation' would ring true here, in that Ryder breaks out of the bounds of the usual parameters of human perception, and is able to merge with other human consciousnesses.

Alternatively, we might view the concept of the global extracted from *The Unconsoled* as a meditation on the nature of world-wide networks as such. Indeed, the clash between human and non-human is exactly what Thacker and Galloway pick out as one of the quintessential features of the network, from the internet to networks of contagion.[57] As they put it, 'the nonhuman quality of networks is precisely what makes them so difficult to grasp. They are, we suggest, a medium of contemporary power, and yet no single subject or group absolutely controls a network'.[58] Networks have a non-human quality because, whilst to an extent they are controlled by human agents, they simultaneously have a cohesive life of their own, and produce their own effects and consequences: 'if no single human entity controls the network in any total way', the authors ask, 'then can we assume that a network is not controlled in any total way?'[59] The answer is basically yes, and it is this mix between the human and the nonhuman which leads the

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[56] Castells, *Communication Power*, p. 139. Nevertheless, Castells' famous use of the term 'network society' is still predominantly used to talk about the internet. For a comprehensive view of this see Manuel Castells, ed., *The Network Society: A Cross-cultural Perspective* (Cheltenham and Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar, 2004).
[57] Thacker and Galloway, p. 28.
[58] Ibid., p. 5.
[59] Ibid., p. 154.

two to describe the network form as ‘unhuman’.[60] Thinking about networks in terms of this mixture, according to Galloway and Thacker, ‘will confront the horizon of thinking itself’.[61] The network, from this perspective, goes beyond our usual methods of measurement.

On this view, the confrontation with the inhuman in Stiegler’s work, *Lost Highway*, *The Unconsoled*, and other works, becomes a confrontation with the inhuman aspect of networks themselves, whether this is related to media and digital technologies, or is put in a more general light. Again, one might say that the horror and disorientation depicted in confronting the global network is ultimately reactionary. But it does offer a counterpoint to the valorisation of the network form in its open-source nature as the ultimate place of democracy, and in this sense we find a further link with the discussion of the network in Chapter 2.[62]

World History

We find another, indirect link between *The Unconsoled* and media technologies in the realm of affect, and the way in which this is presented as an important resource in the novel. This is most apparent initially in the way in which the city is presented in the novel, and how this fits in with a certain way of viewing our actual urban landscapes today. Nigel Thrift summarises this best, when he suggests that ‘affect has become a part of how cities are understood. […] [C]ities are increasingly expected to have “buzz”, to be “creative”, and to generally bring forth powers of invention and intuition [...]. Cities must exhibit intense expressivity’. According to Thrift, when it comes to the contemporary city, ‘affect is more and more likely to be engineered’, thereby becoming a basic structural requirement for the way in which the city is built, lived and

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[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid., p. 180.
[62] On this subject see also Evgeny Morozov, *The Net Delusion: How not to Liberate the World* (London: Allen Lane, 2011).

navigated.[63] This notion of an affect-producing urban environment is similar to the environment in *The Unconsoled*. It is not just the way in which the landscape consistently produces affects in Ryder via the presentation of various memories in concrete form. Further, there is a quite general imperative which comes from the inhabitants of the city, concerning his scheduled performance. Throughout the book, we are constantly reminded of the 'crisis' which has struck the city. What the crisis actually is, we never find out, but its resolution seems to rely solely on the recital which Ryder is to give, along with the other side-performances scheduled for the evening. One character puts the case strongly when he suggests that, if the performance goes badly, there is nothing left for the city's inhabitants but 'misery! Yes, deep, lonely misery!' (*TU* 128). Ryder is held responsible for setting in motion a positive chain of affect through music, in order to restore the city to its former glory, to bring it out of crisis. Ryder's affective abilities become a precious commodity in the world of the novel, then, and this commodity is made use of quite extensively.

But the urban environment is also a global environment in Ishiguro's novel, and in this sense we can begin to consider this exploitation of affect from the perspective of the totality. In this regard, *The Unconsoled* chimes with a number of different theories of new forms of labour present in the capitalist world-system, such as what has been labelled cognitive, immaterial, and affective labour.[64] Hardt and Negri subsume the first two of these under the latter, for the simple reason that both cognitive and immaterial labour always involve some kind of production or exploitation of affect. In other words, affective labour is a labour which 'produces or manipulates affects such as a feeling of ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement, or passion'.[65] In fact, this

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[63] Nigel Thrift, *Non-Representational Theory: Space, Politics, Affect* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 172.
[64] On Cognitive labour see Yann Moulier Boutang, *Cognitive Capitalism*, trans. Ed Emery (Cambridge and Malden, MA: Polity, 2011). On Immaterial labour see Maurizio Lazzarato, 'Immaterial Labour', in *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*, ed. Michael Hardt and Paolo Virno (Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 1996).
[65] Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, p. 108.

takes us back to the beginning of this chapter, where we saw Hardt and Negri's suggestion that contemporary capitalism relies on a production of what is held in common, whether this in the realm of affect or genetic material. And in this sense we also link back here to Casarino's comments on the nature of the common, and the way in which Keiller's film was read as infusing the entire world-system with the principle of common ownership.

To stick with this more general aspect of the contemporary state of labour, what all of the material collated here places on the agenda is a re-emergence of an expansive dimension of capitalism. In other words, from the 1990s onwards, a new frontier opened in capitalist markets, enabled to a large extent by digital and network technologies. In many ways, this can be viewed as a new phase of primitive accumulation. But instead of land, what is at stake here is immaterial, communicative, affective and informational property. As Steven Shaviro puts it:

> Digitization goes hand in hand with privatization. It's our version of […] primitive accumulation. Just as British landlords, at the start of the sixteenth century, expropriated the peasants and enclosed formerly common lands, so multinational corporations, at the start of the twenty-first, are appropriating data that used to be in the public domain and turning culture itself into a private preserve.[66]

When it comes to the genetic, we have already seen how Hardt and Negri identify this as a new avenue for capitalist markets. Similarly, Donna Haraway's equation of contemporary genetic technologies and the gene itself with Marx's concept of commodity fetishism suggests the movement of the former into the market, and the capitalist mode of abstraction. As Haraway puts it herself, 'ask any biodiversity lawyer whether genes are sources of "value" these days, and the structure of commodity fetishism will become clear'.[67] In other words, and as McKenzie Wark

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[66] Shaviro, *Connected,* p. 43.
[67] Donna J. Haraway, *Modest_Witness@Second_Millenium*. *FemaleMan_Meets_OncoMouse*: *Feminism and Technoscience* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 135.

puts it, 'just as the commodity fetish makes all things property to be exchanged, so too the corporeal fetish makes all of life a thing to be commodified through ownership of its code'.[68]

All of these examples showcase a re-ignition of a particular version of world-history, namely, the history of capitalist expansion, and its movement into a place outside of itself. This is particularly evident in the use of Marx's concept of primitive accumulation, the very locus for the expansion of capitalism into a master-totality. But the examples provided figure this opening-up – out of necessity – in rather contradictory terms. So, whilst we are given a concept of the global which does away with the outside, we have, simultaneously, another virtual or immaterial opening. To take *The Unconsoled* in particular, this novel figures a world from which it is impossible to reach an outside, but one which is nevertheless continually expanding. This dynamic between expansion and stasis in *The Unconsoled* can be read, then, in relation to the expansion into the realm of the immaterial, the affective, and the cognitive, which are of course some of the novel's main concerns.

To return to the concept of primitive accumulation, in this light *Robinson in Ruins* can be seen to display a similar sentiment. If, as we saw previously, one of the film's theses is that primitive accumulation is not necessarily an originary event, but rather one which is carried out continuously, then we might posit here that it is also capitalism's current phase which makes the treatment of primitive accumulation all the more resonant, particularly when it comes to forms of common ownership and practices. The same is true also for our identification of a form of monstrous schematics; here, the hijacking of consciousness within a global feedback loop becomes another way of talking about the commoditisation of affect, consciousness, and communication. The global, in all these examples, brings with it a paradoxical expansionism. With this expansion comes a sense of historical progression, and whether this is the imperative to

[68] Wark, p. 143.

imagine a new future in Keiller's film, or the riding of the expanding world which Ryder undertakes on the tram in *The Unconsoled*, this is certainly registered on the narratives we have discussed here. What is particularly striking about some of the material examined here – from Lynch's film, to Ishiguro's novel, to Haraway's theorisations – is their age. The works which hail from the 1990s uncannily register this new crack in what Francis Fukuyama and others had only a few years before called the end of History, in response to the completion of the capitalist project on a planetary scale. But this can perhaps be put down to their close proximity to the beginnings of these mutations in capitalism, a proximity which makes their figurations none the less startling.

Unhuman Brain

What the particular strain of the re-emergence of history in these materials suggests further, is a mixture of human and non-human actors, as opposed to the purely human variants of world-history, some of which we traced in Chapter 4. This is an instance where the human is traversed by the non-human, both on an 'individual' level, and at the level of the totality. The human labours by being affected both by humans via non-human networks, and by non-human entities themselves. The progression of history is figured not merely in terms of human development and expansion, but the development and discovery of life itself, and its subsequent mastery and commodification. The concept of the Unhuman Brain seeks to identify this traversal of the human by the non-human. It figures the potential not only for the human to be decentred at the level of the totality, but also for the very vessel of this totality to disappear, for the global to move away from its terra-centric focus. In this sense we also saw *Robinson in Ruins* and *There but for the* as being part of the same movement, whereby we are encouraged to think of the

possibility of the Earth without the human, and therefore the end to the Earth-universe, reliant as it is on the privileging of the human subject's point of view.

The elephant in the room in this chapter has been perhaps what is now widely called posthumanism, and the Unhuman Brain would certainly be a version of the totality which fits well with this school of thought, with the latter's emphasis on systems theory, network technologies, non-human actors such as animals and machines, and the general withering of humanist and idealist-centred philosophies.[69] But our investigations throughout this thesis have demonstrated that the Idealist-Brain is still very much alive and well, and that consequently conceptions of the global remain to a very large extent dominated by this paradigm. In this regard, the contemporary moment presents a confrontation between two regimes of the Global Brain: one is concerned with the human totality, whilst the other is concerned with a human totality traversed by the non-human; one is centred on the terrestrial, whilst the other contains within it the possibility of leaving this behind. It remains to be seen which one of these will win

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[69] For a reader on posthumanism see Neil Badminton, ed., *Posthumanism* (London: Palgrave, 2000). Cary Wolfe describes posthumanism as the 'historical moment in which the decentering of the human by its imbrications in […] technical, medical, informatic, and economic networks is impossible to ignore', and which is further attested to via various phenomena, from systems theory, to the human-animal question, and from the digital to deconstruction. Cary Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?* (Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 2010), p. xv. An influential thinker associated with posthumanism is Donna Haraway, who in her writings on cyborgs and 'companion species' seeks to explore the relationships and co-evolution between and of the human, the technological, and the animal, and their various political and natural-cultural potentials. See Donna J. Haraway, 'A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology and Socialist Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century', in *Posthumanism*, ed. Neil Badminton; and Donna J. Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003). Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault have influenced the discourse on posthumanism immensely. For an account of this see Neil Badminton, *Alien Chic: Posthumanism and the Other Within* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), pp. 42-46, 109-122. In connection with this, Sean Gaston has given a reading of some of Derrida's late work, which lends itself well to the discourse of posthumanism. Gaston suggests that Derrida's claim that the world cannot be 'one and the same thing' due to the human's cohabitation with other animals, means that 'there is the possibility that there is *no world*'. Sean Gaston, *The Concept of World from Kant to Derrida* (London and New York: Rowman and Littlefield International, 2013), p. 132. This leads us back to a perceived inability to think the totality, in this case from a posthumanist perspective. This is at odds with the study carried out here, which even when it comes to a decentred subject, sees this as being incorporated into contemporary figurations of the totality, most usefully summed up through the figure of the Unhuman Brain. For a general take on the decentring of the human outside the discourse of posthumanism see Richard Grusin, ed., *The Nonhuman Turn* (Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 2015).

out. In the conclusion, however, we will sketch out further some of the implications of the confrontation between these two visions of the totality.

Conclusion

The two versions of the Global Brain traced throughout this thesis comprise two of the most significant ways of figuring the global. In these two visions of the totality, it is not just the political, the technological, the ecological, and the historical which are at stake, but also our very conception of the human itself.

The Idealist Brain is the continuation of a very long line of conceptualisation, which can be traced back most directly to Hegel. But, as we have seen, this version of the Global Brain has taken on some extra baggage in the intervening period, and has in the main become the emblem of an idealist-humanist view of the human totality which incorporates media, satellite and telecommunications technology (and to a lesser extent, bio- and gene-technology) into its vision. Marshal McLuhan stands as the founding figure of the contemporary Idealist Brain, the latter being present throughout critical theory, film, and literature. What all the examples of this looked at suggest – from the hive-like mind in *Generation A* and its links with McLuhan's work to the network of interchangeable subjects in *Synecdoche, New York*, and from Eric Packer's foray into the 'Singularity', to the mental transitioning in Iain Banks' *Transition* – is the primacy of the *human* totality, which as we have seen is tied firmly to the Earth. The Idealist Brain joins up with the various conceptualisations of the global which are bound firmly together with the terrestrial, and which posit the infinite as that which is contained within the bounds of the Earth itself, as we saw particularly in Chapters 1 and 3. Whether it is utopian or dystopian, the global connection of

minds guarantees the primacy of the human, even if this is a human which becomes indistinct as an individual subject.[1]

The Unhuman Brain, however, offers a rather different picture. As outlined in Chapter 5, this version of the Global Brain is a relatively new one, which incorporates aspects of the nonhuman into a vision of the human totality; it is, in other words, a human totality traversed by the nonhuman. This takes into account the effect of contemporary digital and network technologies, and other networked phenomena to a much greater extent than the various cases of the Idealist Brain encountered. Indeed, the nonhuman aspects of all of these technologies led us to link-up with other ways of figuring the human as traversed by the nonhuman, such as Donna Haraway's writing on gene technologies. The human is decentred in this vision of the Unhuman Brain, but this does not mean that the totality is discarded. Rather, we have a totality made up of both human and non-human entities. As we have seen, this connection of human minds which is traversed by the nonhuman is concomitant with a vision of the global which has the potential to be decoupled from the Earth, figured through the human's potential absence. Thus, as with the Idealist Brain, there is also a particular way of viewing the Earth-universe which goes with this, and in the case of the Unhuman Brain we can say that the version of the terrestrial associated with the Idealist Brain is discredited. The Unhuman Brain can be linked to the discourse on post-humanism, but it can also be viewed in the light of other developments in contemporary thought such as what has been dubbed the 'speculative turn' and 'object oriented ontology', both of which seek to put an end to the prioritisation of human thought, and take into account objects of

[1] On the dystopian and utopian versions of the Idealist Brain, it is worth considering Dave Eggers' novel *The Circle* (2013), which deals not only with a hive-like mind made possible through network and digital technologies, but also actively interrogates the utopian and dystopian possibilities and inflections of such a scenario. Dave Eggers, *The Circle: A Novel* (London and New York: Penguin, 2014).

all shapes and sizes.[2] In terms of narrative, we might look for other examples of this version of the Global Brain in contemporary network narratives such as William Gibson's and Thomas Pynchon's, whereby, to use Gibson's phrase, 'cyberspace has everted', the computer network itself coming out into meat-space (at least in the way it is conceptualised), and structuring the human's movements and thoughts.[3] But, to reiterate, it is the decentring of the human at the level of the totality which is at stake in the Unhuman Brain.

The confrontation of these two versions of the Global Brain poses its own ethical and political problems, but before moving on to discuss some of these, we might briefly look at a figure which encapsulates, in itself, this confrontation, an exercise which will in fact lead us on to the ethical and the political. That figure is what has been called the 'Anthropocene', which designates a new geological era, in which human activity has more influence on the Earth than any other naturally occurring factor. In this era, as Gaia Vince puts it, 'humanity has become a geophysical force on a par with earth-shattering asteroids and planet-cloaking volcanoes that defined past eras'.[4] The moment at which humanity becomes god-like in its capacity to influence the entire planet, then, coincides with the forces of global climate change and impending catastrophe which are a direct result of human activity. As Christophe Bonneuil and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz put it, 'the Anthropocene is the sign of our power, but also of our impotence'.[5] Immediately, then, the problem is posed: humanity seems to have reached an absolute, god-like

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[2] Meillassoux is the most widely-cited of the speculative realists. For a reader on the speculative turn, see *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism*, ed. Levi R. Bryant and others (Melbourne: Re-Press, 2011). On Object Oriented Ontology, Graham Harman is the founding contributor to this school of thought. See Harman, *The Quadruple Object*, and Graham Harman, *Guerrilla Metaphysics: Phenomenology and the Carpentry of Things* (Chicago: Open Court, 2005).
[3] William Gibson, quoted in Steven E. Jones, *The Emergence of the Digital Humanities* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), p. 19. For examples of this eversion in narrative form see William Gibson, *Pattern Recognition* (London and New York: Penguin, 2004); and Thomas Pynchon, *Bleeding Edge* (London: Vintage, 2014).
[4] Gaia Vince, *Adventures in the Anthropocene: A Journey into the Heart of the Planet We Made* (London: Vintage, 2016), p. 5.
[5] Christophe Bonneuil and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz, *The Shock of the Anthropocene: The Earth, History and Us*, trans. David Fernbach (London and New York: Verso, 2016).

status, and yet at the same time it is in danger of being completely wiped out, without any means of resistance. From this point of view, the Anthropocene expresses the contradiction between a human centred, Earth-universe and an Unhuman totality, which threatens to tear out the Earth from under our feet. Or, to phrase it slightly differently, we thus reach in the figure of the Anthropocene the point at which the Earth-universe, tied to as it is to the prioritisation of the human, becomes its own undoing, or contains within it the very germ of its own destruction. As McKenzie Wark has suggested, the recognition of this fact can be seen as a positive, in that it forces us to think from 'the labor point of view', and to rethink how this relates to geology itself, in order not only to undo the Anthropocene, but also to think of new ways of organising society and its relation with the 'workings of the world'.[6] But, as with the Unhuman Brain, many will detect a danger here in de-prioritising the human. What, after all, becomes of human rights (however limited or flawed these may be), individual freedom (however loaded a concept this might be) and human suffrage (however futile this may or may not be) without a concept of a universal humanity, or where humanity is side-lined in articulations of the universal?

It is with these questions in mind that we might turn here to Alain Badiou's book, *The Century* (2005). For Badiou, the twentieth century was 'haunted by the idea of changing man, of creating a new man', and this is attested to predominantly through the two large-scale political projects of the century: fascism and communism. In our own era, the creation of a new being through a political project is no longer a goal, despite the fact that 'with the advent of genetic engineering, [...] preparations are under way for a real transformation of man, for the modification of the species'. There is no project, says Badiou, because today we leave science and technics to the law of the market, and so when asked the hypothetical question 'what is to be

[6] Wark, p. 225.

done about this fact: that science knows how to make a new man?', 'everyone knows there is only one answer: profit will tell us what to do'.[7]

This focus on the creation of a new version of the human is mirrored in the stand-off between what Badiou calls a 'radical humanism' and a 'radical anti-humanism', both of which came about during the twentieth century as the result of the 'death of God'.[8] For radical humanism, the task was to replace God with Man as the ultimate absolute, and Jean-Paul Sartre is the prime example cited here. On the other hand, radical anti-humanism is that which sees the disappearance of God as conterminous with the disappearance of Man as a philosophical category, thereby demoting the very concept of Man (and God) to the status of discourse. The paradigm for this way of thinking is Michel Foucault's work. Radical humanism, then, is 'a general anthropology accompanying a concrete process of emancipation', whereas radical anti-humanism is 'a thinking which lets an inhuman beginning arrive'.[9] Both of these projects use the category of Man – whether this is its presence, or its absence – in order to develop a project for thought and/or praxis. In the case of Sartre and radical humanism, this is the thought of the human as its own, absolute becoming, and the political project which stands alongside this is Marxism. For Foucault, getting rid of the category of Man signals the possibility of a new form of thought and praxis. In both cases 'Man, whether as vacuity or becoming' represents 'an unprecedented possibility'. In our own age, however, and as Badiou puts it,

> we witness the simultaneous abandonment of these two propositions. We are no longer offered anything more than the restoration of classical humanism, but without the vitality of the God [...] that sustained its exercise.[10]

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[7] Alain Badiou, *The Century*, trans. Alberto Toscano (Cambridge and Malden, MA: Polity, 2008), pp. 8-9.
[8] Ibid., p. 172.
[9] Ibid., p. 173.
[10] Ibid., p. 174.

Today is the era of ecology and of the market, both of which supposedly follow the same logic. The categories of radical humanism and radical anti-humanism, in other words, are abandoned in favour of 'natural' systems which supposedly require little or no maintenance. The task of creating a thought and a praxis around either the elevation of the human or its abandonment is neglected, and again left to market and 'natural' forces to define.[11]

Badiou's distinction between radical humanism and radical anti-humanism would initially seem to be a rather close fit with our own identification of the two versions of the Global Brain. The Idealist Brain elevates human consciousness to an overarching, animating force across the totality, whereas the Unhuman Brain figures a situation whereby the human is decentred, and worked into a new vision of the totality which incorporates various non-human elements. In this sense, though, we would have to disagree with Badiou's ultimate diagnosis, which is that these two strains of conceptualisation have been supplanted in favour of 'natural' processes, a scenario which is mirrored by the refusal to inject the creation of a new human with a political project. The stand-off between the Idealist Brain and the Unhuman Brain in contemporary culture demonstrates, firstly, the continued prevalence of radical humanism and its opposing doctrine, and secondly, the way in which this has been transposed onto conceptualisations of the global itself. Or, to put it slightly differently, what Badiou identifies has become firmly a question of the totality in contemporary cultural and philosophical production.

But where we can agree with Badiou is in his identification of the lack of an overall, political project, both when it comes to dealing with the human or its lack as an absolute category, or the way in which the global is conceptualised today in general. From this perspective, heterogeneity is perhaps the fundamental characteristic of what Fisher calls 'capitalist realism'. In other words, capitalist realism encourages the production of multiple

[11] Ibid., pp. 176-177.

cultural forms and figures, none of which follow a political programme, all of which simply circulate on the market, which is here the only (albeit shifting and volatile) constant in play. And this has been seen to be the case also with the specific topic of this thesis; whilst, then, we can see that ways of figuring the totality have certainly become a concern once again in contemporary Western, cultural production, what we have is actually is a whole series of competing versions of the totality, figured through the various different ways of conceptualising the global which we have traced. This is not to say that having different, competing versions of the global is a bad thing, but rather to make the point that capitalism has no one vision of *itself* as totality, and that this is its most effective tool in promoting the mode of production and thought associated with what Fisher calls capitalist realism.

Thus, apart from the two competing versions of the Global Brain, we have located here four, general ways of conceptualising the global in contemporary culture. Immanence came closest to the capitalist realist view when transposed onto the global itself, as here we are presented with a world without outside, a self-contained structure which cuts through itself and has an animating principle distributed evenly throughout itself, rather like the ways in which the capitalist world-system is figured by various different authors. In Chapter 1, this cutting-through was associated also with the status of art and media in contemporary society, and particularly with the way in which the computer, alongside the world-system, reconfigures our ways of thinking about the former two things. Indeed, this was demonstrated particularly well in the case of *House of Leaves*. In Chapter 2, the focus on the technological was widened to global networks, and in particular global computer networks, which again put forward a view of the global characterised by immanence. Both of these aspects of the technological demonstrate the way in which our means of conceptualising the global has taken on some of the dominant

diagrams of what Jameson has called the 'third machine age', or the age of the computer.[12] But this registering of the technological cannot be separated from the political, and whilst it was capitalist realism which provided a way of demonstrating this in Chapter 1, in Chapter 2 Hardt and Negri's concept of Empire provided the most useful and relevant way of doing this, emphasising as it does the disappearance of structures of transcendence, the networked structure of the world-system, and the prevalence of control. The network, the murder of transcendence and an overall animating principle of control were, of course, all main features of the materials discussed throughout Chapter 2, and in this sense we built up a broad picture of this mode of conceptualisation.

Just as the technological and the economic cannot be separated from the political in conceptualisations of the global, so too we have located specifically philosophical concepts which go hand in hand with the former, whether these are extracted from artistic works, or are taken from philosophy itself. One overarching concept – derived from a reading of Sloterdijk's work initially, but found throughout examples of contemporary culture – was what was dubbed the Earth-universe, whereby the idea of the infinite Universe of the contemporary era underwent an amalgamation with the concept of the Earth itself as the site of the global. Indeed, this continued into Chapter 3, where the infinite again was seen to be folded within the bounds of the Earth. But in this case we were presented with a way of conceptualising the global which was characterised by transcendence, and which fitted with various discourses focused on things such as the world city, cosmopolitanism and the Singularity. Whilst this suggested a re-emergence of the outside in our explorations of the ways in which the global is being conceptualised, this was an outside which was folded within the bounds of the terrestrial, an earthly transcendence which, as the name suggests, never managed to break free from the planet. This vision of an earthly

[12] Jameson, *Postmodernism*, pp. 34-35.

transcendence brought us back to the state of capital, and in this instance we encountered a vision of the totality which was modelled on sovereignty, quasi-religiousness, and the realm of the digital. This was not a classical form of sovereignty, but rather one which was based largely on privileged nodes in the world-system of capital, and the same was the case with the religiosity displayed, which acted in the main as a cipher for the power of global capitalism, or at the very least a form of political subjugation. And in fact, the various links found with the digital and the concept of the Singularity were seen to be related in the works discussed to the power dynamics inherent in the capitalist world-system.

In Chapter 4, we saw another way in which the outside is still of concern in articulations of the global, but in this case from the point of view of contingency. The totality returns here, in the sense that both a Modern and a more classical vision of a world structured by contingent events is transposed onto social relations, and the ground of these, across the globe. On one hand, contingency offers a model of the global which forces us to view the world as being potentially, and radically different. On the other hand, the injection of contingency into ways of conceptualising the global resembles a common way of conceptualising the world-system, as that which creates contingent events, and yet which remains itself ultimately stable, a fixed and necessary mechanism which is immovable and immutable. Indeed, it is the split in ways of figuring contingency which allows us to identify a movement away from a human-centred view of the global, and its concomitant Earth-universe. This is because a vision of the global which forces us to imagine the Earth as radically otherwise, and without human habitation, calls into question both the Earth-universe and the privileging of the human subject that goes with this. Indeed, as we saw in the case of *Cloud Atlas*, even when a different Earth seems completely impossible – a world, that is, without mass subjugation – the latter ultimately slips into

irrelevancy, as it is this itself which would appear to be creating the imaginative block in the human conceptual apparatus, and is therefore something which needs to be left behind.

But leaving behind the Earth, as we have seen, is perhaps not where the abandonment of the Earth-universe and the Idealist Brain begins. As was sketched out in Chapter 5, it is the various nonhuman elements which have been incorporated into conceptualisations of the global which are paving the way for this. From global networks to ecological collapse, and from the infiltration of media technologies which structure human consciousness to the marketisation of gene material and codes, it is clear that the nonhuman's incorporation into the vision of the human totality also introduces the possibility of the end of the Earth as the privileged site of the global. The disappearance of the Earth-universe, in other words, must first take place, it seems, from the Earth itself.

As we saw in Chapter 5, each mode of conceptualisation has its own problems and contradictions. This, in fact, is one of the benefits of a conceptually-oriented study, as it allows us to draw out some of these overarching problems and contradictions, which might otherwise have been left untouched in more polemical studies, or studies focused on strict orders of representation. Thus, immanence provides a vision of the world and with this the capitalist world-system, as inescapable, as an all-encompassing state to which there is no alternative. Running alongside this there is a feeling that we have moved into an era of total control, one which is flexible, which replaces the remnants of sovereignty on which the nation-state was reliant, and which is situated throughout the totality. But, immanence also offers on the other hand its own logic of resistance, whether this is political, insurgent, temporal, or aesthetic, as seen in *Empire*, *Existenz*, and *Synecdoche, New York*.

Transcendence offers at one end a way of identifying power within the world-system, as opposed to viewing the former as placeless, and distributed. But at the same time, it runs the risk of implying that subjugation is a wholly necessary affair. We thus identified, in Chapter 3, three different regimes of the transcendent: the first – as seen with *Transition* – holds up the global control centre as ultimately wholly necessary; the second – as seen with *Cosmopolis* and *Elysium* – uses motifs of transcendence in order to identify sites of power within the world-system, but runs the danger of slipping into the mode of thought of the first regime; the third – as seen with *The Book of Dave* – uses transcendent motifs to identify sites of power, but simultaneously discredits their very status as transcendent, and thus demolishes their apparently necessary nature.

A similar dynamic was located in Chapter 4, where two different regimes of contingency were located when it comes to conceptualisations of the global. The first – located predominantly in Smith's *There but for the* – was a radical model of contingency, one which offered not only a glimpse of a world without the human, but also a world structured through common ownership. The second – seen through Smith's *The Accidental*, but also a range of other materials – gave us a model of contingency which is always beholden to a higher necessity, and this necessity invariably appeared in the guise of the global state of capital. Contingency thus poses a problem in the contemporary conceptual apparatus, in that it can be at once dizzyingly liberating, whilst at the same time wholly conservative.

The beginning of this conclusion has already sketched out some of the problems and contradictions when it comes to Chapter 5. What we might add in addition to this is that we see here ways of conceptualising the global which both figure the renewal of expansionism in terms of the world-system, but also a resurgence of common forms of ownership situated across the

globe, as identified in Keiller's *Robinson in Ruins*, which in this sense finds a parallel with *There but for the*. Thus, we find another contradiction when it comes to the various visions of the totality, which is that whilst capitalism and private forms of ownership seem to be growing exponentially, the common is simultaneously both a prominent figure in the conceptual apparatus, and an actually-existing state which sustains the world-system today.

Throughout this thesis, we have also encountered a contradictory figure, a conceptual persona whom we called the anti-nomad. As we have seen, the anti-nomad comes into play when the nomadic becomes a normative way of life. In its conflation of movement and stasis, the nomadic and the sedentary, the carceral and the boundless, this figure resonated with the effects telecommunication and satellite networks are seen to have on contemporary life, the way in which capital operates via centres of command and control, the discourse of cosmopolitanism and the glocal, and the interplay between control and flexibility. The fact that the anti-nomad has been seen to be present throughout the various ways of conceptualising the global – whether we are concerned with an instance of the Earth-universe, or that which breaks this apart – suggests that this is a much more general phenomenon in the return to figurations of the totality. From this general perspective, the anti-nomad comes to signal the return of the ability to, as Lukács once put it, 'experience distances as realities', whether these realities are human or inhuman, or a mixture of both.[13]

Indeed, what all of these problems and contradictions demonstrate is both the re-emergence of totality in contemporary thought, and the different forms this totality can take. Thus, whilst this thesis might well have gone down the route of defining how cultural artefacts respond to, or are products of globalisation, or the capitalist world-system, we have sought to identify instead how contemporary narratives contribute to predominant ways of figuring the

[13] Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel*, p. 97.

totality, and some of the main ways of conceptualising the global. A further contribution has been to see how the roots of this return to the totality are themselves often found within the postmodern. Whilst a thorough treatment of some of the hallmarks of the postmodern and their relationship with the global would not have been possible here, we have nevertheless identified a recurring theme in this instance. Whether it is the postmodern tropes in *House of Leaves* or the dynamic of simulation in *Synecdoche, New York*, and whether it is an emphasis on contingency or a waning of transcendence, all these examples display a form of the global which takes some of its main ingredients from postmodern thought, but ultimately twists these in a direction which no longer has such an aversion toward the totality, and an inability to locate and figure this. Or, if it is not a way of conceptualising the global which has its roots in the postmodern, then it is a variant of the former which is distinctly set apart from the postmodern, whether this is the new-found sense of Spirit located in narratives such as *Generation A*, *Synecdoche, New York*, *Cloud Atlas*, and so on, or a model of transcendence, with all the (quasi-)religious sentiment which goes with this. In all these cases, we are witnessing a turn away from postmodern discourse, or at the very least what Steven Connor has described as postmodernism having 'grown old'.[14] Indeed, all of these examples of either postmodernism's transmutation, or its displacement, serve to link this thesis to a growing body of work which recognises postmodernism's passing, whether this is seen to be as a result of new digital and media technologies, a rise in religious fundamentalism, or a return to the principle of mimesis.[15] The prevalence of conceptualisations of the global

[14] Steven Connor, 'Postmodernism Grown Old', in *Supplanting the Postmodern: An Anthology of Writings on the Arts and Culture of the 21st Century*, ed. David Rudrum and Nicholas Stavris (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2015), p. 33.

[15] On the waning of postmodernism in relation to digital and new media technologies see Linda Hutcheon, 'Epilogue: The Postmodern...in Retrospect', in *Supplanting the Postmodern*; Katherine Hayles and Todd Gannon, 'Mood Swings: The Aesthetics of Ambient Emergence', in *The Mourning After: Attending the Wake of Postmodernism*, ed. Neil Brooks and Josh Toth (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2007); and Alan Kirby, *Digimodernism: How New Technologies Dismantle the Postmodern and Reconfigure our Culture* (London and New York: Continuum, 2009). On religious fundamentalism and its relationship to the end of postmodernism in the US

throughout contemporary Western culture is perhaps one of the most significant areas in which the postmodern is being supplanted. If the totality is again of concern, however, this does not mean that we simply return to a prior state of holism, religiosity, or political investment. Rather, new forms of the global are being thought in front of our very eyes, and it has been the purpose of this thesis to set about identifying these. The totality is back. But it remains to be seen whether or not it will be claimed.

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see Paul Maltby, 'Postmodernism in a Fundamentalist Era', in *The Mourning After*. Finally, on the re-discovery of mimesis see Josh Toth, *The Passing of Postmodernism: A Spectroanalysis of the Contemporary* (New York: New York State UP, 2010). *House of Leaves* itself has been identified with the passing of postmodernism, and so we find a very specific link here with this thesis and the emerging body of work outlined. See Hayles and Todd, 'Mood Swings', pp. 116-125; and William G. Little, 'Nothing to Write Home About: Impossible Reception in Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves*', in *The Mourning After*.

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