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THE POST-APOCALYPTIC TURN:

A STUDY OF CONTEMPORARY APOCALYPTIC

AND POST-APOCALYPTIC NARRATIVE

by

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ABSTRACT

THE POST-APOCALYPTIC TURN: A STUDY OF CONTEMPORARY APOCALYPTIC AND POST-APOCALYPTIC NARRATIVE

by

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The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2014
Under the Supervision of Professor Peter Y. Paik

Few periods have witnessed so strong a cultural fixation on apocalyptic calamity as the present. From fictions and comic books to Hollywood films, television shows, and video games, the end of the world is ubiquitous in the form of apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives. Imagining world-changing catastrophes, contemporary apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives force us to face urgent socio-political questions such as danger of globalization, effect of neoliberal capitalist hegemony, ecological disasters, fragility of human civilization, and so on. J. G. Ballard's final fictions, though they do not directly deal with apocalyptic events but evoke apocalyptic mood, portray the bleak landscape of post-political, post-historical, late capitalist society, where extreme boredom generates mindless violence. Unlike Ballard, Margaret Atwood's satirical *MaddAddam* trilogy not only envisions the real possibility of apocalypse under the current neoliberal tendency but also presents a utopian desire in the form of a religious group that actively resists the hegemony of neoliberalism. James Howard Kunstler's post-apocalyptic fiction focuses on a post-petroleum age, where people lead simple and quotidian lives due to the scarcity of oil. By bringing the sense of scarcity to the fore, Kunstler's novel also formulates one version of realist worldview, in which the scarcity of resources inevitably calls for the strict rule of law. As an ultimate social

allegory of anxiety and fear in our times, the global zombie apocalypse envisages the total destruction of civilization, examining the rising necessity of realist attitude that fundamentally negates the traditional belief of progress. Although the scope of contemporary apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives is wide and varied, they share one thing in common: the bold desire to imagine a totally different world by questioning the current order of things.

DEDICATION

To my parents, Choon-shik Moon and Mi-sun Kang.
Also to my wife, Hye-jung Shin.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

**NARRATIVES THAT LEAP INTO THE FUTURE …
AND BACK TO THE PRESENT**

> The end of the world has already occurred.
> —Timothy Morton, *Hyperobjects*

> History is the subject of a structure whose site is not homogenous, empty
> time, but time filled by the presence of the now. Thus, to Robespierre
> ancient Rome was a past charged with the time of the now which he
> blasted out of the continuum of history. The French Revolution viewed
> itself as Rome reincarnate. It evoked ancient Rome the way fashion
> evokes costumes of the past. Fashion has a flair for the topical, no matter
> where it stirs in the thickets of long ago; it is a tiger's leap into the past.
> —Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History"

This dissertation is a study of apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives in the

contemporary period, which concerns such themes as breakdown of community,

economic crisis, environmental catastrophe, collapse of civilization itself, and so on. The

term "apocalyptic narrative" is used here as a sub-genre of speculative fiction that is

concerned with the collapse of civilization through various disasters such as nuclear war,

plague, energy shortages, flood, earthquake, or political conflict. Post-apocalyptic

narratives are set in a world or civilization after such a disaster has taken place. They

often depict the aftermath of a world-changing catastrophic event. Post-apocalyptic

narratives confront us with the fragility of human civilization, which is conveyed by such

themes as the relationship between violence and boredom, neoliberal hegemony and

subjectivity, resource depletion, and the inhuman condition that challenges the

conventionally humanitarian values, all of which are manifested in connection with

catastrophic events that render these various narratives the particular title of 'apocalypse.'

Apocalyptic motifs have long been a part of the western literary tradition since the

writing of the Book of Revelation, and millenarian movements have been a recurring

phenomenon of European history, from the antinomian sects of the late Middle Ages to the radical political movements of the twentieth century.[1] Indeed, human beings have been fascinated by the concept of the end of the world as we know it.[2] As the critic Frank Kermode observes, "[a]pocalypse and the related themes are strikingly long-lived" (Kermode, 29). For Kermode, human beings, who always live "in the middest," are anxious to understand the world in coherent patterns by providing themselves with the concept of an end. If there was the beginning and there is the world in the middle (present times), then there will definitely be the end of the world, which gives a satisfying "consonance with" the logical understanding of the linearity of historical time (Kermode, 17). However universal has been the concept of the end of the world, the term 'apocalypse' primarily bears the religious connotation, which is especially linked to Christianity. As the Greek word *apokalyptein* suggests, the meaning of 'apocalypse' was designated as 'disclosure' or 'revelation.' In the Book of Revelation (also known as simply Apocalypse) written by John of Patmos in the New Testament, the word 'revelation' denotes God's will, his providence in relation to the end of the world and the final judgment. There exists a tradition in the disciplines of history and literary criticism that narrowly restricts the term 'apocalypse' to the religious interpretation. For example, in his magnum opus of apocalyptic history in the west, historian Bernard McGinn

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[1] For a history of apocalyptic thoughts and movements in the ancient and Middle Ages, see McGinn (1979); for the apocalyptic millenarian movements in the late Middle Ages, see Cohn (1961); for a diachronic history of apocalypse in the west, see Baumgartner (1999) and Hall (2009).

[2] According to Baumgartner, the various forms of the religious concept of apocalypse can be found in almost every civilization, not limited to the tradition of western Christianity. The only exception is Confucianism in the East Asia (i.e. China, Korea, and Japan). In Baumgartner's words: "That this brief description of the world's end fits equally well for Aztecs, Buddhists, Christians, and Muslims serves as powerful evidence of the near universality of eschatology in human cultures and religions. Confucianism alone among the world's major systems of thought, and most minor ones, lacks an eschatological myth" (Baumgartner, 1).

rigorously confines apocalypse to a "divine plan":

> The most fundamental appeal of apocalypticism is the conviction it holds forth that time is related to eternity, that the history of man has a discernible structure and meaning in relation to its End, and that this End is the product not of chance, but of divine plan. Obviously, such beliefs are incapable of rational demonstration; they can only be revealed, that is, presented or manifested in symbolic and dramatic forms (McGinn, 36).

American studies scholar Zbigniew Lewicki, in his study of apocalyptic tradition in American fiction, also argues that apocalypse "must be discussed as a religious structure" in order not to lose the "relevance" of the term (Lewicki, xvi). But perhaps the most famous interpretation of apocalypse in terms of religion might be D. H. Lawrence's last book, *Apocalypse*. Combining literary analysis of the Book of Revelation with his own life-affirming philosophy of erotic power, Lawrence condemns apocalyptic thought of the Revelation as the representation of the political ideal of the weak souls, who desire to dominate the strong and the aristocratic. Evoking Nietzsche's dichotomy between masters and slaves in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Lawrence argues that unlike the aristocrats of the spirit who find their fulfillment in self-realization and in service, the vast, "always second-rate" mass who have no aristocratic singleness and high-mindedness secretly want "the rule of the weak" (Lawrence, 65, 66). And the biblical authority for this cry is the Apocalypse.

Although being faithful to the literal meaning of apocalypse, the austerity of the religious approach of apocalypse not only reduces the meaning of apocalypse to the area of myth but also loses track of the changing usage of the term, or what Kermode observes as the altered nature of apocalypse that is no longer "imminent" but "immanent" (Kermode, 25). While in the pre-modern era, the concept of apocalypse referred to the end of the world as an imminent actuality, in the modern era it has come to mean the

immanent existence of a life shaped by crisis. The theological myth of apocalypse has

been turned into an earthly fiction symbolic of crisis, as it were. Apocalypse as the fiction

of crisis emphasizes not the final judgment of God but the disjuncture of the present

orders in which dramatic events reshape the lives of human beings and bring an end to

the world as we know it. Modern technology has made it possible to destroy the world or

wipe out entire peoples, as borne out by the Holocaust and the atomic bombings of

Hiroshima and Nagasaki. But as its original meaning—disclosure—suggests, apocalypse

can also refer to a catastrophic change that results in the demise of old order and the

creation of new one. Whether this new order would be utopian or dystopian is often left

veiled. Freed from its religious shackles, apocalypse has become a concept that

designates "a dialectic, conflict, or tension of oppositions" (Ketterer, 8). In other words,

apocalypse can function as a conceptual tool that projects an imaginative catastrophic

event onto a reality, through which questions of political, economic, social, and cultural

problems of the present era can be raised, thought, and answered. In a world where the

fear of sudden collapse of civilization is becoming more widespread, the apocalyptic

imagination, or an imagination around apocalypse, is a way in which history can be re-

examined and human nature re-interrogated. Hence the apocalyptic imagination is, to

quote an American literary critic Joseph Dewey,

> … an attempt by a culture that is genuinely puzzled by and deeply
> disturbed to understand the very undergirdings of its makeup—its people
> suspended in graceless poses of helplessness, uncertainty, and fear—
> visionaries puzzle out a way of setting the present crisis within a larger
> context, a pattern greater than ever suspected, and judge that the crisis at
> hand is certainly of considerable dimension but is nevertheless part of an
> order as wide as the cosmos itself, an order that points humanity toward
> nothing less than the finale of its history (Dewey, 10).

In this sense, the changed nature of apocalypse in contemporary times is

concerned with imagining our history in a radically different way. That is, through the looking glass of apocalypse, human history is finally understood as the linear progression from the beginning to a definitive end. Moreover, the rearrangement of the present and the future by means of a catastrophic event enables apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives to carry out thought experiments that confront readers and viewers with disturbing political, social, and cultural questions. In the case of apocalyptic narratives, the story begins with the present situation which then leads to a catastrophic event, whereas in case of post-apocalyptic narratives, the story takes place in the future after the catastrophic event, in light of which the present situation is critically recounted. To look to Walter Benjamin's ideas, apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives are related to what he calls "the time of the now [*Jetztzeit*]," which, unlike "a homogeneous, empty time," is outside the grip of linear time and can be brought about from the future or the past into the present, whereby the time always in transition as well as in translation (Benjamin 1968, 261). Benjamin teaches us to reinvent the possibility of the past, the time that has passed like an instant, from which the messianic future can be grasped. That is, Benjamin tries to view time not in the way of linearity (he condemns so-called "progress") but in terms of chaos and upheaval, into which the past and the future can be entered. Catastrophic events, through which the present civilization and history experience the groundbreaking change, in apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives evoke the Benjaminian *Jetztzeit* that penetrates into the present order, or the fearsome Other that shakes the allegedly peaceful subject who has been accustomed to *status quo*.

Focusing on the road leading to the aftermath of the present civilization, both apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives are primarily concerned with the theme of

subverting the existing order. That the present civilization is imagined having collapsed is itself a version of this subversion, in which the age-old power relation of 'nature under the control of civilization' is reversed into that of 'civilization under the control of nature.' George R. Stewart's post-apocalyptic novel *Earth Abides* (1949) is representative of this theme as its title suggests. The collapse of civilization means the collapse of values that have been intrinsic to civilization. This can be found most poignantly in the depiction of the characters in apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives. In this context, it is likely that those who accept and adapt to a radically different world are people whose status was marginal in the former civilization. The technical expertise of a financial analyst or a marketing manager, for example, is much less valuable, if not altogether worthless, than the skills of a farmer or a mechanic or a soldier. Power relations among these occupations—the former being rich and powerful for their knowledge and technology in capitalist economy, while the latter being more marginal for their ties to manual labor— are overturned dramatically. In H. G. Wells' *The Time Machine* (1895), the protagonist, a scientist and inventor simply called "The Time Traveller," travels into the distant future (AD 802,701), where he finds humanity divided into two groups. One is the Eloi, a community of small, elegant, faint-hearted, child-like human beings, and the other is the Morlocks, fierce, cannibalistic, beast-like troglodytes who live in darkness and come out only at night to hunt the Eloi, who try to hide at night to evade the Morlocks' attacks. The Time Traveler observes that the division between the Eloi and the Morlock has been resulted from the continued evolution of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat: the bourgeoisie have evolved into child-like creatures due to their enjoyment of leisure and play without labor, whereas the proletariat have become transformed into monstrous

predators, thanks to their hard work and forced adaptation to the harsh underground environment. In short, Wells imagines that the dominant group in the post-apocalyptic future would be the proletariat, who are in the position of the ruled in the present times. John Wyndham's post-apocalyptic fiction *The Day of the Triffids* (1951), which tells a story of the world where all people who have seen a meteor shower on a specific day go blind all of a sudden, depicts a scene that a man born blind boasts of his status and power in a changed world. Likewise, the Governor in Robert Kirkman's *The Walking Dead* (2003-present) was a marginal individual before the catastrophe and has risen to the status of a group leader. A common twist in apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives is thus that those who were in a minor position in the pre-apocalyptic civilization can ascend to a dominant position in a completely new environment, where the abilities of skilled manual labor, strong physical power, and adaptability that often goes with a lack of moral restraint are more valued.

Originally, the theme of the subversion of existing order has not been a theme of fictional narratives such as fictions, films, and comics. From Spartacus' rebellion and the millennial movements to the French Revolution and the Bolshevik Revolution, the subversion of existing order has been belong to another area that is real and actual: history. In other words, the subversion of existing order has been an actual practice and a tangible phenomenon in reality. Rebellions and revolutions were events that could happen at any time; and history has recorded these events not as a fiction but as a real possibility. There was a sort of historical belief that such a subversive events happened and will happen when time is right. Recent cultural fixation on apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives is associated with death of this historical belief. Although Francis

Fukuyama was ridiculed when he raised the question regarding the end state of historical progress, postmodern culture has reduced history with capital H to one of many linguistic constructs. And now the global capitalism, as a major instigator of what Slavoj Žižek calls "four riders of the apocalypse" comprised by the ecological crisis, the biogenetic consequences, the imbalances within the system, and the explosive growth of social exclusions, is attesting that not just history but also the world itself is approaching its own apocalyptic end (Žižek, x). While we are still witnessing sporadic protests against global capitalism, it seems harder to imagine the end of capitalism than to imagine the end of the world. The belief in the dialectic dynamism of history, in which the subversion of existing order is triggered by the contradictions of the system, has become a thing of the past. In this sense, it seems that the theme of sudden collapse of civilization, which composes the central element of apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives, represents a unique contemporary phenomenon in which the loss of historical belief is replaced by a radical cultural imagination. Again, it represents a trend of thought that the current order would not crumble without world-changing apocalyptic events such as climate change, infectious plagues, or even the advent of zombies.

One can argue that the experience of Holocaust and nuclear anxiety during and after the World War II led to the creation of apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives in the 1950s. Pioneering works of post-apocalyptic narratives such as George R. Stewart's *Earth Abides* (1949), John Wyndham's *The Day of the Triffids* (1951), Nevil Shute's *On the Beach* (1957), and Pat Frank's *Alas, Babylon* (1959) among others appeared in the wake of the World War II. Between the 1960s and the 1990s, apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives had not recovered their former popularity in the 1950s,

though they continued as a sub-genre of science fiction. The renaissance of apocalyptic

and post-apocalyptic has resumed in the 2000s, which was associated with the chain of

gloomy events that typified the bleak atmosphere of the times: the terrorist attack of the

Twin Towers on September 11, the outbreaks of lethal viruses and epidemics such as

SARS and H1N1 virus, the recurrence of mega-scale natural disasters due to climate

change, and a prolonged recession in the capitalist economy. These events signified that

the possibility of the end of the world has increased; yet, broadly they corresponded to a

certain impression that history was not moving forward but, as John Gray argues, just

circling around, or even moving backward.[3] The cultural phenomenon of the renaissance

of apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives since the 2000s is not just another cultural

trend that happened by accident, but rather a logical consequence that has been resulted

from a certain historical deadlock which has characterized our times.

When people no longer believe that they can enact change on history, when

people experience the sense of helplessness, they start to search for a cultural substitute

that not only embodies such helplessness on a fictional level but also suggests a political

and cultural outcome of the imagined predicaments. One thing that should be

remembered, and will be argued in this dissertation, is that both the fictional

representation of catastrophes and their outcome in apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic

narratives are closely connected to our present dilemmas, from which a precious insight,

be it political, philosophical, or cultural, that refreshes our awareness of reality can be

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[3] For example, in an essay against Fukuyama's idea of the end of history, which Gray views another version of utopian perspective, Gray writes: "We know this much at least: history will not end with the passing of liberalism, any more than with the collapse of Communism. The second thing we know for sure is that we have no reason whatever to expect that our future will be markedly different from our past. As we have known it, human history is a succession of contingencies, catastrophes and occasional lapses into peace and civilization" (Gray 2009, 223).

gained. Looking further into the narratives one will find out that the narratives are not only complex in their literary structure and profound in their depictions of contemporary society, but also productive in raising essential questions that should be engaged in the ever-gloomier present times.

More than any other genre, apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives gravitate toward the exploration of the major dilemmas of the present. While individual works of apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives do vary in how meaningfully they reflect on these issues, most nevertheless crystallize the fears and anxieties of late capitalist society in ways that are often more powerful and revealing than other genres. Moreover, many apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives are also driven by "the effort to imagine a fundamentally different future world, one that … exhibits the consistency and coherence" of historical actuality (Paik, 2). Apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives can accordingly help us to unravel the contradictions and look beyond the possible breakdown of the current political, social, and economic order by providing the reader with visions in which familiar realities are destabilized and transformed.

Highlighting what I consider the most politically significant aspects of the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narrative, this dissertation will not to attempt to provide a total definition of the entire genre, or to write a systematic literary history, but rather to interpret what I consider to be some of its most significant texts. I will also take an interdisciplinary approach that examines how these texts raise vital cultural, political, social, and philosophical questions. As a way of doing it, this dissertation will select four groups of primary texts and relate them to the particular theoretical topics with which they engage most productively.

The first chapter examines J. G. Ballard's four late fictions on violence in the age of post-politics: *Cocaine Nights* (1998), *Super-Cannes* (2000), *Millennium People* (2003), and *Kingdom Come* (2006). The second takes on Margaret Atwood's post-apocalyptic trilogy regarding the excesses of neoliberal capitalism and the counter-movement it generates: *Oryx and Crake* (2003), *The Year of the Flood* (2009), and *MaddAddam* (2013). James Howard Kunstler's post-apocalyptic novel set in the post-oil America, *World Made By Hand* (2008), is the focus of the third chapter, while two popular zombie apocalypses, Danny Boyle's *28 Days Later* (2002) and *The Walking Dead* (2003-present) by Robert Kirkman are examined in the fourth chapter. With the exception of Ballard's novels, which evoke catastrophe as a violent mood rather than as an event, these texts depict the end of civilization for a variety of causes, whether from unbridled capitalist greed, megalomaniac utopian yearnings, the shortage of cheap petroleum, or the spread of deadly viruses. The order of the texts also evokes a pattern of escalation in global catastrophe: from the pre-apocalyptic phase when the catastrophic potential of a society is exposed (Ballard's quartet) to the apocalyptic phase in which the actual catastrophe is depicted (Atwood's trilogy) and to the post-apocalyptic phase, in which human beings struggle to survive the aftermath of the collapse (Kunstler's fiction and the zombie narratives). The texts are chosen according not only for their capacity to portray convincing apocalypses, but also for the links they draw to such topics such as the use of violence, neoliberal economics, resource scarcity, and political and moral realism. The chapters can be divided into two parts according to its broad theoretical categories: the first two chapters on neoliberalism and the later two chapters on political realism. If the depictions of violence and commodification in Ballard and Atwood are radicalized

versions of current neoliberal rationality, politics of scarcity and the realist subjectivity in Kunstler and zombie narratives are the inevitable paths that such neoliberal rationality leads to in the imagined post-apocalyptic times.

Chapter 1 discusses J. G. Ballard's four final fictions, all of which explore the unleashing of violence in wealthy late capitalist societies. Ballard locates the essence of the internal landscape of late capitalist culture in the dialectic of boredom and violence. In various ways, the four late fictions, which are all detective thrillers, deal with this theme. In Ballard's world, the affluent suffer from extreme boredom. Ideology, religion, history, and politics, all of which once directed human beings how to live, are now socially irrelevant. Under such conditions, people become restless, desiring secretly anything that would unsettle their secure but eventless lives. Thus, people turn to violence and crime as a psychological cure to restore their mental well-being. For violence and crime function in appropriate doses as a useful instigator of a certain level of vitality and energy, which people have only come to lack in a post-ideological atmosphere.

Violence in Ballard is thus often understood as a form of neuropsychological stimulation, which is connected to the health of the capitalist system. When the form of capitalism has been shifted from manufacturing toward production of services, emotions, and activities, the need for neuropsychological stimulation and the health of today's late capitalism have become interconnected. The post-industrial turn of late capitalism that depends on cognitive abilities and emotional capabilities resorts to neuropsychological stimulation as the means of increasing profit. If violence in Ballard's novels is another name for psychological stimulation, what Ballard portrays as a community seduced by

violence is not just a typical exploration of the dark side of human nature but rather an allegory of civilizational anxiety and demise under the influence of extreme capitalism. As an allegory of capitalist manipulation that holds sway over human society, Ballard's four later fictions provide us with a bleak and dark view of the future.

Chapter 2 is devoted to the Canadian writer Margaret Atwood's post-apocalyptic novels that form "the MaddAddam trilogy." Unlike Ballard's quartet, Atwood's trilogy directly depicts a catastrophic event. Although the three novels take the form of disaster novel, they, both as dystopian speculative fiction and as social criticism, engage in an extended critique of neoliberalism. As a 'speculative' fiction, the trilogy pushes the logic of neoliberal market thinking into extremes that are nevertheless imaginable. In Atwood's near future, almost every domain of society is characterized by the neoliberal injunction of extreme competition, privatization of everyday life, lifestyles based on the principle of the survival-of-the-fittest, and so on. With its dystopian narrative of a global pandemic, the trilogy treats the global spread of neoliberalism as a literal worldwide pandemic.

This chapter, in addition to providing an interpretation of Atwood's novels, will also examine theories of neoliberalism. Neoliberal policies and neoliberal thinking have an enormous impact on such issues as climate change, technology, the built environment, education, and language. To round out the critiques found in Atwood's novels, the second chapter reviews the theory of neoliberalism from Foucault's philosophical understanding of it as the means of governmentality to Harvey's more economic definition. What Wendy Brown calls "the political rationality" that controls subjectivity is also vital to understanding neoliberalism. Atwood's novels, in addition to problematizing the current neoliberal order and unraveling neoliberal subjectivity, take us finally to consider the idea

of utopian desire. Despite its apparent dystopian settings, the trilogy is replete with utopian desire in various forms and contents. It is present in the world of elite technocracy and violent anarchy that ironically epitomizes the neoliberal utopia, but also in Christian-environmentalist fundamentalism of the sect, God's Gardeners, as well as in the restoration of writing and reading by Toby. The utopian desire provides the post-apocalyptic dystopian speculative fiction with an atmosphere of ambivalence, which Atwood dubs 'ustopia' (utopia combined with dystopia). Although the idea of ustopia certainly contains a grain of truth, Atwood's trilogy shows its shortcomings by insufficiently focusing on the inevitable complications and contradictions that might arise within the post-apocalyptic world.

This topic of limitation of ustopian approach leads to the third chapter, in which study of realism in post-apocalyptic narrative will play an important role. Third chapter focuses on James Howard Kunstler's post-apocalyptic peak-oil fiction, *World Made By Hand* (2008). Kunstler's novel tells the story of people in a small village in upstate New York in a post-petroleum age. Compared to Atwood's trilogy, which is full of dramatic upheavals and world-changing events, Kunstler's novel appears simpler and more quotidian in its depiction of the rustic lives of people who endeavor to adapt themselves to new circumstances in which they are forced to engage in manual labor and use horse-drawn wagons for transportation. But the ideas of Kunstler in this post-apocalyptic novel are as bold as that of Atwood in the sense that he makes his readers imagine life without oil, electricity, and the capitalist market system.

In analyzing Kunstler's idea of the post-oil future, the third chapter provides an overview of works that criticize the current oil economy. The main argument of these

critics is that contemporary capitalism, which depends on cheap oil, cannot be maintained in the near future because of scarcity of easily accessible petroleum. Kunstler himself also forecasts in his *The Long Emergency* (2006) that the oil economy will soon be obsolete, arguing that we have to prepare for the post-oil future. *World Made By Hand* is Kunstler's literary counterpart to his controversial argument. Peak-oil theory, which has strong affinities to post-apocalyptic narratives, anticipates the transformation of capitalist society by the return of scarcity. Scarcity of vital resources, especially of cheap petroleum, will be the most serious problem that humanity will face in the near future. As the second chapter will show, the devastating effects of the sweeping changes brought about by neoliberalism feed the sense of impending catastrophe that hangs over the global era and provide fuel for the apocalyptic imagination. Under the hegemony of neoliberalism, the realms of economics, culture, politics, the environment, and even sexual relationships are reshaped according to the competitive drive. This brings scarcity into play not only in the pursuit of natural resources but also in everyday social and economic relationships. Constant struggle becomes the rule, as safety nets have become unstable and populations are forced to compete among themselves not just in the realm of economics but also sexuality and culture.

By bringing the sense of scarcity to the fore, Kunstler's post-apocalyptic novel also formulates a realist worldview. Realists often critique teleological, utopian beliefs for causing immense human atrocities throughout human history. On the other hand, realism, by taking into account the presence of conflict in human societies, lends itself according to its exponents to the minimization of violence. As John Gray argues, it is "from realism more than from any other school that we can learn how to think about

current conflicts" that center on the competition for vital resources and economic

hegemony (Gray 2007, 193). The third chapter also discusses Kunstler's fictional

depiction of the post-oil world in relation to the realist thinking of Gray and others. In so

doing, this section will draw a links between realities that have been characterized

variously as post-oil and post-political, where post-capitalist literature comes together

with a realist sense of scarcity.

The final chapter takes up the narratives of zombie apocalypse. The figure of

zombie is, above all, related to the emotion of fear and disgust. As Immanuel Wallerstein

writes of the economic crisis in Greece, "fear is the most pervasive public emotion in

most of the world today" (Wallerstein 2010). A clear sign of the pervasiveness of fear is

the proliferation of literary and cinematic narratives portraying the total collapse of

civilization. And the most compelling change in mainstream culture in recent years has

been the widespread popularity of zombie narratives in film, television, fiction, and

comics. The figure of the zombie triggers fear and disgust in the viewer, primarily

because it represents the corrupt state of what Julia Kristeva calls "the abject." As the

abject as well as the cast-aside, zombie represents the fate of the complacent subject,

living in the system that cannot continue but will collapse. The zombie is the most

exemplary figure of contemporary fears of apocalypse.

Yet, the zombie is not just a disgusting monster that evokes fear in the viewer but

also, like other monsters, it is a product of a historically specific moment, and as such it

bears particular meanings in connection with its time. So what is significant about zombie

narratives is what it represents in a particular historical, social, and cultural setting. In

order to unveil this complicated context, this chapter tries to look into the history of

zombie narratives from its origin in Haitian sugarcane field and the import of zombies into American popular culture in the 1930s to George Romero's reinvention of zombies in the 1960s and the recent reboot of global zombie apocalypse since the 2000s. Reviewing the brief history of the zombie evolution in popular culture, this chapter will argue that changes in figure of the zombie have been closely associated with the various social problems in each historical phase. If Haitian zombies, for example, were connected to the slave problem in colonial Haitian history, Romero's zombies in America were deeply entwined with the social turbulence in the post-Vietnam America. Similarly, zombie apocalypse narratives that have been predominant since the 2000s most spectacularly combined zombie's image with global issues such as infectious diseases, government failure, growing inequality, and social conflicts.

Zombie apocalypse also provides us with an opportunity to think about how to act in the moment of catastrophe, how to overcome what Marc Abélès calls the myth of "convivance" (harmoniously living together) and turn ourselves into "the politics of survival" (Abélès, 103), and how to rebuild a human community under the condition of ceaseless scarcity and perpetual danger. Danny Boyle's *28 Days Later* and Robert Kirkman's *The Walking Dead* are key texts in this respect. Although these popular zombie apocalypses tell the story of sudden proliferation of zombies, what they try to capture is the various aspects of human behaviors under such a disastrous situation. In so doing these texts evoke the importance of the ethics of realism: If you want to survive the zombie apocalypse and build a new community, one should act in realist ways that are contrary to the dominant behavioral models of hedonistic liberal culture. This chapter will focus on how the ethics and politics of realism are connected with the apocalyptic

imagination. The zombie narrative thus emerges as a realist allegory of individual subjectivity confronting inevitable catastrophe.

Apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives have proven themselves to be timely and relevant. Since they focus on dilemmas of violence and the fragility of community, the hegemony of neoliberalism and its psychic mechanisms, resource depletion and its aftermath, and human behaviors in global crisis, they function as prisms that reveal our deep-seated and lingering anxieties and conflicts. Indeed, apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives are what Tom Moylan calls "self-consciously warnings" (Moylan, 136). By imagining a completely ruined system, these narratives illuminate the moral, political, philosophical understandings of both the human beings and the world. In this sense, imagination of the end of the world can provide us with a perspective that approaches our current situations in a radically refreshing way. The narratives that leap into the future, then, finally return to the present.

CHAPTER ONE

VIOLENCE AND NEUROPSYCHOLOGICAL STIMULATIONS IN LATE CAPITALISM: READING J. G. BALLARD'S FOUR FINAL NOVELS

> We are brought up like the flowers, to look as pretty as we can, and be dull without complaining. That is my notion about the plants; they are often bored, and that is the reason why some of them have got poisonous.
> —Gwendolen from George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*

> Contemporary capitalism is prodigiously productive, but the imperative that drives it is not productivity. It is to keep boredom at bay. Where affluence is the rule the chief threat is the loss of desire. With wants so quickly sated, the economy soon comes to depend on the manufacture of ever more exotic needs.
> —John Gray, *Straw Dogs*

> A wholly instrumental definition of power coupled with a radically individualistic justification of pleasure, after all, serves ineluctably to resuscitate and reinforce the sophistic belief that the happiest are those who commit crimes with impunity.
> —Peter Y. Paik, *From Utopia to Apocalypse*

Biopolitical Production and the Birth of the Depressed

Fredric Jameson once said that "[i]t seems easier for us today to imagine the thoroughgoing deterioration of the earth and of the nature than the breakdown of late capitalism" (Jameson 1994, xii). Karl Marx was sure that the contradictions in capitalist mode of production would bring capitalism to an end, but that has not happened to date. Rather, what we have seen was the 'really existing socialism' turned into a horrible totalitarianism, which in the end experienced a total collapse due to the torrent of civilian protests. Francis Fukuyama even connected the collapse of the Soviet Union to the ultimate fulfillment of Hegelian philosophy of history. The victory of political liberalism (democracy) and economic liberalism (capitalism) means for Fukuyama the actualization of the Realm of Freedom, which is the Hegelian goal of human history. Since the goal of history was achieved, there would be no other meaningful progress in ideology and

history. Hence, the notorious 'End of History' thesis (Fukuyama 1992). His rather hasty

proclamation caused plethora of criticism and mockery from the intellectuals of the left

who strived to negate the reality by believing that the 'really existing socialism' was not

actually a *de facto* socialism. Yet, capitalism since Fukuyama's proclaim has been so

exceptionally resilient to crises that it seems hardly possible to imagine the end of

capitalism, as Jameson succinctly pointed out.

But the victorious state of capitalism couldn't be attainable without its continuous

effort to modify itself when change needed. From World War II to the mid-1970s, when

it had to compete against the Soviet bloc, capitalism generally transformed itself into the

so-called Keynesian 'embedded liberalism,' in which the state plays a central role in

economy by seeking to maintain full employment, providing national welfare, and

intervening periodically to ensure economic growth (Harvey 2005, 10-11). After the

economic shocks and crises in the mid-1970s onwards, the Western democracies adopted

neoliberal policies that sought to liberate individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills

within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free

markets, and free trade (Harvey 2005, 2). The capitalist market has been also remarkable

in its capacity to absorb different countries and regions. As John Gray observes: "A

universal state of equal integration in worldwide economic activity is precisely what

globalization *is not*. On the contrary, the increased interconnection of economic activity

throughout the world accentuates uneven development between different countries"

(Gray 1998, 55-6). Thus, there is the US capitalism in the US, the Chinese capitalism in

China, and the Japanese capitalism in Japan. This is why Jean Baudrillard argues that

even though Marx's analysis on capitalism is still valuable, Marx underestimated the

adaptability of capitalism:

> But Marx simply did not foresee that it would be possible for capital, in the face of the imminent threat to its existence, to transpoliticize itself, as it were: to launch itself into an orbit beyond the relations of production and political contradictions, to make itself autonomous in a free-floating, ecstatic and haphazard form, and thus to totalize the world in its own image. (Baudrillard 1993, 11-2)

What is interesting is the recent trend in capitalism, in which the traditional

function of 'production' is no longer crucial. The production and consumption of

commodities still exists as the basic mechanism of capitalism, but it is no longer an

essential function in today's capitalism. The essential function lies in production of life

rather than in production of commodity. Already in his brief essay written in 1990,

"Postscript on the Societies of Control," Gilles Deleuze notices the trend: "But capitalism

in its present form is no longer directed toward production … It's directed toward

metaproduction. … What it seeks to sell is services, and what it seeks to buy, activities"

(Deleuze 1995, 181). In addition, also in 1990, Baudrillard declares that capitalism enters

into the world of virtuality by deconstructing itself:

> … whether we can properly speak of 'economy' here is questionable. Certainly this glaring reality of today cannot have the meaning it had in the classical or Marxist accounts. Its motor is neither the infrastructure nor the superstructure of material production, but rather the *destructuring* of value, the destabilization of real markets and economies and the victory of an economy unencumbered by ideologies, by social science, by history— an economy freed from 'Economics' and given over to pure speculation; a virtual economy emancipated from real economies … (Baudrillard 1993, 37-8; emphasis in the original)

Transformations in capitalism that Deleuze (trading service and activity) and Baudrillard

(entering into "pure speculation") theorize are synthesized by Michael Hardt and Antonio

Negri as the idea of 'biopolitical production.' Arguing that industrial labor lost its

hegemony already in the late twentieth century, Hardt and Negri propose instead the idea

of 'immaterial labor,' which "creates immaterial products, such as knowledge,

information, communication, a relationship, or an emotional response," as the central

category of biopolitical production (Hardt and Negri 2004, 108). Immaterial labor has

two forms. One is an 'intelligent or linguistic' form that produces ideas, symbols, codes,

texts, linguistic figures and images; the other is 'affective' form that produces or

manipulates affects such as a feeling of ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement, or

passion. Through immaterial labor that produces symbols and affects, capital creates not

only material products but also "relationships and ultimately social life itself" (Hardt and

Negri 2004, 109). The biopolitical nature of capital means that it starts to control life in

its entirety.

It is a psychological factor that gains momentum in this trend of capital's control

of life. In what Hardt and Negri call biopolitical production, for example, affects such as

individual emotion or passion becomes the very source of values that derives values. In a

similar vein, Franco Berardi, an Italian media activist and theorist, proposes the idea of

'semiocapital' to evoke the capitalist strategy of cognitive production, control, and

exploitation. What Berardi calls semiocapital means the particular nature of the present

capitalism that creates profit from the erotic, social, and neurological desires of workers:

"Semiocapital puts neuropsychical energies to work, and submits them to the speed of

electronic machinery. It compels our cognition, our emotional hardware to follow the

rhythm of net-productivity" (Berardi, 55). In the capitalist space that has been expanded

from closed factory to open network, human beings are provided with endless

stimulations and are expected to react to them in calculable ways. As a result, "[t]he

constant mobilization of nervous energies can lead to a depressive reaction: the frustration of our attempts to act and compete leads the subject to withdraw his or her libidinal energy from the social arena" (Berardi, 61). Due to the constant bombardment of neuropsychological stimulations, human beings in late capitalist society frequently experience a certain type of depression and nervous breakdown. It is not a coincidence that anti-depressants such as Zoloft and Prozac hit the worldwide market since the mid-1990s when cognitive economy that calls for "total mobilization of creative labor's mental energies" (Berardi, 67) gained its momentum. The new biopolitical character of capitalism, which not only stimulates emotion, passion, and neurological senses, but also produces and controls our cognitive faculties, turning us into exhausted subjects who suffer from increasing rates of depression and nervous breakdown.

When capital really subsumes not just neuropsychological energy but rather life in its entirety, it could be said that we are living in an age where there is no outside of capitalism. Because capital absorbs life and its common resources (what Hardt and Negri call 'the common'), every other value except profit becomes regarded as peripheral. Politics, religion, ideology lose their influence over the public. As Zygmunt Bauman points out, we have been moving from the passage of the 'solid' to a 'liquid' phase of modernity: "[T]hat is, into a condition in which social forms (structures that limit individual choices, institutions that guard repetitions of routines, patterns of acceptable behaviour) can no longer (and are not expected) to keep their shape for long, because they decompose and melt faster than the time it takes to cast them, and once they are cast for them to set" (Bauman 2007, 1). In what Bauman calls a liquid modernity, most values from the past lose their grip on everyday life, while people have not enough time to look

back on the past or look into the future. Hence, what takes hold is a post-political, post-ideological, and post-historical society. To survive in the time of relentless competition without guiding values and solid communal institutions, people begin to live in a perpetual present, as Jameson notes from his observation of the post-modern culture:

> … [N]amely the disappearance of a sense of history, the way in which our entire contemporary social system has little by little begun to lose its capacity to retain its own past, has begun to live in a perpetual present and in a perpetual change that obliterates traditions of the kind which all earlier social information have had, in one way or another, to preserve. … The informational function of the media would thus be to help us forget, to serve as the very agents and mechanisms for our historical amnesia (Jameson 1998, 20).

This leads us back to Fukuyama again, but in a twisted way. That is, the end of history has begun not through the collapse of the Soviet Union but through capital's subsumption of life itself. Then, what will happen to the nervously unstable subject of our post-historical age, who has to live in a hollow world without social and moral values? Is there anything that this depressed subject, who has been reared by capitalist economic absorption and post-political void, can do? What path will this exhausted subject in a state of overstimulation and depression take?

Trying to answer these questions, this chapter focuses four late novels by the British author J. G. Ballard. Imagining the radical possibilities of collective human behavior in the context of late capitalist affluence and the emptiness of post-historical existence, Ballard's final four fictions—*Cocaine Nights* (1996), *Super-Cannes* (2000), *Millennium People* (2003), and *Kingdom Come* (2006)—inquire into the role of violence and neuropsychological stimulations in revitalizing a bored and affluent society.[4] One finds in these novels the fascination of Ballard with the dark side of modern civilization

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[4] Hereafter, quotations from each novel will be abbreviated to *CN, SC*, *MP,* and *KC* in a parenthesis with page numbers.

and human nature, yet they also imagine a society of the near-future embracing a collective psychopathology. They situate sociopathic violence in the yearning for neuropsychological stimulations and fit into the literary tradition of apocalypse by evoking the possibility of civilizational collapse. This chapter attempts to argue that Ballard's four final novels function as a powerful allegory of the present society, especially in their use of motifs that call to mind the dilemmas of post-history and biopolitics. Unlike his early novels that are clearly classified as post-apocalyptic genre (especially, his disaster trilogy of *The Drowned World* (1962), *The Drought* (1964), and *The Crystal World* (1966)), the novels he wrote between 1996 and 2006 do not deal with the actual demise of the world. Nevertheless, this chapter also argues, the four final novels of Ballard create an apocalyptic mood for apocalypse by pursuing to its logical conclusion the violence inherent to capitalist society.

*Cocaine Nights***: Boredom and Violence in the Post-historical Leisure Society**

Ballard's *Cocaine Nights* (1996) and *Super-Cannes* (2000) share the almost same structure and theme. Both novels depict how violence and crime can galvanize a bored community into becoming a more passionate one. Narrators of both novels—they are at the same time the protagonists—at first find this 'role' of violence, but as they explore deep into this logic they become involved with it, come to sympathize, and even collaborate with the criminal ringleaders. So at the end of the novels, no one stays innocent and everyone shares the collective guilt. The only thing that remains solid is 'the community,' or the existing system.

In *Cocaine Nights*, Charles Prentice, an English travel writer, comes to the fictional resort of Estrella de Mar in order to help his jailed brother Frank, who has

recently been charged with arson that took the lives of five people. Disbelieving his

brother's confession of crime, Charles starts inquiring into the case as an amateur

detective, sensing that Frank is innocent. As Charles investigates the case, he finds that

there is a dark side to this apparently peaceful, strangely energetic utopia of Estrella de

Mar. Charles finds out that the boring and eventless resort has become turned into the

exciting and lively community due to the incessant provision of crimes such as rape,

drug, stealing, vandalism, and arson, all of which is neatly planned and relentlessly

performed by Frank's colleague, Bobby Crawford. When Charles gradually becomes

drawn to Crawford's 'cause,' he finally understands Frank's role. Ultimately, under the

influence of Crawford, Charles decides to devote himself to defend Crawford's cause as

Frank did.

      The fictional space of Estrella de Mar plays an important role here. In one point,

fully realizing the strange atmosphere of the place, Charles narrates, "I was sure that the

solution to the Hollinger murders lay not in Frank's involvement with the retired film

producer but in the unique nature of the resort where he had died. I needed to become

part of Estrella de Mar" (*CN*, 78-9). The characters of the novel keep referring to the

difference of the resort: "This place isn't like anywhere else, you know. There's a very

special atmosphere" (*CN*, 43). Even before Charles meets Frank, the novel introduces

lines from Frank's earlier reply to Charles' curiosity of his brother's choice of the place

("It [Estrella de Mar] doesn't really exist. That's why I like the coast. I've been looking

for it all my life. Estrella de Mar isn't anywhere" (*CN*, 17)). And it is Estrella de Mar that

Frank suggests when Charles first meets his brother in jail ("You'd have to live for a

while at Estrella de Mar even to begin to understand. … It's a different world," (*CN*, 24)).

All these remarks point to the "unique nature" of the place, which remains "a huge

riddle" (*CN*, 151) or an Escher-style labyrinth as Jeannette Baxter calls in her essay on

Cocaine Nights (Baxter, 97-99). To find out the unique nature of the fictional retreats for

"the professional classes of northern Europe" (*CN*, 35), it is necessary to contrast Estrella

de Mar with its neighboring resorts in Costa del Sol. Here is Charles's first impression of

Costa del Sol:

> … Steeped in sun and sundowners, wandering the golf greens by day and dozing in front of their satellite television in the evening, the residents of the Costa del Sol lived in an eventless world.
> As I neared Estrella de Mar the residential complexes stood shoulder to shoulder along the beach. The future had come ashore here, lying down to rest among the pines. The white-walled pueblos reminded me of my visit to Arcosanti, Paolo Soleri's outpost of the day after tomorrow in the Arizona desert. The cubist apartments and terraced houses resembled Arcosanti's, their architecture dedicated to the abolition of time, as befitted the ageing population of the retirement havens and an even wider world waiting to be old (*CN*, 33-4).

Costa del Sol appears as a futuristic "eventless world" that has abolished time.

The vanished temporality of this retirement resort, which is engraved into its architectural

style, features what turns out to be the image of the future: "The future had come ashore

here." This un-temporality of the place is again depicted as the definite sign of the future

where there will be less work and more leisure: "the timelessness of a world beyond

boredom, with no past, no future and a diminishing present. Perhaps this was what a

leisure-dominated future would resemble? Nothing could ever happen in this affectless

realm, where entropic drift calmed the surfaces of a thousand swimming pools" (*CN*, 35).

Through Charles' gaze Ballard here describes what he speculates as the definitive image

of the future, where time in the shape of pocket watch is melting as depicted in Salvador

Dalí's surrealist painting. In this imagined world, there is neither past nor future but

always the perpetual present. Daily routine and hard work also vanish with the abolition of time. But the end of work and the abolition of time creates particular predicament faced by people. Their life continues without vitality, energy, and desire. As John Gray observes, "[w]here affluence is the rule the chief threat is the loss of desire" (Gray 2002, 163). Lack of excitement in life drives the residents into a state of nervous breakdown. So they seek refuge in "[a]lcoholism, ennui and benzo-diazepine" (*CN*, 121). Costa del Sol is suggested as a model space of the future where people "dream of pure idleness, but not a hope" (*CN*, 43).

This eventless, lifeless "Zombieland" (*CN*, 90) represents an era that has already lived beyond the dynamic phase of modernity. Marshall Berman, in his book on modernity, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air*, defines, via Marx and Nietzsche, that modernity is a condition which enables people to find their destiny by facing the immense possibilities of the world: "To be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world—and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are" (Berman, 15). The space of Costa del Sol reveals quite the contrary to Berman's adventurous and dangerous character of modernity. What the Ballardian world of Costa del Sol represents is the phase beyond modernity, where there is nothing left but to be "embalmed in a dream of the sun from which they would never awake" (*CN*, 75).

Contrary to the eventless Costa del Sol, Estrella de Mar appears to be a thriving community, especially in terms of culture. Galleries, bookshops, and music stores are crowded. Resident participates in choir societies, the Harold Pinter play is being

practiced, and cinema programs boast its artistic awareness. "Everyone in the town

seemed alert and confident" (*CN*, 36). Compared with Costa del Sol's silence, Estrella de

Mar makes a spirited sound of a lively community. "The monoculture of sun and sangria

that becalmed the pueblo residents had no place in this vibrant little enclave, which

seemed to combine the best features of Bel Air and the Left Bank" (*CN*, 37). At one

point, being impressed by its lively and vibrant atmosphere, Charles narrates, "Estrella de

Mar seemed a place without shadows. … As everyone never tired of saying, Estrella de

Mar was a true community" (*CN*, 66).

The secret that makes Estrella de Mar a "true community" is found in Bobby

Crawford's radical theory about crime and prosperity. As an "entertainment officer" (*CN*,

46) of Estrella de Mar, the former professional tennis player thinks that crime in the guise

of game or play is the only necessary means of building a lively community. This proves

correct by the fact that "Estrella de Mar was just another resort on the Costa del Sol"

before Crawford arrived there (*CN*, 179). Crawford provides Estrella de Mar with all

sorts of "transgressive behavior," which serves to make the community more vibrant and

more creative. According to Crawford, "[c]rime and creativity go together, and always

have done. The greater the sense of crime, the greater the civic awareness and richer the

civilization. Nothing else binds a community together. It's a strange paradox" (*CN*, 281).

Here is a conversation between Charles and Crawford, in which he most clearly explains

how the "transgressive behavior" works on the residents' psychology:

> "… These break-ins, wrecking a few TV sets and painting 'Fuck' on a
> garage door—is that going to change people's lives? If you burgled my
> house I'd just call the police. I wouldn't join a chess club or take up carol-
> singing."

> "Absolutely. You'd call the police. So would I. But suppose the police do nothing and I break in again, this time stealing something you really value. You'd start thinking about stronger locks and a security camera. …
>
> … You're not asleep. By now you're wide awake, more alert than you've ever been before. The break-ins are like the devout Catholic's wristlet that chafes the skin and sharpens the moral sensibility. … Everything around you, the paintings and silverware you've taken for granted, fit into this new moral framework. You're more aware of yourself. Dormant areas of your mind that you haven't visited for years become important again. You begin to reassess yourself, as you did, Charles, when that Renault caught fire."
>
> "Perhaps … but I didn't take up t'ai chi or start a new book."
>
> "… The process takes time. The crime wave continues—someone shits in your pool, ransacks your bedroom and plays around with your wife's underwear. Now rage and anger are not enough. You're forced to rethink yourself on every level, like primitive man confronting a hostile universe behind every tree and rock. You're aware of time, chance, the resources of your own imagination. … You have to rise above these mindless thugs and the oafish world they inhabit. Insecurity forces you to cherish whatever moral strength you have …"
>
> "We realize time is finite and take nothing for granted any more?"
>
> "Exactly." Crawford patted my arm, happy to welcome me to his flock (*CN*, 243-4).

According to Crawford's logic, menacing attacks from outside enable people to be "more alert" and be "more aware of" themselves. At one point, Mrs. Shand, a developer as well as a member of the Crawford clan, nonchalantly says to Charles about the recent rape attempt in Estrella de Mar: "Rape? Awful, I know. But it does keep the girls on their toes" (*CN*, 133). Those who do not act in the eventless world gradually wake up from their slumber and commit themselves to some activity because of the 'events' that are happening around them. Crawford even approaches his whole scheme in terms of morality. Crawford's use of crime and violence serves in some way a means to wake up those who lost their ability of moral judgment. Nonetheless, Crawford's theory is certainly paradoxical in that his socially beneficial ends are supported only by unjust activities. However paradoxical it may be, Crawford's theory has its predecessor: *The*

Fable of the Bees (1714), written by Bernard Mandeville. Mandeville, a Dutch satirist

who lived most of his life in England, proposes that vice and prosperity go together. The

fable depicts an immense bee colony that thrives until the bees are suddenly made honest

and virtuous. Without their selfish desires for personal gain, their economy collapses and

the remaining bees go to live simple lives in a hollow tree, implying that without private

vices there can exist no public benefit, which is an economy of abundance:[5]

> Without great Vices, is a vain
> Eutopia seated in the Brain.
> Fraud, Luxury, and Pride must live
> Whilst we the Benefits receive (Mandeville, 76).

What is implied in Crawford's and Mandeville's proposition is the assumption that to

achieve a thriving community some forms of pathological incentive must be needed. For

Crawford the stimulation is crime, for Mandeville vice. Both Crawford and Mandeville

realize that the flourishing community needs not just goodwill and virtue, but also threat

and vice. If you want to enjoy the sunlight, you have to accept the shadow as well. Thus,

Estrella de Mar's solidarity and creativity cannot be sustained without theft, rape, arson,

and finally, murder. As René Girard observes in *Violence and the Sacred*, the community

threatened by crises stemming from competitive desire has traditionally resorted to the

violent execution of innocents to restore peace and harmony. John Gray also points out

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[5] It seems that Mandeville's fable is similar to Adam Smith's argument that personal selfishness brings forth prosperity of economy, or wealth of nation. But it is not. Whereas Smith the moral philosopher is always cautious about the selfish motif not to overwhelm moral virtue, Mandeville radically advocates vice over virtue. As a devout believer of mercantilism, Mandeville supports the balance of the amount of export and import. The trade can be possible if one nation can export some amount of products to other nation, it has to import the similar amount. To import products is to consume them. Thus, without luxurious consumption and free enterprise, in other words, without so-called vice, national economy cannot be thriving. Since capitalist economy based on mercantilism should be tolerant of vice, people has to choose between 'vice and economic prosperity' and 'virtue and moral contentment'. For the moralist aspect of Adam Smith, see Terry Eagleton, *Trouble with Strangers*, 68-70. For the relationship between Mandeville's satire and his economic position, see Phillip Harth, "Introduction," *The Fable of the Bees*, 22-6.

that the good and the evil, or prosperity and vice, is inextricably linked with each other.

In *Straw Dogs*, Gray argues that prosperity in society "cannot continue without inventing

new vices" and that "virtue cannot do without the solace of vice" (Gray 2002, 163).[6]

The justification for Crawford's proposition is related with the social condition of

Estrella de Mar. Before Crawford came, Estrella de Mar was just another seaside

luxurious resort in Gibraltar, another Costa del Sol, where silence, eventlessness, and

inertia ruled. In this surreal futuristic space, where "[a] billion balconies facing the sun"

(*CN*, 180), there is nothing left that energizes people. Politics and religion lost their

momentum of giving people's lives a meaning. This condition of Estrella de Mar echoes

exactly the current post-political, post-religious, and post-historical state of contemporary

Western civilization. In *Cocaine Nights*, people in Estrella de Mar, who are stricken with

eventlessness and boredom, frequently depend on drugs, medication, and alcohol. As

Frank's former lover Paula, a physician at the resort, says, "Before he [Crawford] arrived

it was one huge, money-churning de-tox unit. Alcoholism, ennui, and benzo-diazepine

filled our beds" (*CN*, 121). People badly need something that gives them meaning,

energy, and passion, or else they sink into boredom. It is Bobby Crawford who gives

them this something, a psychological stimulation that can substitute for politics and

religion: crime. Thus, in a way, he is a savior to the residents of the community: "Bobby,

you're a new kind of Messiah" (*CN*, 289). Throughout the text, Crawford is described as

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[6] Graham Matthews also reads Ballard's *Cocaine Nights* and *Super-Cannes* in relationship with violence and community-building. Matthews interestingly links Crawford's violent activity to Benjamin's 'law-preserving violence' ("Critique of Violence"), emphasizing Crawford's violence functions to preserve peace and order in the community. But he underestimates that Crawford's violence is not intended 'to preserve' law and order but to distract people's boredom. Rather, Crawford's violence somehow works as 'law-making violence', the violence that destroys existing order by creating new one. See Matthews, 125-31.

a Messiah or a missionary who looks after the purposeless people ("the peoples of his ministry" (*CN,* 249)) in Estrella de Mar. Having "an evangelical heart" (*CN,* 258), Crawford is "a strange missionary fervor" (*CN,* 219), "a really some kind of saint" (*CN,* 280), or "an earnest young pastor keeping an ever-vigilant eye on his flock" (*CN,* 154). Charles feels buoyed "by his evangelical zeal and his selfless commitment to the people of the Residencia" (*CN,* 254). Even Crawford's father is a priest: "My father was a deacon at Ely Cathedral" (*CN,* 249). This characterization suggests that Ballard purposely builds the Crawford character as a religiously fanatical leader. As we'll see later, the fanatical character of Crawford reappears again in a similar form—the religious color is retained but pseudo-fascist touch is added—in the next three novels as Dr. Wilder Penrose (*SC*), Dr. Richard Gould (*MP*), and Dr. Tony Maxted (*KC*).

Indeed, Ballard has argued that both the end of traditional values and the end of work will produce boredom, which will function as a motor for all kinds of objectless violence. Ballard suggests this formula in a series of interviews:

> I do think we're living in very uncertain times; there's no doubt about that. In some ways this is good to see, because the main *pillars* that used to prop up society (in this country, anyway)—the monarchy, religion and politics—have all been knocked aside. … One sees a terrible boredom coming in. There's a limit as to how much time you can worry about what sort of trainers you should buy, or how you're going to redecorate your kitchen for the tenth time. Out of boredom comes a need for change. … I see a future of deepening boredom interspersed with random acts of violence (Vale, 45-6; emphasis in the original).

These words call to mind the work of Fukuyama for his much-debated 1992 book *The End of History and the Last Man.* Interpreting Hegel's philosophy of history via Alexandre Kojève, Fukuyama suggests that economic liberalism (capitalism) and political liberalism (democracy) have won the battle against various kinds of anti-

liberalism (totalitarianism, authoritarianism, etc.), which allows us to contemplate the

likelihood of the end of History. For Fukuyama the end of History in the Hegelian sense

means the point where mankind achieves a form of society that satisfied its deepest and

most fundamental longings: the liberal state (Fukuyama, xii). What makes Fukuyama

considerate and serious is not this apparently daring argument but his speculation of the

life 'after' the end of ideology, history, and politics. Taking up the Greek idea of *thymos*

(spiritedness, envy, competition, recognition) as a basic element of human nature which

finds its chief expression in politics, Fukuyama argues that even though liberal

democracy and market capitalism might fulfill the basic needs of human being, it will

nevertheless remain uncertain whether the *thymotic* aspects of the human personality

would be ever satisfied. Even in the peaceful era of Nietzschean last men—a

paradigmatic figure of post-history who values self-preservation as his foremost goal—

the *thymotic* nature of mankind, the drive to become passionate and meaningful, will not

be subdued but beget a new and unfamiliar kinds of struggle and antagonism:

> Experience suggests that if men cannot struggle on behalf of a just cause
> because that just cause was victorious in an earlier generation, then they
> will struggle *against* the just cause. They will struggle for the sake of
> struggle. They will struggle, in other words, out of a certain boredom: for
> they cannot imagine living in a world without struggle. And if the greater
> part of the world in which they live is characterized by peaceful and
> prosperous liberal democracy, then they will struggle against that peace
> and prosperity, and *against* democracy (Fukuyama, 330; emphases in the
> original).

As we have already discussed, both Costa del Sol and Estrella de Mar exhibit the typical

characteristics of a post-historical society. In such a society, politics and religion become

"a pastime for a professional caste and fail to excite" the people (*CN,* 181). As Fukuyama

argues, when values and causes no longer have any meaning, peace and boredom will be

a powerful instigator of "struggle for the sake of struggle," for human being will always be controlled by his *thymotic* side, his passion to struggle. Ballard pushes this logic further, imagining that the terrible boredom of the coming age will only be dealt with increasing violence that calls for the blood of innocent scapegoats. Indeed, this bleak imagination of the near future in *Cocaine Nights* exemplifies Ballard's deep suspicion of human nature and the frailty of civilization.

Super-Cannes: Violence in Neoliberal Utopia

Ballard further develops the logic of boredom and violence in the companion piece to *Cocaine Nights*, *Super-Cannes* (2000). Space continues to play a pivotal role in this novel. Whereas Estrella de Mar in *Cocaine Nights* is a rich European retiree's haven in Gibraltar, Eden-Olympia in *Super-Cannes* is a self-sufficient business park on the Mediterranean that houses a number of multinational companies. While Estrella de Mar, as a retiree's residence, represents the characteristics of leisure society, the business-park of Eden-Olympia epitomizes the opposite of leisure society: the expertise, efficiency, and productivity of a corporate complex.

Modelled on the actual business park of Sophia Antipolis in France, Eden-Olympia is populated by "the most highly paid professional caste in Europe, a new elite of administrators, énarques and scientific entrepreneurs" (*SC,* 5). Usually dubbed the "dream palace" (*SC,* 5) or the "new paradise" (*SC,* 96), this Silicon Valley on the Mediterranean is described as the symbol of the future, "the newest of the new France" (*SC,* 5). The familiar images of the dark side of capitalism—sweatshops, illegal immigrant workers, massive factories, and an angry working class—do not exist here. Besides, this "intelligent city" that creates ideas and engender management strategies

perfectly controls everything in its territory: "We can cope with anything. This is the only place in the world where you can get insurance against acts of God" (*SC,* 16). The only element that controls this city is the logic of profit and loss. Free from the interference of the state and from the disruption of workers' strikes, Eden-Olympia indeed represents a neoliberal utopia at its purest.

However, as with Estrella de Mar in *Cocaine Nights*, the high-tech corporate community is revealed to have a dark underside of crime and violence. Paul Sinclair, the narrator and the former RAF pilot, arrives at Eden-Olympia with his much younger pediatrician wife Jane, who has been offered work at the residential clinic. There is an event that mirrors the Hollinger fire in *Cocaine Nights*: A few months ago, David Greenwood, Jane's predecessor of the clinic, allegedly killed ten people before he turned the trigger to himself. Out of curiosity Paul starts to dig into the case, finding out that company executives regularly take "special actions" at night after their working hours. Costumed in black leather jackets, the highly paid executives frequently barge into a nearby shantytown to beat up pimps, sexually harass immigrant girls, and steal items from foreigners. They do "[e]verything you can think of—armed robberies, murders, drive-by killings, drug-dealing, racist attacks, paedophile sex" (*SC,* 244). The discovery leads Paul to the mastermind of all this criminal activities: Dr. Wilder Penrose, a psychiatrist in Eden-Olympia.

As a capitalist utopia fully dedicated to maximizing profit, the only thing that is expected from the global managerial class in Eden Olympia is to work. Here, however, work is not a means of living for them. Rather, work itself has become a privilege of the elite. For the residents in the complex, the culture of overworking is the only value left:

> Work dominates life in Eden-Olympia, and drives out everything else. The dream of a leisure society was the great twentieth-century delusion. Work is the new leisure. Talented and ambitious people work harder than they have ever done, and for longer hours. They find their only fulfillment through work. The men and women running successful companies need to focus their energies on the task in front of them, and for every minute of the day (*SC,* 254).

Such a rigorous work ethic gradually produces the feature of eventlessness. While Costa del Sol is eventless due to the excess of leisure, Eden Olympia is eventless because of excessive work. Those who ceaselessly work have no time to develop any social bonds outside of work. Hence, more severe fragmentation and cloisteredness: "People at Eden-Olympia don't mix. … By the time they get home they want to be alone, fix a martini, swim a few lengths. Their true social life is the office" (*SC,* 93). With its "ceaseless work and its ethic of corporate responsibility" (*SC,* 155), the workers in the complex are prone to exhaustion and threatened with the loss of mental health.

It is essential to note here that the nature of work in Eden-Olympia is different from that of 'traditional' factory labor. Essentially, nature of labor in which this elite managerial class is engaged is what Hardt and Negri call immaterial labor. Immaterial labor is a kind of labor that produces an abstract product such as information, affect, service, and idea. Arguing that information and communication have come to play a foundational role in production processes, which they call the 'postmodernization of labor,' Hardt and Negri in their magnum opus *Empire* (2000) propose that the hegemony of labor has been transferred from industrialized material labor to informationalized immaterial labor. They also distinguish three types of immaterial labor in the informational economy. The first type is an industrial production using information and communication technology. The second type is "the immaterial labor of analytical and

symbolic tasks, which itself breaks down into creative and intelligent manipulation on the one hand and routine symbolic tasks on the other." The third type involves affect and requires a bodily mode (Hardt and Negri 2000, 293). What Eden-Olympians do is the second type of creative, intelligent, symbolic labor. Indeed, resident-workers call Eden-Olympia "an ideas laboratory for the new millennium" (*SC,* 16). The business complex is even described as "Europe's California," hosting "high-tech industries, an army of people programming the future, billions surfacing on a silicon chip" (*SC,* 128). Those working in Eden-Olympia comprise the administrators, scientific entrepreneurs, programmers, investment brokers, bioengineers, and design consultants. Like Steve Jobs, George Soros and Mark Zuckerberg, these people create ideas, produce intelligence, analyze market trends, and manipulate the symbolic aspects of capital. Even Paul's wife Jane does not physically examine patients in her clinic. Rather, she becomes engaged in the project of setting up an electronic system to monitor the health of employees. The "mirage, a virtual city" (*SC,* 8) of Eden-Olympia is not a confined, enclosed site but a sort of a floating code, a modulating unit, a symbolic control tower of information, strategy, and idea, fulfilling the basic elements of a postmodernized capitalist mode of production. The knowledge workers in Eden-Olympia recall what Gilles Deleuze calls a figure of "snake" that "undulates, moving among a continuous range of different orbits" rather than a figure of "mole" that confines within a boundary (Deleuze 1995, 180). In his essay, "Postscript on Control Societies," Deleuze analyzes the shift of social trend from the Foucauldian model of disciplinary society to control society. According to Deleuze, this trend reflects the mutation of capitalism, that is, from the 19th century capitalism of factory production

to the present capitalism of service and activity.[7] Deleuze's insight has influenced Hardt's and Negri's concept of 'immaterial labor.'

In a similar vein, Franco Berardi suggests the relationship between stimulation, which comes from the immaterial labor process, and neurotic reaction of subjects. Berardi argues that in the present form of informational economy, the speed and amount of information and stimulation is so accelerated that it often leads workers to the state of psychological exhaustion and panic.

> The acceleration of semiotic transmission and the proliferation of sources of information transformed the perception of living time. The infosphere became more rapid and dense, and sensibility underwent increasing exposure to the flow of infostimuli. Due to an intensification of electronic signals, sensibility was dragged into a vertigo of simulated stimulation that increased its speed to panic levels. … I think that the effect of semiocapitalist acceleration and overexploitation of nervous energies is exhaustion. Nervous breakdown, psychopathology, panic, depression, suicidal epidemic. (Berardi, 132-3)

What brings about violent activities of these executives and entrepreneurs stems exactly from both the nature of immaterial labor and the neurotic exhaustion, which resulted from their culture of excessive work.

It is natural that a psychiatrist is needed to take care of the mental suffering of the residents. For them, Dr. Penrose, a mild-mannered and dedicated psychiatrist, proposes an "advanced therapy programme" (*SC*, 248) that involves committing violent crimes and engaging in deviant activities. Facing the "chronic fatigue syndrome" (*SC*, 253) that infects every office in Eden-Olympia, what Dr. Penrose offers is to prescribe "a carefully

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[7] Here's Deleuze's comparison between moles and snakes: "If money's old moles are the animals you get in places of confinement, then control societies have their snakes. We've gone from one animal to the other, from moles to snakes, not just in the system we live under but in the way we live and in our relations with other people too. Disciplinary man produced energy in discrete amounts, while control man undulates, moving among a continuous range of different orbits" (Deleuze 1995, 180).

metered measure of psychopathy" as a form of therapy (*SC*, 259). His therapy arises from the careful inspection of these overworking, highly disciplined professionals. Realizing that they have fantasies filled with yearning for violence, anger, and rage, Dr. Penrose decides to prescribe Sadean psychopathy as the means of fulfilling their repressed fantasies:

> More violence and cruelty, more drama and rage. … But how to satisfy them? Today we shun the psychopathic, the dark side of the sun and those shadows that burn the ground. Sadism, cruelty and the dream of pain belong to our primate ancestors. … The run-down chief executives with their hives and depression were sane and civilized men. Maroon them on a desert island after a plane crash and they'd be the first to perish. Any perverse elements in their lives would have to be applied externally, like a vitamin shot or an antibiotic (259).

It is interesting that Dr. Penrose's prescription for overworked executives and Crawford's solution for bored retirees are essentially the same. Just as Crawford is the "entertainment officer" at Estrella de Mar, Dr. Penrose describes himself as a "kind of leisure coordinator" (*SC*, 96). But they provide more than mere distraction—they style themselves as messiahs for their respective communities. They face the neuroses from which these communities are suffering, and resort to violence and criminal activities as a solution for individual depression and communal inertia. For both Penrose and Crawford, "there's nothing like a little violence to tone up the system" (*SC*, 171).

Even though Dr. Penrose and Crawford share the same theory of the relationship between violence and thriving community, nature of violence in *Super-Cannes* shows a striking difference from that of *Cocaine Nights*. In *Cocaine Nights*, violence and crime are directed *inwardly*, i.e. against other members of the community, while in *Super-Cannes* all of the violent activities are directed *outwardly*, against those living outside Eden-Olympia. In other words, in contrast to Estrella de Mar, violence of Eden-Olympia

always needs the others to serve as its victims. Even if the executives and entrepreneurs in the business complex have different nationalities and job descriptions, they have the same social identity as the brains and administrators of the multinational companies: "We're the vanguard of a new world-aristocracy" (*SC*, 115). As their black leather jacket costume represents, the members of the same community and the same global managerial class need outside groups as the outlet for their aggression. Most of their robberies, sexual assaults, and beatings take place in nearby shantytown of La Bocca, where immigrants and laborers from Asia, North Africa, and East Europe reside. The juxtaposition of the European, white, rich, capitalist Eden-Olympia and the Third World, dark, poor, proletarian La Bocca reminds us of the history of European colonialism. Violent actions performed at La Bocca by the Eden-Olympia executives donning leather jackets calls to mind the invasion of non-European countries by the European powers. The word 'ratissage' underscores the colonialist origins of the gated community. Used to describe the violent "evening workout" (*SC*, 175) performed by the leather jacket executives, 'ratissage' originally means the military raid carried out by the French in its colonial Algeria (*SC*, 210). Moreover, Dr. Penrose, the mastermind of the 'ratissage,' is dubbed by Paul as "our amiable Prospero" (*SC*, 3), in a reference to Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Indeed, as "the face of the future" (*SC*, 254), Eden-Olympia is frequently portrayed as a symbol of capitalist domination: "The whole world will soon be a business-park colony, run by a lot of tight-lipped men who pretend to be weekend psychos" (*SC*, 344-5). Also, as the former colonial powers did, Eden-Olympia keeps expanding its territory. There is talk of a second Eden-Olympia, "Eden II," which will be twice the size of the original and host the same mix of multinational companies. Just as

the colonial powers used Christianity to justify the economic exploitation and political domination of their colonies, "Eden II" is christened as a "City on a Hill" (*SC*, 357). Penrose even maintains a religious aura as a "part conjuror and part revivalist preacher" (*SC*, 95), but he consciously identifies himself as a missionary, a "proselytizer" (*SC*, 97).

In addition to colonialist allegory, Ballard depicts Eden-Olympia as an incubator for the neo-fascism of the near future. As Paul gets to know the dark undercurrents of Eden-Olympia better, he comes to acknowledge its fascist nature. But how do the managerial class of capitalism develop inclinations for fascism? Isn't a market capitalism that promotes economic freedom and liberal individualism antithetical to the evil influence of fascism? For instance, Friedrich Hayek, an Austrian economist and a founding father of neoliberalism, argues that socialism and Nazism share the same essential element of utopianism and collectivism in opposition to individual freedom and democracy, which will definitely lead human beings to what he calls 'the road to serfdom': "Democracy and socialism have nothing in common but one word: equality. But notice the difference: while democracy seeks equality in liberty, socialism seeks equality in restraint and servitude" (Hayek, 77). For Hayek, only political liberalism (democracy) and economic liberalism (capitalism) can be an antidote to fascism. Michel Foucault, in his lectures at the Collège de France on the birth of neoliberalism, notes that the ordoliberalists, a German neoliberalist group in the mid-twentieth century, viewed radical market capitalism, which "serve[s] as the principle, form, and model for a state," could be the only way to avoid repeating the horrors of Nazism (Foucault 2008, 114-6). It appears to be the mainstream view that the Nazi-style fascism is located on the opposite side of free market capitalism.

Ballard's viewpoint is different. Whereas Hayek and other economic liberals

think fascism can be prevented through economic and political freedom, Ballard

approaches fascism by way of the frailty of human nature. He contends that excessive

freedom can brew the new kind of fascism at any time. Through the mouth of Dr.

Penrose, Ballard describes how the neoliberal condition of excessive freedom in Eden-

Olympia has brought freedom without morality:

> Freedom. A giant multinational like Fuji or General Motors sets its own
> morality. The company defines the rule that govern how you treat your
> spouse, where you educate your children, the sensible limits to stock-
> market investment. The bank decides how big a mortgage you can handle,
> the right amount of health insurance to buy. There are no moral decisions
> than there are on a new superhighway. Unless you own a Ferrari, pressing
> the accelerator is not a moral decision. Ford and Fiat and Toyota have
> engineered in a sensible response curve. We can rely on their judgment,
> and that leaves us free to get on with the rest of our lives. We've achieved
> real freedom, the freedom from morality (*SC*, 95).

Describing a situation when the essential decisions are made not by human subjects but

by multinational corporations, Ballard pushes what he sees as current tendencies in a

radical direction. For Ballard, the form of fascism can arrive when freedom becomes too

overindulgent and reaches the point of ignoring moral judgments over human affairs. In

Super-Cannes, the overworked and exhausted executives achieve "real freedom" from

morality by half-consciously accepting the idea of fascism. Knowing that "the world

would collapse without them, and think they can get away with anything" (*SC*, 344),

these depressed but violent members of the elite, dubbed as "playgroup Nazis" (*SC*, 352),

exhibit their "deeply racist" attitudes "in a new way" (*SC*, 343). Traditionally, as seen in

Italy in the 1910s and in Germany in the 1930s, fascism has been welcomed by a

community obsessively preoccupied with the fantasy of its "decline, humiliation, or

victimhood" (Paxton, 218). Believing that one's group is a victim, members of the group

seek a charismatic leader to unite them as a purer, more prosperous community. By exerting violence against its (imagined) enemies, they ultimately confer themselves the right of the chosen people to dominate others, which is being justified by eugenics or social Darwinist theory (Paxton, 219-20). In *Super-Cannes*, Ballard changed the central feature of the fascist group. Unlike the group that has a fantasized belief in its decline, Ballard's CEOs in Eden-Olympia has an excessive confidence ("the world would collapse without them"). Whereas most fascist movements have developed from socio-economic crises, these CEOs are nothing to do with such a crisis (Paxton, 41). Only crisis for them is their shared boredom of life in an eventless world. They need stimulation, event, and an emotional outlet for aggressiveness that lies inside them. And the best outlet for violent desire is the inferior: immigrants, prostitutes, foreigners, and so on. Whereas historical fascist groups have chosen their victims from history and nationality (e.g. Jewish people), the victims of Ballard's fascists are broader and more nonspecific. That is to say, the CEOs exhibit deeply racist tendencies, but "in a new way." Penrose welcomes the thought that this racist freedom will bring forth a Hitler:

> And then take on the immigrant population as a whole. We're back in Weimar Germany, with a weekend Freikorps fighting the Reds. Sooner or later some corporate raider with a messianic streak will turn up, backed by all the natural gas in Yakut, and decide that social Darwinism deserves another go. (*SC*, 344)

This idea of the second coming of fascism in our current times is one of Ballard's foremost concerns. In a series of interviews, especially after the event of 9/11 and the nationalistic passions it aroused in the US, Ballard emphasizes the point that the disappearance of moral decision in contemporary life will most likely lead to the eruption of the irrational passions:

> … [W]e seem to have subcontracted out the moral dimensions to our lives. We rely on someone else to make moral decisions for us. We're happy to be told what a successful stock market portfolio is; we don't want to have to do the thinking ourselves. We're happy to be told what the best way to educate our children is; the fewer moral decisions we make, the better … as far as most people are concerned. (Vale, 73)

> … The flight of reason leaves people with these partly-conscious notions that perhaps they can rely on the *irrational*. Psychopathology offers a better guarantor of their own freedom from the cant and bullshit and sales commercials that fill the ether every moment of the day. That's the real danger. One saw it in absolute peak form during the Nazi period, but already there are hints that the *appeals to the irrational* are becoming more and more to the fore. (Vale, 53, 55; emphases in the original)

For Ballard, fascism gives a name to the disappearance of morality and to direct appeals to the irrational. In *Super-Cannes* neoliberal multi-corporations and their executives are depicted as instigators of a revival of fascist irrationalism. What lies beneath Dr. Penrose's prescription of psychopathy to the executives is in fact the working out of the fundamental logic of capitalism that incites both the nervous breakdown and the fascist irrationality: profit. When Dr. Penrose explains the cause and effect of his "therapy programme" to Paul, he concludes his long explanation with a reference to his therapy's ultimate purpose: "Corporate profits and equity values began to climb again. The treatment worked" (*SC*, 260). This reveals everything that *Super-Cannes* deals with in a nutshell. Endemic nervous breakdown in Eden-Olympia, the psychopathic violence as its antidote, colonialist and fascist outcome of the violence—all these phenomena derive from the pursuit of profit.

Paul in the end decides to kill Dr. Penrose and to reveal the dirty secret to the world, as David Greenwood planned. But the novel makes it likely that Paul will only end up as the next Greenwood, a scapegoat to cover up the underground activities of Eden-Olympia. The "mirage" (*SC*, 8) of Eden-Olympia, the future of Europe, will not be

cleared, and regardless of Paul's moral awakening the march of capitalism, with its psychopathy and fascism, will be continued. If this neurotic and dangerous capitalism keeps marching on, what will become of the middle class? This is the question Ballard tries to answer in his next novel, to which we move on.

Millennium People: Meaningful Violence in a Meaningless World

Millennium People (2003) builds on a theory of violence that had appeared in *Cocaine Nights* and *Super-Cannes*. In those two novels, violence functions as the cement that holds community together. In *Cocaine Nights*, organized petty crimes 'inside' the eventless resort wake up the bored residents and make the resort lively, whereas in *Super-Cannes* overworking executives inflict violence on those 'outside' their social rank as a form of therapy, which enables them to earn increased profit within the business complex. Violence in both novels serves as the means to revive the once withered community. Compared to these two, the final two novels, *Millennium People* and *Kingdom Come* (2006), are more concerned with a violence that goes viral, expanding into the more explicit theoretical justifications: revolution, terrorism, commune, and fascism. Still, violence is depicted as the indispensable instrument whereby bored human beings might realize their repressed fantasies or act on their repressed desires. Yet, in *Millennium People* and *Kingdom Come,* violence works not just as the adhesive for community in crisis, but also as the means for actively expressing anxiety and nervousness. It can be argued that in the former two novels, violence is used by the community to adapt to its conditions, whereas the characters use violence in the later two novels to change their communities. Thus, characters in the later novels engage in collective actions to fight against the existing system, while in the previous novels only

several characters in the inner circle of the cult commit crimes. By shifting the scale of

narrative and theme, Ballard tries to contain various aspects of postmodern unease and

volatility in his radical imagination of the future of violence and human civilization.

In *Millennium People* Ballard utilizes the same plot strategy of the detective

thriller genre that Ballard used in both *Cocaine Nights* and *Super-Cannes.* A killing takes

place under mysterious circumstances, and the protagonist/narrator takes up the role of an

amateur detective to uncover the truth behind the event.[8] In this novel, the murder event is

a bomb explosion on a baggage carousel at Heathrow Airport. The mysterious explosion

kills several people, including the ex-wife of the narrator, David Markham, who works as

a psychologist. The Home Office is suspicious of this event as the act of "new terrorist

group" and asks David to map an emerging psychology of the group by working as a

civilian undercover (*MP,* 32). David accepts the offer and unravels the mystery behind

the apparently pointless death of his ex-wife. From the outset, the narrator, facing the

meaningless death of his ex-wife, shows that he realizes the central theme of the novel:

"No one was safe from the motiveless psychopath who roamed the car parks and baggage

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[8] It has to be noted that the convention of the genre is slightly twisted in Ballard's four final
fictions. Usually the detective thriller plot postpones the truth for the last moment by way of
intensifying the dramatic effect. But in Ballard's thrillers, the truth of the mystery is revealed in
the middle of the narrative, which then proceeds into another progression of newer and more
radical events. For example, in *Cocaine Nights*, Ballard offers as many leads as possible about the
mystery of the Hollinger fire from the outset. Frank's confession does not seem truthful, curious
things happen around the fire site, and ever since Crawford's appearance at Ch. 5 readers are
certainly be guided to acknowledge the weird situation in Estrella de Mar. Although the final
truth about the fire is unveiled at the penultimate chapter (Ch. 27), the truth does not surprise the
readers as it normally does in other detective thrillers. Why? Because the novel has already
shown much more striking and unpredictable incidents (i.e. Crawford's criminal activities), which
in truth is more vital and crucial in understanding the whole narrative. Thus, it can be argued that
in Ballard's four final fiction the apparent form of the detective thriller genre serves as a mere foil
for his original imagination of psychopathology of violence in the future. In a nutshell, for
Ballard the dramatic effect of mystery and final revelation is not as critical as his dystopian
imaging of the frailty of human civilization.

carousels of our everyday lives. A vicious boredom ruled the world, for the first time in human history, interrupted by meaningless acts of violence" (*MP,* 28). Soon David abruptly enters the inner circle of a group of revolutionaries based in Chelsea, finding himself immersed in the deeper world of the grievances and anxieties of the English middle class. As it turns out, the "vicious boredom" is that of the middle class, which becomes more and more a "dangerous class" in the world, where traditional values have dissolved.

In *Millennium People,* the role of agency for whirlwind of violence goes to the middle class on the verge of crisis. The middle class, dubbed by Ballard here as "the educated professional class" (*MP,* 5) or "a salaried professional class" (51), is usually regarded as the social group that is "society's keel and anchor" (*MP,* 5). Portrayed in general as dutiful, responsible, and polite, these "likeable and over-educated" (*MP,* 3) classes are "too well-mannered to pose a physical threat" (*MP,* 4). Even at the moment on the brink of revolution, they take care to make plans for how to clean up garbage after clashes with the police: "The revolutionaries, as ever considerate of their neighbours, had ordered a dozen of these huge containers in the week before the uprising" (*MP,* 8). The well-mannerliness of the middle class easily linked to their timidity. It is well known that Georges Sorel, in his book *Reflections on Violence* (1908), praises the effectiveness of violence used by the proletariat because the bourgeoisie are timid and cowardly (Sorel, 61-2). Yet, now this polite and timid middle-class in the fictional gated community Chelsea Marina has become angry and outraged. Like the proletariat in the nineteenth century, they use violence as their weapon, set up barricades, and try to bring about a revolution.

What fuels this anger is apparently an economic condition from which the middle classes are suffering. The educated professionals living in Chelsea Marina see themselves as "the new poor" (*MP,* 78), "a new kind of serf. Coolies in trainers and tracksuits" (*MP,* 200). Their salaries have plateaued out, threat of early retirement has become fiercer, school fees for their children have skyrocketed, maintenance charges have soared, and parking charges have driven them mad. As Kay Churchill, former film studies lecturer turned leader of the revolution, proclaims, echoing Joseph Conrad, that Chelsea Marina has become the heart of another kind of darkness: "The whole place was purpose-built for the responsible middle class, but it's turning into a high-priced slum. No city bonuses here, no share options or company credit cards. A lot of us are really stretched" (*MP,* 51-2). Yet, some of their grievances seem like a typical middle-class overreaction: "Anyway, one of the lifts has been out of order for months. For two hours a day the taps don't run. You have to plan when you need a shit" (*MP,* 79). Ostensibly, the inability to use the lift and the two hours without running water can trigger a serious revolution. Churchill solemnly says to David: "Believe me, the next revolution is going to be about parking" (*MP,* 66). This humorous middle-class overreaction stems from their sense of obsolescence. The management company of the residence of Chelsea Marina is rumored to be conspiring with a property developer who wants to replace them with richer tenants: "They want to run the place down, buy us out and raze it to the ground. Then they'll bring in Foster and Richard Rogers to design huge blocks of luxury flats" (*MP,* 79).[9]

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[9] In an interview Ballard talks about the similar tendency happening in England: "In England, we're getting unprecedented disparities of wealth. The people who run our biggest corporations have begun to affect life in London primarily by buying up property, and the old middle class (doctors, civil servants, teachers, salaried professionals) can no longer afford to live in central London. Now there are whole areas of central London given over to the rich. … In due course

Combined with the unstable condition of work, this fear of banishment underscores their

anxiety over falling behind. Just as the working class was overpowered by the Thatcher

government in the 1980s, it is now the middle class that worries about being crushed:

"Knowledge-based professions are just another extractive industry. When the seams run

out we're left high and dray with a lot of out-of-date software. Believe me, I know why

the miners went on strike" (*MP,* 80). According to John Gray, the increasing instability of

the middle class life is an essential consequence of neoliberal capitalism. When

manufacturing industries have shrunk while a new informational economy rapidly

develops what Negri and Hardt call immaterial forms of production, both the industrial

working class and the professional middle class have find themselves becoming

increasingly obsolete:

> The effect of the new information technologies is not merely an increased scarcity of many kinds of less skilled or knowledge-intensive work. It is the wholesale disappearance of entire occupations. For much of the population traditional bourgeois institutions such as career structures and vocations no longer exist.
> The result is a re-proletarianization of much of the industrial working class and the de-bourgeoisification of what remains of the former middle classes. The free market seems set to achieve what socialism was never able to accomplish—a euthanasia of bourgeois life. (Gray 1998, 72)

The residents of Chelsea Marina revolt against the "euthanasia" of the bourgeois

way of life. Yet this revolution is not directed against capitalism in any systemic manner.

Rather, the revolution is against existing middle-class social codes, against the

civilizational legacies of the twentieth century, and ultimately against themselves. The

new cultural revolution consists of lighting bonfires of books and paintings, torching

video stores, attacking travel agencies, sabotaging galleries and museums. The core

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this sort of thing will prompt *revolutionary thoughts*—once again." (Vale, 86; emphasis in the original)

revolutionary 'cell' of Chelsea Marina, made up of a fanatical film studies lecturer, a

defrocked Catholic priest, his Chinese girlfriend, and a former M15 bomb-maker turned

revolutionary, launch attacks on the leading symbols of modern middle class culture: the

NFT (National Film Theatre), the BBC, Tate Modern, Royal Academy, the Promenade

Concerts, Waterstone's bookshops, "all of them exploiters of middle-class credulity. …

From sandwich to summer school, they were the symbols of subservience and the

enemies of freedom" (*MP,* 120). If society lets the middle class dwindle and die, the best

strategy for the doomed class would be to carry out the deconstruction of their own social

codes, their cultural role as "society's keel and anchor." To deconstruct, to "unlearn" all

those liberal values and humane concern will frighten the whole country.

But what David finds in this outwardly sincere group of revolutionary militants is

the vicious boredom and anxiety of the middle class: "Most revolutionaries in the last

century had aspired to exactly this level of affluence and leisure, and it occurred to me

that I was seeing the emergence of a higher kind of boredom" (*MP,* 77). As in the

previous two novels, Ballard picks up boredom as the critical catalyst for violence in the

late capitalist culture. Indeed, boredom has been considered the major question of

existence by such thinkers as Bertrand Russell, who argues that boredom is one of the

permanent elements of human civilization, which has triggered all kinds of violence in

history:

> A wish to escape from boredom is natural; indeed, all races of mankind
> have displayed it as opportunity occurred. When savages have first tasted
> liquor at the hands of the white men, they have found at last an escape
> from age-old tedium, and except when the Government has interfered they
> have drunk themselves into a riotous death. Wars, pogroms, and
> persecutions have all been a part of the flight from boredom; even quarrels
> with neighbours have been found better than nothing. Boredom is

therefore a vital problem for the moralist, as half the sins of mankind are caused by fear of it (Russell, 47).

For Ballard, the intense craving for the relief of boredom inevitably triggers crises in contemporary society. With regard to the theme of boredom, it is noticeable that in his 1975 novel that portrays the middle class engaging in violent mayhem in a residential building, *High-Rise,* Ballard did not suggest boredom as the motive for the violence. The narrative of *High-Rise*, in which material and cultural differences among the floors leads to internecine warfare between the residents, was still based on the model of 'traditional' class struggle between the rich and the less wealthy. By contrast, his final four fictions essentially portray the crisis of late capitalist society, in which people can fulfill the basic level of needs and desires, having achieved affluence, increased personal freedom and leisure. It is in this late capitalist atmosphere that boredom comes to play a critical role in human life. The fundamental question that might rise from this would be: What will happen when we run out of causes that forced us to struggle? Where will we find meaning in life when it is supposed that we have already overcome necessity? David's wife Sally recapitulates these questions as she refers to the volatility of boredom: "We're all bored, David, desperately bored. We're like children left for too long in a playroom. After a while we have to start breaking up the toys, even the ones we like. There's nothing we believe in" (*MP,* 115). Indeed, Ballard shows his deep-rooted distrust of human nature through this analogy of "children." He repeats the analogy in all of the four final fictions. In *Cocaine Nights,* Crawford says, "People are like children, they need constant stimulation. Without that the whole thing runs down. Only crime, or something close to crime, seems to stir them" (*CN,* 260). In *Super-Cannes*, when Pascal Zander, an acting security chief of Eden-Olympia, talks about Dr. Penrose, he says, "Dangerous toys

they're not old enough to play with. Wilder Penrose is turning them [Eden-Olympians]

into children" (*SC,* 293). Finally in *Kingdom Come*, Dr. Maxted observes, "We're like

bored children. We've been on holiday for too long, and we've been given too many

presents. Anyone who's had children knows that the greatest danger is boredom" (*KC,*

102-3). By comparing human beings to bored children, Ballard compellingly

demonstrates how gullible, naïve and dangerous human beings are.

Besides, the analogy indicates that the Ballardian 'masterminds' of the novels, i.e.

Crawford, Penrose, Gould, and Maxted, play a figure of shepherd or pastor who take care

of and lead children-like modern men in their own direction towards violence, which is

also connected to the rising of new fascism. In an interview, Ballard suggests how

boredom can call for the various forms of violence:

> It all confirms my belief that as a society we're beginning to exhibit the
> first signs of profound boredom. In that state of mind we're prepared to
> tolerate anything that *distracts us* from that boredom: terrorist violence,
> wars—you name it. *Anything* to break the deadly dread of … seeing
> oneself in the mirror. (Vale, 90; emphases in the original)

Richard Gould, an earnest paediatrician and the ringleader of the revolutionary cell,

realizes the significance of the role of boredom in modern life. Like other Ballardian

criminal masterminds in the final fictions, Gould proposes violence to be the cure for

postmodern anomie. In these times when everything is regarded as already fulfilled,

already examined, thus utterly meaningless, our life and death can be meaningful by the

shock that comes from meaningless, motiveless violence. Just as Penrose in *Super-*

Cannes suggests that, "Meaningless violence may be the true poetry of the new

millennium. Perhaps only gratuitous madness can define who we are" (*SC,* 262), Gould

offers an almost identical observation, when Markham protests against the terrorist act that killed his ex-wife:

> Right—the deaths there were pointless and inexplicable, but maybe that *was* the point. A motiveless act stops the universe in its tracks. If I'd set out to kill you, that would have been just another squalid crime. But if I killed you by accident, or for no reason at all, your death would have a unique significance. To keep the world sane we depend on motive, we rely on cause and effect. Kick those props away and we see that the meaningless act is the only one that has any meaning (*MP,* 255).

This perverse logic of meaningless violence registers that Dr. Gould is someone who overcomes civilizational convention ("… the first of a new kind of desperate man who refuses to bow before the arrogance of existence and the tyranny of space-time," *MP,* 292). If the Churchill gang is ironically still under the influence of modernity by fighting against civilizational convention, Dr. Gould easily transcends this logic of meaningful struggle and advances into the meaningful world created by meaninglessness. It is in this sense that Markham enacts the meaningless violence that Dr. Gould has unleashed in Chelsea Marina as an image of the future: "Chelsea Marina was the blueprint for the social protests of the future, for pointless armed uprisings and doomed revolutions, for unmotivated violence and senseless demonstrations" (*MP,* 293). The world that Dr. Gould temporarily built at Chelsea Marina based on his theory of meaningless violence is therefore the emblematic Ballardian image of the future. It is the place that not just surpasses the meaning itself but rather vigorously accepts the meaninglessness and paradoxes of life: "a city without street signs, laws without penalties, events without significance, a sun without shadows" (*MP,* 294). This echoes what Baudrillard describes as the dilemma of the late modernity: "Ours is rather like the situation of the man who has lost his shadow: either he has become transparent, and the light passes right through

him or, alternatively, he is lit from all angles, overexposed and defenseless against all sort

of light" (Baudrillard 1993, 49). Just as the Ballard's image of "a sun without shadows"

indicates the future where there are no meaningful referents, Baudrillard's image of "the

man who has lost his shadow" similarly designates the paradoxical situation when all the

modern conventions of the duality of positivity and negativity have disappeared. For both

Ballard and Baudrillard, what finally remains is not the justice or the meaning, but the

fluctuating images of paradox and meaninglessness.

It must be noted again that in *Millennium People*, such a whirlwind of

meaningless violence, which stems from unbearable boredom of life, is connected to the

proletarianization of middle class life under the regime of neoliberalism. Although

Ballard's concern lies not in the criticism of neoliberalism but rather in the collective

psychopathology of modern man, it is crucial to remember that Dr. Gould's theory of

meaningless violence could not be possible without the middle class residents' real sense

of obsolescence, which originates from neoliberal capitalism. What neoliberalism has

been doing in the contemporary world is to make obsolete anything that blocks its own

progress. The process of neoliberalization—deregulation, privatization, withdrawal of the

state from areas of social provision, and so on—has entailed much so-called 'creative

destruction,' which includes, as David Harvey states, "not only [of] prior institutional

frameworks and powers (even challenging traditional forms of state sovereignty) but also

[of] divisions of labor, social relations, welfare provisions, technological mixes, ways of

life and thought, reproductive activities, attachments to the land and habits of the heart"

(Harvey 2005, 3). Such neoliberal process leads to the staggeringly unequal distribution

of wealth. In 2007, for example, the four hundred American taxpayers with the highest

incomes averaged an incredible $344.8 million each, the equivalent of over $1 million of income per day (Pizzigati, 3). As the rich get more and more income, both the middle class and the working class have become dwindled. Indeed, this neoliberal restructuring is an acceleration of typical tendency of capitalism, the tendency of what Marx calls "constant expansion" (Marx 1973, 407). Capitalism can only circulate capital, or expand itself, by destroying existing orders. For capitalism, as Marx observes, "[e]very limit appears as a barrier to be overcome" (Marx 1973, 408). It is noticeable that this tendency of capitalism resembles the tendency of violence in Ballard's four final fictions. As Dr. Gould preaches, like the other three masterminds, about the creative power of violence: "Violence is like a bush fire, it destroys a lot of trees but refreshes the forest, clears away the stifling undergrowth, so more trees spring up" (*MP,* 177). In Ballard's four final fictions, violence is depicted again and again as the fuel of creativity, prosperity, and meaningfulness by these masterminds. In this sense, both capital and violence has the same logic of stimulation, at least in the Ballardian world.

Kingdom Come: Consumerism Turned Fascism

Like the previous three novels, *Kingdom Come* (2006) also follows the generic conventions of the detective novel. The narrator arrives at a place with the intent to uncover the truth behind murder. Unlike the detective novels, however, the perpetrator has already been captured. When he looks deeper into the incident, he senses there is more to the incident than meets the eye. The incident remains a mystery with the lack of a motive, so that the question becomes "not how but why" the incident happens (Matthews, 126). The protagonist is drawn into the community he seeks to expose, but gradually he ultimately enters into a position of an accomplice with the perpetrators of the crime.

Although the mystery of the incident is revealed in the end, both the protagonist and the narrative itself do not arrive at a solution but are left without closure. Consequently, the fiction shifts the reader's attention from the individual deviancy to the collective psychology and its relation with violence. All four late novels of Ballard take this narrative structure, from which *Kingdom Come* is no exception. The recurrent motifs of Ballard's late novels such as boredom, violence, and community are appearing again in this novel. Yet in *Kingdom Come*, Ballard takes a new step. Placing consumerism at its center, Ballard develops how consumerism is connected to violent acts and how it brings out the rise of the 21st century type of fascism.

"The suburbs dream of violence. Asleep in their drowsy villas, sheltered by benevolent shopping malls, they wait patiently for the nightmares that will wake them into a more passionate world" (*KC,* 3). Ballard's final novel starts with this symptomatic anticipation of Richard Pearson, a sacked advertising executive and the narrator of the novel. He is on the way to the fictional suburb of Brooklands, located near Heathrow airport, where his father had recently been killed in an apparently random shooting at the Metro-Centre, a huge shopping mall located at Brooklands. Even before Pearson arrived, the case has been apparently solved. The alleged shooter is identified as a deranged mental patient named Duncan Christie. But as soon as Pearson comes to Brooklands, he senses that there is more to the incident than it seems. Christie is released because Dr. Julia Goodwin, a young doctor who treated Pearson's father after the shooting, testified that Christie was with them and could not have committed the crime. While Pearson resolves to track down the real killer, he realizes that the Metro-Centre lies at the very heart of the mystery.

Consumerism rules the lives of everyone in Brooklands. Pearson senses it when he first arrived at this "mysterious" town (*KC,* 7). He narrates, "This was a place where it was impossible to borrow a book, attend a concert, say a prayer, consult a parish record or give to charity. In short, the town was an end state of consumerism" (*KC*, 8). This consumerism is the new value that has replaced the old value: "History and tradition, the slow death by suffocation of an older Britain, played no part in its people's lives. They lived in an eternal retail present, where the deepest moral decisions concerned the purchase of a refrigerator or washing machine" (*KC*, 8). That is to say, for the residents of Brooklands, the Metro-Centre and the act of consuming products is not just an economic behavior; rather it is a way of life through which they view and experience the world. The Metro-Centre is the symbol of a new religion for consumers in Brooklands. Many parts of the novel describe the religious aspects of the Centre: It is portrayed as "a cathedral of consumerism whose congregations far exceeded those of the Christian churches" (*KC,* 15); going to the Centre is exactly "like going to church" (*KC*, 40); the mascots of the shopping mall, three bears, represent the contemporary version of the Holy Trinity; and the place that the bears are located is "almost a shrine" (*KC*, 43). Later in the novel, when the consumers' uprising begins, people at the Metro-Centre even pray to the bears (*KC,* 265). Echoing Walter Benjamin's essay, "Capitalism as Religion," the shopping mall, an epitome of consumer capitalism, "is a pure religious cult, perhaps the most extreme there ever was" (Benjamin 2005, 259).

Consumerism in this novel functions as an outlet for the unbearable boredom that has dominated the eventless post-historical world. As we've seen in the previous novels, this formulation is quintessentially Ballardian. In *Cocaine Nights,* boredom of the resort

is overcome by criminal acts from petit shoplifting to burning a house that kills five people. In *Super-Cannes,* boredom of the CEOs is compensated for their crimes of abusing the weak foreigners in a near town at night. In *Millennium People*, boredom of the traditional middle class develops into either a pseudo-revolutionary act of burning down the cultural symbols of Britain or a meaningless violence that instigates social unrest. In his final novel, boredom of the middle class in the motorway towns is soothed by an addictive consumption at a local shopping mall. Consumerism provides the bored residents with things that the traditional values such as politics, ideology, culture, and religion no longer give. One of them is the sense of group identification. As Benedict Anderson's concept of "imagined community" shows, the group identification has been traditionally related with cultural and artistic values such as novels and newspapers (Anderson, 6-7). However, in *Kingdom Come*, consumerism functions to give residents the sense of belonging. David Cruise, the popular cable channel host in the Metro-Centre, points this out in his program: "… consumerism is about a lot more than buying things. … It's our main way of expressing our tribal values, of engaging with each other's hopes and ambitions. What you see here is a conflict of recreational cultures, a clash of very different lifestyles. On the one side are people like us … On the other side are the low-value expectations of the immigrant communities" (*KC,* 78).

As Cruise's comment shows, the sense of belonging that has been formulated by consumerism easily transforms into the aggressiveness on the Other ("people like us" and "the immigrant communities"). Although excessive boredom called for consumerism, the act of consumption is not able to fulfill the other irrational, violent emotions of human beings such as aggressiveness and hate. This is why consumerism in Brooklands co-

exists with an obsessive interest in sports and a perverted pride in English nationalism. Racist attacks on Asians and East Europeans are widespread, and the sport meetings become political rallies. As John Fiske argues that shopping malls are "key arenas of struggle," the Metro-Centre, in a slightly different context, becomes not just a shopping mall, but also a space of struggle, in which a bored people release their primitive irrationalities unto the Others.[10] In previous novels, as we've seen, Ballard also deals with this relationship between community-building and violence. For Ballard, human irrationality cannot be subdued even in an advanced civilization; desire of violence can always be erupted out and can possibly ruin the civilization itself. In an interview with Vale in 2004, Ballard is very much concerned with the president re-elect George W. Bush on the ground that he expressed his religious views explicitly and led the world into the perpetually delusional War on Terror. Ballard repeats the point from *Millennium People* that "nothing disconcerts people more than an apparently meaningless act," and relates this idea both to the event of 9/11 and the subsequent wars launched by the US government (Vale, 12-6). Then, Ballard expands these phenomena to the return of the irrational in the contemporary world: "There's a sense that, not only in the United States in particular, but all over the world, there's a move towards the irrational. ... Instead of appealing to the reasonable in men and women, there's an open appeal to the unreasonable, to the irrational" (Vale, 19). According to Ballard, this irrational element

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[10] Against the dogmatic view that criticizes the consuming behavior as a passive act, Fiske reinterprets it as a unique cultural practice, where various struggles for power actualize. Here is the original passage: "Shopping malls and the cultural practices, the variety of shoppings that take place within them, are key arenas of struggle, at both economic and ideological levels between those with the power of ideological practice (Althusser), hegemony (Gramsci), or strategy (de Certeau) and those whose construction as subjects in ideology is never complete, whose resistances mean that hegemony can never finally relax in victory, and whose tactics inflict a running series of wounds upon the strategic power" (Fiske, 307).

had been appeared in history again and again in the form of fascism or tyranny in Nazi Germany, the Stalinist Soviet Union, and Pol Pot's Cambodia. What worried him most was that this irrationality was enticing people once again not just in Bush's War on Terror but also in consumer capitalist culture. "And of course the entertainment culture and the entire global marketplace—capitalism itself—is being driven not by rational choice, but by *emotional choice*" (Vale, 23; emphasis in the original). This trend signals that we're entering "a New Dark Age" (Vale, 24).

In *Kingdom Come,* this "emotional choice" or "the irrational" play an essential role in defining Ballard's dystopian vision of a new therapeutic politics. Pearson, who, as a former advertising executive, has been seduced by the irrational atmosphere of Brooklands, understands that the new politics in the post-historical age is driven by incessant emotional appeals that combine consumerist soothing and racist aggressiveness. In one scene, he tells this idea to David Cruise:

> Make a sudden emotional appeal. Show your flaws, then demand loyalty. Insist on faith and emotional commitment, without exactly telling them what they're supposed to believe in. That's new politics. Remember, people today unconsciously accept that violence is redemptive. And in their hearts they're convinced that psychopathy is close to sainthood (*KC,* 148).

Ballard suggests that this purely emotional character of consumerism has something in common with fascism. As with fascism, consumerism leads to a politics that provides depressed and discontent people with hope, dream, and fantasies. "The danger is that consumerism will need something close to fascism in order to keep growing. … The consumer society is a kind of soft police state. … Consumerism creates huge unconscious needs that only fascism can satisfy. If anything, fascism is the form that consumerism takes when it opts for elective madness" (*KC,* 105). Feeding the stimulations such as

hatred, aggression, and violence into people's hollow chests, both consumerism and

fascism revive the vicious instinct of the primate. Dr. Maxted, a psychologist involved in

the killing of Pearson's father, observes that bored human beings are destined to willingly

embrace madness. According to Dr. Maxted, when chimpanzees become bored of

chewing twigs they want bloody meat, "they want to taste their enemies' fear in the flesh

they grind." So they start beating their chests and screaming at the sky, and "work

themselves into a frenzy, then set off in a hunting party" (*KC,* 104). Only after being

transported into a lethal frenzy, do the chimpanzees calm down and resume chewing

again. Dr. Maxted connects this habit of chimpanzees to that of human beings. "Elective

insanity is waiting inside us, ready to come out when we need it. We're talking primate

behaviour at its most extreme. Witch-hunts, auto-da-fés, heretic burnings, the hot poker

shoved up the enemy's rear, gibbets along the skyline. Willed madness can infect a

housing estate or a whole nation" (*KC,* 104). Echoing Ballard, Dr. Maxted says that "a

new Dark Age" is waiting for us.[11]

In his other three later novels Ballard continuously develops this idea, and

repeatedly implies the possibility of fascism in the future. In *Cocaine Nights*, Crawford

arouses fear by committing crime in order to make his community thrive. This idea

resonates perfectly with the logic of fascism, in which violence and crime against other

races, sexes or nationals is fully justified by the causes of the Volk—its unity, purity and

prosperity. Violence and madness in *Super-Cannes* are directed explicitly against the

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[11] In an interview with Graeme Revell in 2003, Ballard mentions "elective psychopathology" in the exactly same context. "On the other hand, one sense that almost a kind of elective psychopathology is now in the air. One can almost choose to indulge in a mode of psychopathic behavior without any sort of moral inhibition at all. … We're being driven by some kind of compulsive need to cut the pigtails off a six-year-old girl sitting on the bus in front of you, or steal underwear from a neighbor's wash line—far from being driven, you choose, you elect to pursue some odd impulse" (Vale, 58).

ethnic or cultural other. In his works after *Super-Cannes*, Ballard directly evokes the

symbols of fascism, depicting an executive gang costumed in leather jackets, extolling

neo-Nazi, racist, and social Darwinist ideas. In *Millennium People*, Ballard ascribes

irrationality and psychopathy to the middle class as it embarks on a revolutionary project.

Kingdom Come is the text where Ballard expresses a prophecy of fascism in the most

direct manner by linking it to consumerist culture. Moreover, in all four of the final

novels, the characters masterminding the violence are frequently referred to as religious

figures, whether as messiah, pastor, missionary, or spiritual leader. Indeed, in Ballard's

association of religion with fascism, these figures in fact designate the generic features of

a fascist leader: charming, charismatic, devoted, self-possessed, passionate, and, most of

all, psychopathic.

It is essential to note that consumerist society does not automatically turn into

fascism, even if there is a tendency of the logic of consumerism to give way to fascism.

For Ballard, consumers need the constant emotional stimulation of hatred and resentment

to satisfy their primate instinct of violence on the one hand and to assuage their boredom

in an eventless post-historical world on the other. Behind the aggressive provision of

emotional stimulation lies the capitalist idea. Present capitalism has been closely

connected to emotion, which Eva Illouz calls 'emotional capitalism.' Illouz states that

emotional capitalism "is a culture in which emotional and economic discourses and

practices mutually shape each other, thus producing … a broad, sweeping movement in

which affect is made an essential aspect of economic behavior and in which emotional

life—especially that of the middle classes—follows the logic of economic relations and

exchange" (Illouz, 5). According to Illouz, what modern capitalism has created was not

an a-emotional world dominated by bureaucratic rationality but an intensely emotional culture in the workplace, in the family, and in our relationship to ourselves. This applies to the strategy of the Metro-Centre. To boost sales profit, the Centre endeavors not only to provide benevolent atmosphere of the shopping mall but also to encourage the irrational hatred to immigrant groups. The strategy is smart enough to meet the need of bored people who "are deliberately re-primitivizing themselves" (*KC*, 105). Someone would ask: If being irrational is the human need, why draws on the issue of capitalism to this matter? My answer is this: It is because capitalism plays as an essential medium to encourage, if not to create, this irrationality to the extent of catastrophe. One catastrophe that Ballard imagines in this novel is the form of fascism. It is useful here to remember Walter Benjamin's observation on capitalism, in which one of the characteristics of capitalism is that it is a religious cult "that engenders blame. Capitalism is presumably the first case of a blaming, rather than a repenting cult" (Benjamin 2005, 259). This "blaming" is represented in this novel a regular attack on the Others, that is, Asians and East Europeans. When Pearson arrives at Brooklands, the first emotion he senses is hate: "I accepted that a new kind of hate had emerged, silent and disciplined, a racism tempered by loyalty cards and PIN numbers" (*KC,* 12). As Pearson's observation points out, what spurs this hate ("a racism") is a capitalist marketing tool ("loyalty cards and PIN numbers").

Neuropsychological Stimulation and Apocalyptic Mood

Since the 1960s, Ballard has taken a critical stance toward conventional science fiction. In an essay written in 1962, Ballard criticizes the "science fiction with the rocket ships and ray guns of Buck Rogers," the sub-genre which he dubs "space fiction," for not

giving voice to more complex ideas due to its juvenile character and its "narrow imaginative limits" (Ballard 1996b, 195). In contrast to modern music and modern art, especially surrealism, conventional science fiction, has not captured the realities of postmodern psychosocial reality. To overcome these narrow limits and to achieve "experimental enthusiasm," Ballard argues that science fiction should rather focus on "inner space" of human beings, since "[t]he biggest developments of the immediate future will take place, not on the Moon or Mars, but on Earth, and it is *inner* space, not outer, that needs to be explored. The only truly alien planet is Earth" (Ballard 1996b, 197). For Ballard, "inner space" does not merely mean individual's psychological condition in the modernist sense. Rather, more broadly, it means a specific social and psychological condition of modern society, where technology, science, and capital wield strong influence over the life of humankind. In another article on the same subject, he loosely defines 'inner space' as "the internal landscape of today that is a transmuted image of the past" (Ballard 1996b, 200). In this respect, there is a sense in which Ballard's novels have aspects that are not easily defined as science fiction in its traditional scope, where spaceships, time travels, or extra-terrestrial beings play a pivotal role in constructing themes and narrative structure. Yet, unlike the genre of realism, in which authors tend not to go beyond contemporary social space and time, Ballard's novels radically imagine "the internal landscape" of modern civilization that is characterized by the progress of technology and the late capitalist consumerist culture.

We can approach Ballard's four late fictions as a fictional attempt to reveal the particular "inner space" of modern civilization. The four late fictions, published between 1996 and 2006, pursue the nature of "internal landscape," encapsulating essential

tendencies of late capitalist society. Like his 'disaster trilogy' in the 1960s (*The Drowned World* (1962), *The Drought* (1964), *The Crystal World* (1966)), 'techno-apparatus trilogy' in the 1970s (*Crash* (1972), *Concrete Island* (1974), *High-Rise* (1975)), and 'life trilogy' in the 1980s to 2000s (*Empire of the Sun* (1984), *The Kindness of Women* (1991), *Miracles of Life* (2008)), Ballard's four final fictions, in their common thematic concerns of late capitalist culture, community-building, criminal acts, and violence can also be categorized as a group. Applying what Adorno and Said call 'late style' to a certain tendency of contemporary literature, Peter Boxall contends that "[t]he work of a wide range of 'late stage' authors writing around the turn of the millennium … exhibits 'late' cultural symptoms; late fictional style in contemporary writing performs the exhaustion of a culture, the growing old and tired of Western modernity itself" (Boxall, 682). Indeed, Ballard of 'late stage' from 1996 and 2006 conveys, by way of his distinct thematic style, a certain symptom of catastrophe and exhaustion of our age, which is in Ballard's terms a singular 'inner space' of apocalyptic ambience.

In Ballard's world, people suffer from extreme boredom. Ideology, religion, history, and politics, all of which once directed human beings how to live and behave, have lost their appeal and influence. Even though the human beings have achieved affluence and leisure, there is a vacuum of values, in which humans have lost their ability of moral judgement and of fulfilling desires. What has been left is severe boredom that locks people up under the state of inertia and depression. Under such situation, people become restless, desiring secretly for anything that would unsettle their eventless and secure lives. One natural means to save people from this unbearable boredom is the act of violence. The French word '*ennui,*' which corresponds to the English word 'boredom'

reveals this relationship between boredom and violence. The word '*ennui*' is derived

from old French '*enui*,' which means 'annoyance'; so '*ennui*' is closely related to the

English word 'annoy.' In an etymological sense, boredom ultimately calls for annoyance,

the feeling of irritation, which is easily changed into violence. One historical example

might be the creation of the Ku-Klux Klan. Unlike historians who asserted that the advent

of Radical Reconstruction after the Civil War gave rise to the Ku-Klux Klan, Wyn Craig

Wade argues that the origin of the notorious racist group has been born form the utter

boredom. According to Wade, it was six young discharged soldiers of Tennessee founded

the group sometime between Christmas 1865 and June 1866. The six young men, who

returned to the rural town of Pulaski, Tennessee, after the Civil War, realized "that there

was utterly nothing to do" (Wade, 32). Being restless under the situation of excruciating

boredom, the six veterans decided to make a gentleman's club and named it first as just

'the circle.' In order to give the name some class, one member proposed translating it into

Greek: '*kuklos*.' Finally, by adding 'klan' to imply their Scotch-Irish descent, they call it

'Kuklux klan' so that no one will know what it means. For these young men the purpose

of the club was neither racist attack nor gentlemanly socializing. "Devoid of practical,

humanitarian, or political significance, it obligated members only to "have fun, make

mischief, and play pranks on the public"" (Wade, 34). And they targeted black people for

their "pranks on the public." This anecdote suggests that the most horrible violence is

usually originated from restless boredom. Ballard understands this and applies this

relationship between boredom and violence to his vision of everyday life in late capitalist

society, in which "[e]conomic life is no longer geared chiefly to production" but "to

distraction" (Gray 2002, 162). Unprecedented material wealth, hollow chest, constant

anxiety, insatiable desire, appetite for violence, barbarity underneath civilization—these are the elements that Ballard draws out from the series of aptly devised narratives to explore an 'inner space' of the near future.

As is clearly indicated, violence plays a central role in Ballard's final novels. From petty shoplifting and burning cars to indiscriminate murder and destruction of cultural landmarks, violence is used as a central means to start a mystery, reveal the human instinct, and to search for the underside of civilization. Most researchers of his late fiction recognize this, and analyze the role of violence in various ways. Graham Matthews points out how violence in Ballard's final four fictions follows the two types of violence, that is, 'law-preserving violence' and 'divine violence,' of which Benjamin classifies in his essay "Critique on Violence" (Matthews 2013). Jeannette Baxter also reads *Cocaine Nights* and *Super-Cannes* in terms of the threat of a revival of fascism in contemporary Europe (Baxter 2009). And Eunju Hwang connects violence in his final novels to the nature of middle-class boredom in contemporary society (Hwang 2011). Even though these scholars provide us with insightful interpretations of Ballard's idea of violence, their readings do not go beyond the narrow understanding of the basic character of violence. What needs to be considered is how violence in Ballard's late novels is intimately connected to neoliberal capitalism. Though since the 1970s Ballard had used violence as the main axis of his novels, nevertheless violence in his four final novels is depicted as an apparatus of stimulation in the sense that stirs people to act. In his earlier novels violence is mainly used as material force to push the protagonists to limitation, revealing the fragility of normality, human nature, and civilization. Catastrophes in *Drowned World*, car crashes in *Crash*, and harsh imprisoned life during the Japanese

occupation of Shanghai in *Empire of the Sun* are all associated with the materiality of violence. As Jim in *Empire of the Sun* shows, the lack of resources and the harshness of environment in the concentration camp drive the once cultivated Europeans into a tough survivalist. Compared with the materiality of violence in earlier novels, violence in the late fictions has become more psychological, more of an emotional stimulation in its characteristic. Dr. Sanger's comment on crime in *Cocaine Nights* is exemplary: "Crime, and transgressive behavior—by which I mean all activities that aren't necessarily illegal, but provoke us and tap our need for strong emotion, quicken the nervous system and jump the synapses deadened by leisure and inaction" (*CN,* 180). For Ballard, violence is a stimulation that works on "nervous system and … the synapses." This applies to all four novels. Sometimes violence takes the form of petit crimes or sometimes of revolutionary acts, yet the apparent various forms of violence converge on its neuropsychological nature.

In Ballard's later fictions, this neuropsychological stimulation functions roughly in two ways. One is to stimulate people out of boredom, and the other is to stimulate the growth of profit. In the novels, the former has been dealt with substantially, but not the latter. Indeed, in all four final fictions, violence and stimulation are connected to the capitalist system. In *Cocaine Nights,* Crawford's instigation of crimes enables Estrella de Mar to become a more lively community, which again leads not only to the flourishing of businesses in Estrella de Mar but also to the construction of Residencia Costasol, another version of Estrella de Mar. Behind this stands Mrs. Shand, a successful land developer in Costa del Sol area. Crawford's role is vital but he is only "an entertainment officer" for her. It is significant here that Mrs. Shand's strategy lies not in the traditional sense of land

development. Her business of land development needs not just bulldozers but also neuropsychological stimulations, without which her business would not be as lucrative. In *Super-Cannes*, Dr. Penrose's prescription of "small doses of madness" is depicted as the means of curing the residents' chronic depression. Yet underneath this exterior scheme lies an interior one, the more fundamental motive of profit. Thanks to the recovery of mental equilibrium by the executives, the multinational corporations for which they work are able to earn greater profits, so that the developer of Eden-Olympia can build another business complex called 'Eden II'. It is not an exaggeration to say that what Dr. Penrose instigates is a boost in profits for global companies rather than a rise in violence for the sake of violence. In *Millennium People*, this plot is somewhat more ambiguous. What the middle classes in the affluent gated community of Chelsea Marina revolt 'against' are the management and the developing company. Even though they criticize the companies that try to drive them out, they do not criticize the logic of capitalism. What they want is not to escape middle class life and find another type of life, but to defend their property rights, to defend the privileges of their gated community. Ultimately, their pseudo-terrorist violence plays a role of expressing the middle-class grievances under the neoliberal regime, demonstrating their desire to recover the affluent life. Finally in *Kingdom Come*, the quasi-fascist suburbanite revolution is encouraged by a shopping channel host working for Metro-Centre. Violence in this novel is partly voluntary out of boredom, partly organized by the consumer capitalism itself. Although the revolution is failed, but it does not necessarily mean that consumers' loyalty for consumer capitalism is over. Overall, the neuropsychological violence in Ballard's final

four fictions can be thought as the crucial means of either boosting profits or defending

property rights.[12]

Facing the limit of market expansion and the development of communication

technology and information industry, capitalism has rapidly been turning into the realm

of cognition, affect, code, number and sign. As Berardi observes,

> Money (i.e. economics) and the State (i.e. politics) are no longer able to
> govern or discipline the world of production, now that its center is not a
> de-brained force, a uniform and quantifiable time of manual work. That
> center is now occupied by mind flows, by the ethereal substance of
> intelligence, which eludes every measurement and cannot be subjected to
> any rule without inducing enormous pathologies and causing a truly
> maddening paralysis of cognition and affectivity (Berardi, 87).

The post-industrial tendency of late capitalism that needs "mind flows" and

"intelligence" gradually calls for neuropsychological stimulation as the means of

increasing profit. As Berardi points out, the dark side of such a tendency is that it

produces "enormous pathologies" as a side effect. In a similar vein, Mark Fisher argues

that the present capitalism cannot work without restructuring of the moods of people:

> With its ceaseless boom and bust cycles, capitalism is itself fundamentally
> and irreducibly bi-polar, periodically lurching between hyped-up mania
> (the irrational exuberance of 'bubble thinking') and depressive come-
> down (the term 'economic depression' is no accident, of course). To a
> degree unprecedented in any other social system, capitalism both feeds on
> and reproduces the moods of populations. Without delirium and
> confidence, capital could not function (Fisher, 35).

Psychiatric and affective disorder that pervades Ballard's final novels is exactly

connected to such a strategy of psychological manipulation in the present capitalism. If

violence in Ballard's novels is another name for psychological stimulation, what Ballard

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[12] In this vein, it is hard not to remember Mandeville's beehive. As he himself manifests, what
drives Mandeville to depict the fable of the bees is his arduous effort to defend the theory of
balance between import and export in mercantile capitalism. For Mandeville, 'vice' is only
meaningful when it helps building a thriving mercantile economy.

portrays as community seduced by violence is not just his typical exploration of dark side of human nature but rather an allegory of civilizational anxiety and demise under the influence of extreme capitalism. It is noticeable in this sense that spaces in the four novels are depicted as a sort of neoliberal version of capitalist utopia where business companies control residents' lives without significant interference from the state or the public. There is neither a political party nor a religious institution, nor a civil organization that influences these communities. In a way, Ballard describes how this neoliberal space might brew a new kind of criminal wave and fascist uprising through psychological manipulation of people.

The Ballardian allegory of capitalist strategy of neuropsychological maneuver works to evoke an atmosphere of catastrophe. The narrative impasse that characterizes Ballard's four final fictions manifests this. Narrators, for example, as a finder of truth are seduced by what they formerly judged as criminal. Even if they find the truth in the end, this finding never helps them to stand against the evil power. What they can do is either accept their tragic fate as co-conspirator of crime (as in *Cocaine Nights* and *Super-Cannes*), or escape from the community in the middle of mayhem (as in *Millennium People* and *Kingdom Come*). There is neither a transcendence of violence, nor a utopian momentum in the narrative. That is to say, there is no alternative to this perpetually increasing dynamism of psychopathy and violence. The fragility of civilization is depicted as becoming worse without dialectical *Aufhebung*. As an allegory of capitalist manipulation that holds sway of human society, Ballard's four later fictions provide us with a bleak, unpromising view of the future. In essence, the deeply dystopian 'inner

space' of our current age of late capitalism represented in Ballard's final four fictions

conveys the mood of apocalypse in its most seductive way.

CHAPTER TWO

"NOT REAL CAN TELL US ABOUT REAL":
NEOLIBERALISM, LANGUAGE, AND UTOPIAN DESIRE
IN MARGARET ATWOOD'S *MADDADDAM TRILOGY*

> The development of modern industry, therefore, cuts from under its feet the very foundation on which the bourgeoisie produces and appropriates products. What the bourgeoisie therefore produces, above all, are its own grave-diggers.
> — Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*

> Capitalism doesn't know how to write.
> — Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*

> The inferno of the living is not something that will be: if there is one, it is what is already here, the inferno where we live every day, that we form by being together. There are two ways to escape suffering it. The first is easy for many: accept the inferno and become such a part of it that you can no longer see it. The second is risky and demands the constant vigilance and apprehension: seek and learn to recognize who and what, in the midst of the inferno, are not inferno, then make them endure, give them space.
> — Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*

All fictional worlds emerge as the product of an author's speculations. In this regard, all fiction is in a sense science fiction, as Carl Freedman has recently argued (Freedman, 16). For science fiction is a literary genre, "whose main formal device is an imaginative framework alternative to the author's empirical environment" (Suvin, 7). Adhering to this definition, it seems clear that Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* trilogy—*Oryx and Crake* (2003), *The Year of the Flood* (2009), and *MaddAddam* (2013)—that foreground a catastrophic event and the following post-apocalyptic world can be properly called science fiction. But Atwood is reluctant to call her trilogy as science fiction; rather she designates it as speculative fiction.[13] According to her classification, science fiction

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[13] Atwood's approach was tricky enough to cause a debate on the marginalized status of science fiction in literary field. For example, Marleen S. Barr criticized that Atwood's reluctance to call her novel (in this context, *Handmaid's Tale* and *Oryx and Crake*) science fiction implied her "textism," a discriminatory evaluation criteria that regard so-called sub-literary genre as inferior

deals with "things in them we can't yet do or begin to do, talking beings we can never meet, and places we can't go," whereas speculative fiction "employs the means already more or less to hand, and takes place on Planet Earth" (Atwood 2004, 513). In Atwood's words, speculative fiction can explore the consequences of existing technology, the changing meaning of being human in unprecedented historical circumstances, the future of social organization resulting from a world-changing event, and, finally, the outer reaches of the imagination where no person has ever gone before (Atwood 2011, 62-3). Atwood's recent novels, the *MaddAddam* trilogy fulfills the criteria she delineates for the genre of speculative fiction: the novels of the trilogy explore the consequences of new breakthroughs in biogenetics leads to (technological change), portrays the lives of humans and post-humans after the catastrophe (the meaning of being human), describes vivid aspects of a near-future society (social organization), and creates a futuristic spatial-temporal setting that no man has experienced before (imagination).

To add one element more to it, the *MaddAddam* trilogy, in which the almost entire human race is annihilated, is a tale of dystopia, in which humanity, or its surviving members, is thrown into nightmarish conditions.[14] The thrust of Atwood's dystopian imagination is to push existing political, social, economic, and cultural situations further into the near-future and present readers with a catastrophic scenario that can plausibly

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to other canonical genre (See Barr, 430). Similarly, Ursula Le Guin, in her review on *The Year of the Flood*, also expresses her uneasiness: "This arbitrarily restrictive definition seems designed to protect her novels from being relegated to a genre still shunned by hidebound readers, reviewers and prize-awarders. She doesn't want the literary bigots to shove her into the literary ghetto" (see Le Guin 2009).

[14] In an essay, Atwood tells that the idea of the trilogy begun with her anxieties about the disastrous condition of the world: "Worries about the effects of climate change can be found as far back as 1972, when the Club of Rome accurately predicted what now appears to be happening, so those worries had long been with me, though they were not front-page stories in the spring of 2001 when I began *Oryx and Crake*" (Atwood 2011, 94).

result from the social and economic status quo. As Kathrine V. Snyder rightly observes, dystopian speculative fiction "takes what already exists and makes an imaginative leap into the future, following current socio-cultural, political, or scientific developments to their potentially devastating conclusions" (Snyder, 470). From this essential strategy emerges the didactic element of the narrative: the function of providing a prophetic warning about future possibilities. Dystopian narratives are "self-consciously warnings" (Moylan, 136). Whereas utopian speculative fiction basically makes use of the human desire to build a better world, dystopian speculative fiction serves as an inversion of such an undertaking. By imagining a nightmarish social reality, it tries to awaken the moral sensibilities of its readers. Dystopian speculative fiction seeks to inform readers that something is deeply wrong about the status quo and insists that we must act to avoid disaster. As one of the epigraphs of *Oryx and Crake* puts it: "… my principal design was to inform you, and not to amuse you." This quote is taken from Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, a classic example of literary satire, which like dystopian speculative fiction has the didactic element as its central literary function. Just as satire ridicules the vices and follies of individual and society with a serious intent to fix and improve them, dystopian speculative fiction endeavors to imagine a possible catastrophic situation with an earnest purpose of giving a warning and, in some cases, of suggesting a solution. In this sense, dystopian speculative fictions can be said to function ultimately as a kind of social criticism.[15] As Snowman/Jimmy observes, "Not real can tell us about real."

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[15] To understand this statement, one is only to recall that George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* or Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, two most exemplary texts of this narrative form, has been mainly regarded less as a pure literary text than as a social criticism of totalitarian tendency of one's government.

The *MaddAddam* trilogy both as a dystopian speculative fiction and as a social criticism mainly engages in the critique of neoliberalism. As a 'speculative' fiction, the trilogy pushes the prevalent logic of the neoliberal market further into the near future, where almost every domain of social fabric is ruled by extreme competition, the unconstrained materialism of *homo oeconomicus*, privatization of the commons, the spread of economic calculation into more spheres of everyday life, and so on. The plague that nearly annihilates the human species is unleashed by widespread use of sex-enhancing pill (BlyssPlus Pill)—this pandemic not just from a megalomanical 'mad scientist' but also from an unbridled greed of a global pharmaceutical corporation. With its dystopian speculative narrative of global pandemic, the trilogy more or less manifestly performs the social criticism of existing neoliberal pandemic, as it were. No contemporary dystopian speculative fiction has combined the criticism of neoliberalism and the narrative of post-apocalyptic catastrophe so meticulous as the *MaddAddam* trilogy does. Most studies of the novels[16] focus on the topic of post-humanism in terms of the relationship between the survived human being (Jimmy/Snowman) and the post-human beings (Crakers) (see Ku 2006; Mosca 2013), or on the question of environmental sustainability (Bergthaller 2010), or on the concept of *homo faber* in the characterization of Crake (DiMarco 2005), or on the concept of trauma that is represented by Jimmy/Snowman's experience (Snyder 2011). These critics certainly acknowledge Atwood's representation of neoliberalism in the trilogy and sometimes sketch it in their articles, but it is certain that neoliberalism does not play an essential role in their reading of the trilogy. One exception in this neglect of neoliberalism is Jane Elliott, who not only

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[16] All hitherto articles deal with the first two novels, because the third and final novel of the trilogy, *MaddAddam*, was just published in North America in early September of 2013.

includes and allots considerable part to *Oryx and Crake* in her article on trends in recent North American fiction. Noticing that the recent North American fiction revives the formerly evaded representation of extreme experiences of oppression, which she calls "dramas of immediacy," Elliott argues that this shift in representational politics reveals not its increased sense of reality but "the transformations internal to North American culture itself, specifically those related to neoliberalism" (Elliott, 350). According to Elliott, the characterization of Oryx not as the typical object of oppression and the possible subject of anti-instrumentalism, but rather as "a canny neoliberal subject of interest" reflects that the traditional strategy of the Left (anti-instrumentalism) has already failed and that the neoliberal strategy of blurring the line of freedom and oppression has ultimately triumphed (Elliott, 354). Although Elliott's insight is quite revealing of the strategy of neoliberalism and the shift in representational politics in literature, Elliott does not expand her critique to address other elements in neoliberal politics that can be found in the trilogy, and also neglects an alternative characterization of the trilogy that escapes from the neoliberal cultural strategy.

To fully grasp the meaning of neoliberalism in the trilogy with which the hitherto researches have insufficiently dealt, this chapter tries to foreground the total neoliberalization of the world that the novels foreshadow. In areas such as climate change, technology, space, subjectivity, education, and language, neoliberal elements play an essential role of advancing the narrative. To understand the role of neoliberalism in the trilogy, it is crucial to analyze the four main characters—Jimmy, Crake, Oryx, and Toby—each of whom affirms the values of neoliberalism (Oryx, Jimmy, and Crake) or rebels against it (Toby and God's Gardeners). Whereas Oryx typifies what Elliott calls

"an exemplary neoliberal subject of interest," who is made to transform her hardship into a chance of self-improvement, Jimmy symbolizes what Žižek calls a cynical fetishist who knows exactly what things are but refuses to act accordingly (Elliott, 352). Crake is somewhat different from the more characteristic neoliberal subjects like Oryx and Jimmy, but he nonetheless serves the technocratic, instrumental rationality that is funded by the drive of late capitalism to commodify everything. On the other hand, Toby and God's Gardeners, both of whom have been marginalized by hegemonic materialist rationality, act as bearers of utopian desire, possible alternative positions against the status quo.

The symbolic importance of language and writing emerges as a central factor throughout the trilogy. In the world of pre-apocalyptic future, portrayed at large in the first two parts of the trilogy, language functions as an ultimate ideological apparatus that makes neoliberal domination possible. Unconstrained genetic technology and unlimited profit making needs a new language that makes harsh exploitation seem not so harsh, or even make it appear desirable, as Oryx's self-justifying word choices or Corporations' seductive brand names reveal. Whereas language in Compounds and pleeblands has become corrupted by the market, language in God's Gardeners carries out its anti-capitalist, historiographical role as a weapon of resistance and of preservation. In the final novel of the trilogy, *MaddAddam*, language conducts its role as an essential history-making, myth-making, and world-making medium. Following Toby's ascension to the symbolic rank of god-mother of Crakers, (oral and written) language also takes a pivotal place in the post-historic world.

Atwood's trilogy, by satirizing the contemporary neoliberal order and examining the power of language to give life as well as to corrupt it, takes us finally to consider the

idea of utopian desire. Despite its apparent dystopian settings, the *MaddAddam* trilogy is full of utopian desire in various forms and contents. The separate worlds of elite technocracy, embodied by the Compounds, and the violent poverty of the pleeblands gives a satirical twist to the utopia extolled by neoliberal fantasies. The Christian/environmentalist fundamentalism of God's Gardeners and restoration of writing and reading by Toby exemplify the anti-capitalist utopian desire. The Crakers are themselves a *sui generis* utopian embodiment. They are able to forge bonds with the surviving humans and pigoons, which are biogenetically spliced pigs with a human cerebral cortex, in a post-apocalyptic world. This utopian desire provides the post-apocalyptic dystopian speculative fiction with an atmosphere of ambivalence, that is, the double aspects of utopia and dystopian, which Atwood calls "ustopia." Although the idea of 'ustopia' certainly captures a seed of truth, the obvious utopian desire of the trilogy hits against a limitation, especially when we consider the politico-ethical aspect of a post-apocalyptic narrative. That is, Atwood's ustopian trilogy shows its shortcomings by insufficiently focusing on the inevitable and complicated contradictions that might occur in the post-apocalyptic world.

Brave New Neoliberal World: The Commodification of Everything

Let us start by briefly summarizing the narrative structure of the trilogy. The *MaddAddam* trilogy consists of three novels: *Oryx and Crake*, *The Year of the Flood*, and *MaddAddam*.[17] The first novel, *Oryx and Crake,* tells the story of Snowman, who before the plague is called by his given name, Jimmy. Snowman thinks he is the only survivor after the catastrophe that his best friend Crake and his secret lover Oryx engineered.

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[17] Hereafter, quotations from each novel will be abbreviated to *OC, YF*, and *MA* in a parenthesis with page numbers.

Snowman lives in a desolate post-apocalyptic world, where he is charged with protecting the Crakers, a gene-spliced group of post-humans that Crake created to replace human race. The novel moves between the post-apocalyptic present world of a mentally unstable Snowman and the pre-apocalyptic past of the cynical and vulnerable Jimmy. Jimmy's story also introduces the stories of both Crake and Oryx. Crake is a misanthropic scientific genius, and Oryx is a sex slave from Asia who becomes Crake's partner and Jimmy's secret lover. The novel shows the lives of Jimmy, Crake, and Oryx in the near future, and culminates in the lethal plague that decimates almost the entire human race. At the end of the novel, Snowman finds out that there are a few more human survivors in the woods, and decides to reveal himself to them. The second novel, *The Year of the Flood*, takes place during the same years as *Oryx and Crake*. The story follows the past and the present of Toby and Ren, who are two other survivors but are for most of the novel unaware of the survival of the other. Toby and Ren were once members of God's Gardeners, a green religion founded by Adam One, who preaches love for all creatures, the dangers of technology, and a coming man-made catastrophe ("the Waterless Flood"). *The Year of the Flood* finally brings us to the scene where *Oryx and Crake* ended, leaving another cliffhanger that continues in the final novel. Whereas the first two novels center on the same catastrophic event from the different perspectives, the final one, *MaddAddam*, proceeds onwards after the human survivors meet one another. The protagonists of the previous novels build a new life with the survived scientist members of MaddAddam (who helped to create Crakers), the post-human Crakers, and the pigoons.

As is clear from the cursory summarization, the trilogy can be divided into two parts in terms of temporality and spatiality: one is the pre-apocalyptic dystopia that is

described in the first two novels, and the other is the post-apocalyptic utopia-in-the-making which is the subject of the third novel. This section mainly discusses the first part of pre-apocalyptic near future, in which the background images of neoliberal society play a crucial role.

The world of *Oryx and Crake*, the fictional America of the near future, is comically awful. This sense of devastation can be seen almost in the beginning of the novel (chapter two), where Snowman's childhood story (as Jimmy) begins, in the image of "a huge bonfire" (*OC*, 15) of dead cows, sheep, and pigs. Little Jimmy, five or six years old, watches the ambiguously fearful scene with his father. Soon we become vaguely recognize what is behind this bonfire by the conversation between Jimmy's father and his colleague.

> "This is where it ends up," said Jimmy's father, not to Jimmy but to a man standing with them. "Once things get going." Jimmy's father sounded angry; so did the man when he answered.
> "They say it was brought in on purpose."
> "I wouldn't be surprised," said Jimmy's father.
> …
> "Drive up the prices," said the man. "Make a killing on their own stuff, that way."
> "It's a killing all right," said Jimmy's father in a disgusted tone. "But it could've been just a nutbar. Some cult thing, you never know."
> …
> "This bug is something new though. We've got the bioprint."
> "Two can play at the game," said the man.
> "Any number can play," said Jimmy's father (*OC*, 18-9).

This short conversation in the very first scene not just shows the central topics of the novel but also reveals the reality of unbridled capitalism. Jimmy's father and his colleague don't know what drives this bonfire; all they know is that there is "this bug" which is "something new." Rumor says that this bug has been spread "on purpose," and Jimmy's father does not surprised. What he assumes is that this virus and mass killing of

animals might be part of inside plot: making and spreading a new virus will "drive up the

prices." Or, it could be "some cult thing," which is an outside terrorism out of anti-

business hatred. Nobody knows the truth; the only thing certain is that this "game" can be

played by "any number" of people. From this short conversation, we have the major

tropes of the trilogy: a mysterious virus, the intentional act of spreading virus, the

corporation as a cult group and as the player of a mystifying game. All of these topics

reappear as the novel progresses. For example, after Crake's father disappear under

mysterious circumstances, Crake finds out that he was executed by HelthWyzer, the

corporation which employed his father, because he tried to expose the truth that the

corporation "put the hostile bioforms into their vitamin pills" to doubly increase the sales

of other pills (*OC*, 211).[18] This bonfire scene indicates that HelthWyzer at first

experimented with animals before extending its practices to the human beings. Tellingly,

this plot of spreading virus and making profits through it also reveals a terrifying truth.

The ruthless rationality of capitalism works efficiently and effectively by taking hold of

human life as its hostage.[19] Crake captures it in a sudden formulation: "The best diseases,

from a business point of view … would be those that cause lingering illnesses. Ideally—

that is, for maximum profit—the patient should either get well or die just before all of his

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[18] Crake later uses this terrible HelthWyzer method in his own project of human elimination ("BlyssPluss Pill" is its name). It seems clear that the idea was definitely attractive to Crake. But it is ambivalent whether Crake induces the calamity as a revenge for his father.

[19] Actually, this scheme is not just an imagined story, but rather it happened already in our times. It had been a scandal when some medical or pharmaceutical companies secretly experimented their new drugs with people in Africa. For example, in 1996, the Pfizer drug, Trovan was used in a clinical trial in Nigeria. By the time the experiment ended, 200 children were disabled and 11 were dead. This led to a lawsuit from the Nigerian government over informed consent in Kano, Nigeria. John Le Carre's novel, *The Constant Gardener* (2001), and the 2005 film adaptation of the same name, is based on this scandal.

or her money runs out. It's a fine calculation" (*OC*, 211).[20] Jimmy was too young to see

that the bonfire in his childhood will expand to incinerate almost the entire human

population across the globe.[21]

As this scene aptly shows, the world in *Oryx and Crake* and *The Year of the*

Flood is diseased in its most literal sense. At one point Jimmy watches the news, and

what he gets from it are: "more plagues, more famines, more floods, more insect or

microbe or small-mammal outbreaks, more droughts, more chickenshit boy-soldier wars

in distant countries" (*OC*, 254). Later, when Snowman/Jimmy mythologizes this pre-

apocalyptic world for Crakers, it was dubbed as the age of chaos:

> In the chaos, everything was mixed together … The people in the chaos
> were full of chaos themselves, and the chaos made them do bad things.
> They were killing other people all the time. And they were eating up all
> the Children of Oryx [animals], against the wishes of Oryx and Crake.
> Every day they were eating them up. They were killing them and killing
> them, and eating them and eating them. They ate them even when they
> weren't hungry (*OC*, 103).

As Snowman's tale suggests, the age of chaos is another expression that describes the age

of extreme consumption (endless "killing" and "eating"). Atwood's world is neither a

totalitarian dystopia nor a fascist one, but the world of extreme capitalism, where greed is,

if not praised as a powerful motivation, then accepted as an ineradicable part of social

existence, allowing every activity to be justified according to its capacity for making a

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[20] It turns out, in the third novel in Zeb's past story, that Adam One also acknowledges this
scheme at that time. "They're using their vitamin supplement pills and over-the-counter
painkillers as vectors for diseases … They make money all ways: on the vitamins, then on the
drugs, and finally on the hospitalization when the illness takes firm hold. As it does, because the
treatment drugs are loaded too. A very good plan for siphoning the victim's money into Corps
pockets" (*MA*, 254). The difference is that while Crake uses this method to destroy the world,
Adam One and MaddAddamites use it to destroy the Corporation.
[21] "Inflame" is used not just as a symbolic way. The symptoms of Crake's BlyssPluss Pill are
"high fever, bleeding from the eyes and skin, convulsions, then breakdown of the inner organs,
followed by death. The time from visible onset to final moment was amazingly short" (*OC*, 325).

profit. From self-motivation programs to human internal organs, everything can be produced and sold; from hospital and public school to army and prison, everything is privatized and commercialized. There is no state, no public authorities, and no law to regulate or control this process. This place is, as it were, an exemplary model of Margaret Thatcher's notorious statement: "As you know, there is no such thing as society." The only groups that have power over people (not as citizens but as consumers) are corporations. In this sense, Atwood's description of this imaginary near future reminds us not of a conventional capitalist world. Rather, it evokes an image of the most radical kind of neoliberal system.

The economic discourse of neoliberalism stresses the need for privatization, market-based reforms, withdrawal of the state from areas of social provision, intensified competition, economic deregulation, elimination of tariffs, monetary policies favorable to business, and so on (Harvey 2005; see also Jones). Atwood creates a world that reflects these elements through a distorted mirror in which the tendencies of an extreme system are given further time and space in which to develop. Two of the most exemplary areas of her critique focus on the educational system and an economic disparity that marks off the built environment.

Educational institutions are totally privatized, commodified, and hierarchized. College admissions are no longer test-based, but take the form of an auction, where EduCompounds (new name for a university) bid for each student based on his or her academic scores and offer various scholarships to the top candidates:

> Crake was top of the class. The bidding for him by the rival
> EduCompounds at the Student Auction was brisk, and he was snatched up
> at a high price by the Watson-Crick Institute. Once a student there and

> your future was assured. It was like going to Harvard had been, back before it got drowned (*OC*, 173).

In this system, education is divided into two categories: elite, rich science institutes and shabby, poor humanities institutes. While most "brainiacs" study money-catching science or engineering, most "mid-range" students have to choose crumbling humanities and arts.[22] So underfunded humanities schools are destined to be falling apart in this system, whereas science institutes, being managed both as universities and as corporations, earn enormous profits through their inventive products. It is natural that there is a striking disparity between those two types of school in terms of physical circumstances. Here are contrasting passages that describe Jimmy's crumbling Martha Graham Academy and Crake's prestigious Watson-Crick Institute:

> Martha Graham was falling apart. It was surrounded—Jimmy observed as the train pulled in—by the tackiest kind of pleeblands: vacant warehouses, burnt-out tenements, empty parking lots. Here and there were sheds and huts put together from scavenged materials—sheets of tin, slabs of plywood—and inhabited no doubt by squatters. … Half the time the air conditioning in the dorms didn't work; there was a brownout problem with the electrical supply; the food in the cafeteria was mostly beige and looked like rakunk shit (*OC*, 185-6).

> Compared with Martha Graham, Watson-Crick was a palace. At the entranceway was a bronzed statue of the Institute's mascot, the spoat/gider—one of the first successful splices, done in Montreal at the turn of the century, goat crossed with spider to produce high-tensile spider silk filaments in the milk. … The extensive grounds inside the security wall were beautifully laid out … The pathways, unlike the crumbling cement walks at Martha Graham, were smooth and wide. Students and faculty were beetling along them in their electric golf carts (*OC*, 199).

What is more pathetic for Martha Graham than the physical wreckage is its survival strategy, which renders its curriculum entirely utilitarian. The Academy creates

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[22] As this category shows, all men can be classified into either "numbers person" or "words person." In most cases, "numbers person," such as Crake, who excels at technology and science, has a far better chance of a successful life; as for "words person," such as Jimmy, who is good at linguistic capabilities, the only chance to succeed in life is to work at an advertisement person.

ostensibly practical courses such as Applied Rhetoric, Applied Semantics, and Applied Logic, which are aimed at training its students for careers in advertising and public relations. The school motto has changed from "*Ars Longa Vita Brevis*" into a crassly instrumental one: "Our Students Graduate With Employable Skills" (*OC*, 188). The blinkered conditions and its unavoidable decline of Martha Graham Academy symbolize the ultimate degeneration of utilitarianism and instrumentalism over humanism in the neoliberal society.

The pathologies of neoliberal capitalism are revealed most vividly in its administration of space. According to David Harvey, one of the fundamental phenomena of neoliberalism is an increasing spatial gap. The unstoppable drive of competition, along with the privatization of the commons, inevitably causes extreme inequality not only in individuals but also in geography and space. In Harvey's words, "[t]he general progress of neoliberalization has therefore been increasingly impelled *through* mechanisms of uneven geographical developments" (Harvey 2005, 87). In the novels, the society is completely segregated into two parts: Compound and pleebland. Compound is a gated community owned by corporation. It is a self-sufficient space that has everything from public school and hospital to mall and company labs. Only employees and their families can live in the Compound; if an employee gets fired, he or she and his or her family have to leave the Compound immediately. Outside the Compound are "the pleeblands," which are mostly urban wastelands overtaken by poverty and crime.[23] While the Compound is described as tightly secured space, the pleebland is not just unsecured, but rather a space where there is no rules or regulations whatsoever. "Everything in the pleeblands seemed

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[23] Etymologically, 'pleebland' is derived from 'plebeian,' member of the lower class.

so boundless, so porous, so penetrable, so wide-open. So subject to chance" (*OC*, 196).

This "hierarchical ensemble of places" (Foucault 1984), this radical difference between

the Compound and the pleebland evokes the distance between the utopian and dystopian

spaces generated by neoliberal inequality:

> Everything was sparkling clean, landscaped, ecologically pristine, and very expensive. The air was particulate-free, due to the many solar whirlpool purifying towers, discretely placed and disguised as modern art (*OC*, 291).

> There, it was rumored, the kids ran in packs, in hordes. They'd wait until some parent was away, then get right down to business—they'd swarm the place, waste themselves with loud music and toking and boozing, fuck everything including the family cat, trash the furniture, shoot up, overdose (*OC*, 73).

But if we look closer the relationship between the Compound and the pleebland, it seems

that their relationship is similar to that of the empire and the colony. Just as an empire

colonizes and dominates a foreign country both in terms of economy, politics, and culture,

the Compound sells all kinds of products, creates false desires, experiments drugs on the

pleeblanders, and finally controls them through the private security force called

CorpSeCorps. The Compound is however different from an empire in that it does not

seek to preserve the pleebland as a permanent colony in accordance with a long-term

strategy of exploitation. It just exploits the pleebland regardless of how sustainable its

depredations might be. "Accepted wisdom in the Compounds said that nothing of interest

went on in the pleeblands, apart from buying and selling" (*OC*, 196). The Compound

does not try to incorporate the pleeblands nor to improve living conditions in it. The only

thing the Compound cares for the pleebland is to extract profit ("So this [the pleebland] is

where our stuff turns to gold" (*OC*, 288)). As a strange kind of internal colony, the

pleebland is the place of supplying the Compound endless raw materials and paying

customers, which forms the precarious half of a totally commodified society.

What makes this colonial relationship between the Compound and the pleebland

'strange' is that such an endless exploitation generally exacerbates the sustainability of

the pleebland and, as a result, threatens the domination of empire as well. It is not a

rational idea to exhaust one's colonies for the sake of extracting profit from it. However,

the Compound chooses to pursue this relation as though it were led by a blind belief in its

limitlessness. Neoliberalism's uneven spatial development ultimately drives both sides to

an impasse, a condition in which unlimited expansion is no longer possible. One of

Atwood's strategies is to show, or warn readers this neoliberal belief in limitlessness and

its deadlocked path is likely to have catastrophic consequences. The unlimited

advancement of biotechnology in Atwood's novels exhibits both neoliberal logic of

efficiency and its destiny of horrible deadlock. Various genetic engineering projects

shown in the novels produce all kinds of grotesque hybrid animals (called as

"NeoAgriculturals") such as pigoon (pig to which human organs are transplanted),

wolvog (hybrid of wolf and dog), rakunk (hybrid of raccoon and skunk), and

ChickieNobs (headless breast-only chickens). What is notable here is not their

grotesqueness but the basic principle of neoliberalism expressed in their grotesque forms.

The real cause behind the hybrid animals is the rule of efficiency. Proudly explaining

these animals in the labs of Watson-Crick, a researcher reveals the secret of creation:

"[T]he high-growth rate's built in. You get chicken breasts in two weeks—that's a three-

week improvement on the most efficient low-light, high-density chicken farming

operations so far devised" (*OC*, 203). The principle of efficiency teaches that anything

that is useless should be cut off and anything useful should be increased or enlarged. The adherence to efficiency at Watson-Crick takes the form of an officially-approved prostitution service for its students, who are to focus only on their research, not on "unproductive" pursuits like love or sex.[24] The rule of efficiency knows no limit, as the production of hybrid animals rapidly evolves into the production of post-humans, combined with the elimination of the human species.

Again, the obsession of profit and efficiency brings about the end of neoliberalism itself and the end of humans and civilization, in addition to the neoliberal economic system. Atwood portrays the genetic experiments undertaken by Crake and his colleagues in a manner that highlights the hubris of their belief in unlimited technological advancement ("There'd been a lot of fooling around in those days: create-an-animal was so much fun, said the guys doing it; it made you feel like God," *OC*, 51). But the text reveals that it is in fact neoliberal elements and tendencies—commodification, privatization, and efficiency—that causes the catastrophe. When Jimmy sees the deformed ChickieNobs, he thinks: "How much is too much, how far is too far?" (*OC*, 206) Naturally, neoliberal capitalism does not have time to listen to such an "unproductive" question.

"What is my will?": Violence and Acceptance in Neoliberal Political Rationality

The commodification of everything from education to space is the essential impetus of neoliberalism. Such an economic discourse often translates an array of economic policies with unintentional political and social consequences. Following

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[24] In Crake's explanation: "It makes sense … As a system, it avoids the diversion of energies into unproductive channels, and short-circuits malaise. The female students have equal access, of course. You can get any color, any age—well, almost. Any body type. They provide everything. If you're gay or some kind of a fetishist, they'll fix that too" (*OC*, 208).

Foucault's theory of governmentality, which covers a range of practices that "constitute, define, organize and instrumentalize the strategies that individuals in their freedom can use in dealing with each other," neoliberalism is not just confined to an economic discourse or a political-economic reality, but also constitutes a "political rationality," a complex technology of government that endeavors to organize and create a particular reality of the social, the subject, and the state (Foucault 1994, 300; Brown 2006). Neoliberalism as a political rationality, or what Aihwa Ong calls "technology of governing," enables us to expand the dominating role of neoliberalism from the economic sphere into the socio-cultural sphere of everyday life (Ong, 3). Emphasizing the political-rational character of neoliberalism, Brown suggests three salient features of neoliberal political rationality. First, neoliberalism does not cast the market as natural and self-regulating even in the economic sphere; rather, "it depicts free markets, free trade, and entrepreneurial rationality as achieved and normative, as promulgated through law and through social and economic policy." Whereas classical liberalism endeavors to limit the state power and policies in order to secure free market and trade, neoliberalism actively uses state power and state policies to promote a free market and generate an entrepreneurial atmosphere. Second, neoliberalism makes the political and social spheres as dominated by market concerns and as themselves organized by market rationality. In neoliberal society, spheres that previously were not under the influence of market rationality—e.g. prison, education, the police, the military, even subjectivity—become gradually reshaped by market principles. Third, neoliberal rationality creates governance criteria along the lines of productivity and profitability. Neoliberal governance replaces administrative and political government, and the "market-speak" of governance

replaces political negotiations or conflicts. The president of a state or the leader of any

state institution comes to be regarded as a kind of corporate CEO or a fundraiser (Brown

2006, 694-5). Neoliberal political rationality seeks to organize and transform every social

sphere—from the state to the individual—in accordance with market rationality by legal,

administrative, and political means.

One could accordingly argue that neoliberal society is not just a commodified,

consumerist society. Certainly the extreme level of commodification in neoliberal

capitalism sets it apart from earlier forms of capitalism. But what makes neoliberalism

'neo' is that neoliberal society is itself "a form of the economic" through the collusion or

convergence of various political, legal, and cultural spheres (Lemke, 197). Thus, contrary

to neoliberal theory, which rejects the active role of the state in economic area, in most

neoliberal societies the state plays a crucial role in creating the social conditions that

corresponds to neoliberal economic policies.[25] Even in a society where most state

institutions have collapsed, a scenario Atwood imagines in her trilogy, such neoliberal

technologies of governing are what end up maintaining a certain level of law and order. It

is CorpSeCorps, a private security firm for the Corporations that supplies a brutal

minimum of public order through violent, paramilitary means. It takes over the duty of

public security when the local police forces collapsed for lack of funding, becoming the

only organization that can use armed force: "With the CorpsSeCorps takeover of so-

called law-and-order functions, the Corps had the power to bulldoze and squash and erase

anything they liked" (*MA*, 329). Being itself a Corporation, CorpSeCorps's only mission

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[25] See Leo Panitch and Sam Gindin, *The Making of Global Capitalism: The Political Economy of American Empire* (London and New York: Verso, 2012).

is to guard and protect the capitalist section. It gathers intelligence of anti-Corporation bio-terrorists, covertly murders employees who try to leak dirty secrets of Corporations, and kills civilians just to secure "the interests of public order" (*YF*, 212). But people reluctantly accept all these abuses, because "most people felt the CorpSeCorps were better than total anarchy" (*YF*, 34). Such an acceptance of cruel violence in the name of public order seems to be inevitable, since people themselves in neoliberal society become merely (economic) consumers, not (political) citizens. In Wendy Brown's words, "[c]itizenship, reduced to self-care, is divested of any orientation toward the common, thereby undermining an already weak investment in *an active citizenry* and an already thin concept of a *public good*" (Brown 2006, 695; emphases in the original). The almost omnipresent existence of CorpSeCorps in the novels reveals one of the truths in neoliberal society: the most excessive neoliberal order cannot be maintained without the most extreme form of violence.

If CorpSeCorps represents a violent instrument of political rationality in neoliberalism, there is another, more profound, form of political rationality that is related with the making of neoliberal subject. Certain forms of society require specific types of subjectivity, because the particularly produced subjectivity guarantees the particular form of society go smoothly. In Althusser's words, "[t]he ultimate condition of production is therefore the reproduction of the conditions of production" (Althusser, 127). Neoliberal society also has to produce the individuals as a sort of neoliberal subject, who not just accepts but embraces neoliberal values and characteristics in his or her life. Foucault suggests one of the prominent technologies of producing neoliberal subject in his public lecture on neoliberalism: *homo œconomicus* (economic man). According to Foucault,

traditionally *homo œconomicus* meant the man of exchange, one of the two partners in the process of exchange. As a partner of exchange, he must always think in terms of utility based on his needs. This model of subject is the basis of traditional liberalism. But, neoliberalism takes this concept and turns it into a much more extreme kind of subjectivity. *Homo œconomicus* in neoliberalism designates an "entrepreneur of himself, being for himself his own capital, being for himself his own producer, being for himself the source of [his] earnings" (Foucault 2008, 226). Whereas *homo œconomicus* in liberalism points to only a part of human activity, *homo œconomicus* in neoliberalism extends the economic principle to the whole of his existence. As an entrepreneur of himself, he is made to manage his entire life as a form of invested capital, or what Schultz calls "human capital," capital as a part of man himself in the sense that he is a source of his future earnings (Foucault 2008, 226).[26] In accordance with this definition of human capital, the person who consumes is not a consumer but a producer, because he 'produces' his own satisfaction, and the man who works for a company is not a (subjected) worker but an entrepreneur of himself, because he 'creates' his own earnings by 'investing' his 'capital' (i.e. talent and effort). This neoliberal conception of human beings as *homo œconomicus* or human capital reveals neoliberalism's ideological project as one that produces a new subjectivity. Naturally, to boost the ideology of human capital, a plethora of media are offered: self-help books, self-care programs and lectures, economists' reports and comments, religious teachings, school education, etc.[27]

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[26] Schultz's elaboration on human capital: "The distinctive mark of human capital is that it is a part of man. It is human because it is embodied in man, and capital because it is a source of future satisfactions, or of future earnings, or both" (Schultz, 148, quoted from Foucault 2008, 236).
[27] One of Jimmy's term papers for his Applied Rhetoric course was titled "Self-Help Books of the Twentieth Century: Exploiting Hope and Fear" (*OC*, 195). By mentioning cultural phenomenon of self-help throughout the novel, Atwood criticizes the contemporary fashion of

Most people in Atwood's world, both at the Compound and the pleebland, exhibit the features of *homo œconomicus*. While relatively wealthy people in the Compound endeavor to produce new technologies or develop new products to sell, the poor of the pleeblands are compelled to manage their lives efficiently to survive. But it is Oryx who embodies the concept of human capital most thoroughly. Oryx was born in a poor family in Southeast Asia, and was sold by her mother when she was five or six years old to a gang leader in a big city in order to support the other members of her family (*OC*, 115). First she sells flowers to foreign tourists; though still a child, she works as an actress in pornographic videos; and then she is sold as a personal sex slave to a man in San Francisco. Oryx has been forced to endure the life of a slave in the most cruel and degrading manner, and her past causes Jimmy, her secret lover, to be overwhelmed by guilt and outrage. But Oryx herself does not feel anything negative from her experience of oppression. Rather, she strangely regards her life as something that is positive. While Jimmy, a young middle-class, white, western man, gives a sort of politically correct response to her experience by expressing his rage on the unfair and miserable situation, she counter-intuitively rejects his position: "He [human trafficker] was rescuing young girls. He paid for my plane ticket, just like it said. If it wasn't for him, I wouldn't be here. You should like him!" (*OC*, 309) or, "Just imagine, Jimmy—millions of people in the world never ate fries like this! We are so lucky!" (*OC*, 316) She even said that she cried

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self-help in the sense that this exploitation of "hope and fear" might be resulted in the cruelest cultural accomplice of dystopia. Even after the calamity, Snowman/Jimmy inadvertently remembers expressions from self-help books. Here is one instance: "*A great man must rise to meet the challenges in his life*, says a voice. Who is it this time? A motivational lecturer from RejoovTV, some fatuous drone in a suit. A gabbler for hire. *This is surely the lesson taught to us by history. The higher the hurdle the greater the jump. Having to face a crisis causes you to grow as a person*. "I haven't grown as a person, you cretin," Snowman shouts" (*OC*, 237). For history and criticism of self-help books and positive thinking in America, see Ehrenreich 2009.

when she heard about the violent death of Uncle En, a gang leader who made her sell

flowers (*OC*, 136). Here is another such conversation between Jimmy and Oryx that

shows her eccentric interpretation of her cruel past:

> "Why do you think he is bad?" said Oryx. "He never did anything with me that you don't do. Not nearly so many things!"
> "I don't do them against your will," said Jimmy. "Anyway you're grown up now."
> Oryx laughed. "What is my will?" she said. Then she must have seen his pained look, so she stopped laughing. "He taught me to read," she said quietly. "To speak English, and to read English words. Talking first, then reading, not so good at first, and I still don't talk so good but you always have to start somewhere, don't you think so, Jimmy?" (*OC*, 141)

According to her reasoning, she thinks she "traded" sex for learning English from the

human trafficker. She thinks she was not a tragic slave, a human being reduced to the

status of a commodity, but a subject who was able to grow through her negative

experiences. In this sense, she has no reason to be sad or gloomy. Instead, she always

tries to look on the bright side of life: "We should think only beautiful things, as much as

we can. There is so much beautiful in the world if you look around. You are looking only

at the dirt under your feet, Jimmy. It's not good for you" (*OC*, 144).

It is clear that Oryx's almost perversely positive outlook on her past is derived not

from her own reasoning but from the people who buys, sells, and uses her. That is to say,

it is her masters, not Oryx, who offer interpretations of her slavery; Oryx just accepts

these interpretations actively and even believes they are her own ideas. For instance,

Uncle En who buys and sells children says to the mothers that "the work was easy and

the children would be well treated … he wasn't a low-down thug or a liar, he wasn't

pimp," which the mothers and Oryx believed (*OC*, 118). Like a hostage who gets to feel

compassion for one's kidnapper, child Oryx begins to love Uncle En as her

husband/father and does whatever he orders her to do ("This was as close to love as Oryx

could get right then, so she felt happy," *OC*, 133). Trying to avoid her real conditions,

which are tragic and pitiless, Oryx begins to absorb every interpretation her masters offer

her to cover up their evil intentions. As a result, Oryx develops into an unusually positive

and bright person who only sees the positive side of existence. But this does not mean

that she is a naïve or hopeless optimist. On the contrary, she knows exactly what this

world is about. Early on, as "a smart girl" (*OC*, 133) she realizes that she "represented a

cash profit to others" (*OC*, 126), that she is a human type of commodity from which her

masters extract values. Oryx "learned about life," meaning "[t]hat everything has a price"

(*OC*, 138-9). For a slave with a price tag who knows too much about what the world is

like, there are two options. One, she can endeavor to break up her chains, escape from the

masters, and live as a free woman. The other, she accepts the reality and trades every

hardship for her own interest. The first option is difficult and seems to have no possibility

in a society where everything is commodified according to market logic. Even if you

escape from your masters, there is no guarantee that you would live a free life. Everyone

is a slave in one way or another in this society where "everything has a price." So Oryx

chooses the second option: a slave who lives like a master. This is precisely what

Foucault defines *homo œconomicus*:

> *Homo œconomicus*, that is to say, the person who accepts reality or who
> responds systematically to modifications in the variables of the
> environment, appears precisely as someone manageable, someone who
> responds systematically to systematic modifications artificially introduced
> into the environment. *Homo œconomicus* is someone who is eminently
> governable. (Foucault 2008, 270)

Oryx is a typical *homo œconomicus* in neoliberal society who "accepts reality" and as a

result "who is eminently governable." Oryx is a person who is entrapped in neoliberal

ideology of homo capital, and as such she is an ideal model of subject who can be governed by neoliberal political rationality. "What is my will?" Oryx asks back. Unlike Nietzsche who thinks human will to power is the only way to overcome the base and decadent social reality of modernity, Oryx realizes that it is a fantasy in neoliberal capitalist society to believe in the power of one's "will."

Dead End of the Language in Neoliberal Society

As neoliberal political rationality steers everything into a hypercompetitive economy and stratified society, there is absolutely no point from which for individuals to escape. It is certainly what Foucault showed in his 1979 lecture course on *The Birth of Biopolitics*: neoliberalism extends the practices and rationality of the market to a series of hitherto non-economic realms. Analyzing the rising culture of postmodernism in the early 1980s, Jameson also demonstrates the link between postmodern culture and late capitalism, or multinational capital, then the nascent form of neoliberalism. From Andy Warhol and *Star Wars* to experimental poems and Bonaventure hotel, Jameson reminds us of the homology between the form of multinational capitalism and the logic of cultural form. Jameson even argues that contemporary theory is also "itself very precisely a postmodernist phenomenon," for its anti-hermeneutic tendency and anti-referential model of signification represents "a very significant symptom" of postmodernist culture, in which any figure of subject, concept of truth, or stability of meaning is denied and abandoned as "metaphysical baggage" (Jameson 1991, 12). Theory's tendency of affirming indeterminacy and unknowability, in Jameson's observation, symbolizes the late capitalist economic trend, especially in financial sector, of inconsistency and

undecidability.[28] In a similar vein, it is worth noting that how language and the

humanities in Atwood's world are corresponding to the hegemonic power of

neoliberalism. As we've seen in Oryx's case, her submission to the masters' discourses

was possible mainly through the power of language. Oryx accepts the literal, denotational

meaning of masters' language, which fixes her permanently upon the positions of a slave.

In case of the *MaddAddam* trilogy, language is the ultimate tool of rationality, control and

mystification.

Boris Groys argues that economic medium and political medium is utterly

different and is not to be mixed. In his words, "[t]he economy functions in the medium of

money. It operates with numbers. Politics functions in the medium of language. It

operates with words" (Groys, XV). According to Groys, capitalism is the system of

economy, money, and numbers, not the system of words and discourses. Accordingly, in

capitalism, "the ultimate confirmation or refutation of human action is not linguistic but

economic: it is expressed not with words but with numbers. The force of language as

such is thereby annulled" (Groys, XVI). This statement is only half-true, because, as

we've discussed following Foucault, capitalism readily uses linguistic means to justify its

deficiencies, to advertise its spectacle, and to produce its faithful subjects. Rather, we can

regard even economy and money as institutions of language. In Marazzi's words:

> If we consider language to be not only an instrument used in institutional
> reality to *describe* facts, but also to *create them*, then in a world in which

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[28] Jeffrey T. Nealon extends Jameson's argument into the humanities and the curricular policies
in college: "… the dominant logic of economics in the neoliberal revolution years has in many
ways been isomorphic—how could it not be?—with the cultural logic of the humanities and the
rise of theory. As undecidability came to reorganize the larger cultural field, stock portfolios as
well as tenure files became structured around the wildest kind of speculation—the humanities in
particular made a decisive transformation away from the heavy, Fordist enterprise of teaching and
researching a set canon of 'great texts' and building citizens, toward an innovation-based
economy of 'flexibly specialized symbolic analysis'" (Nealon, 173-4).

> institutions like money, property, marriage, technologies, work itself, are
> all linguistic institutions, what molds our consciousness, language,
> becomes at the same time an instrument of production of those same real
> facts (Marazzi, 33; emphases in the original).

Groys's point is true only in the sense that language in capitalism is fundamentally empty

and void, functioning as a decoy or a screen. Only truly meaningful things in capitalism

are numbers and money, not language and words. In *Oryx and Crake*, linguistic means of

course is exhibited most splendidly on the part of corporations. There are two combined

functions that language does in this corporation-dominated world: luring and concealing.

The most distinguished feature in the linguistic world of the trilogy is neologism.

A plethora of newly coined words demonstrate the ultimate hybridized culture of future

capitalism. There are neologisms for animals (pigoon, wolvog, rakunk, bobkitten, snat,

liobam), foods (ChickieNobs Bucket O'Nubbins, WyzeBurger, SoyOBoy burgers,

Happicuppuchino, CrustaeSoy), games (Kwiktime Osama, Extinctathon), concepts

(brainfrizz, Paradice, SeksMart, Corpicide), products (BlyssPluss, Rockulators,

Sea/H/Ear Candies headphones, NooSkins), and corporations (OrganInc, CorpSeCorps,

NooSkins, HelthWyzer, RejoovenEsense, CryoJeenyus). Parts of these new words—

brand names—are coined to lure people to consume specific products. Brand names

describe essential features of products as in ChickieNobs, SoyOBoy, and Kwiktime

Osama. But all of these neologisms conceal the unnatural or harmful nature of something,

making people not to understand the truth of it. For instance, the word 'pigoon' hides the

fact that pigoons are gene-spliced pig with a human cortex in their brains; names such as

'OrganInc,' 'RejoovenEsense,' or 'BlyssPluss' evoke positive images of 'organic,'

'rejuvenation,' or 'bliss' by distorting and adding letters; 'SeksMart' erases the

'politically incorrect' image that the word 'sex market' raises. All these euphoric

neologisms not only delete some parts of truth and reality but also invoke favorable and positive associations inside the consumer's mind.

These linguistic practices in the novel evoke the way in which people gradually detach themselves to reality. That is, there remains no word to describe accurately the exact truth of the world. Every word is so superficial that there is no depth through which users of the word can explore. Jameson observes such flatness and depthlessness as "the first and most evident" phenomenon of global capitalism (Jameson 1991, 9). He points out that this depthlessness of language and culture is also the symptom of "weakening of historicity" both in the meaning of history and of temporality in general (Jameson 1991, 6). Language that is utterly alienated from reality empties history in the end; users of that language lose the sense of temporality, which precludes them from the possibility of "cognitive mapping" (Jameson 1991, 51). In this sense, users of such a hollow language in the pre-apocalyptic Compounds and pleeblands are those who are caught up in losing their sense of reality, temporality, and spatiality.

In addition, language, from which every aspect of negativity has been removed, remains only to conjure up positive aspects. Culture of positivity is also typical in the age of global capitalism. When everyday life has become more and more dangerous, there emerges a cultural politics that emphasizes positivity—the need to keep a positive attitude toward consumption, the established order, and so on.[29] This is a cruel world

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[29] An example of excessive positive culture can be found in Compound. Here is a description of the culture of HelthWyzer West: "The officially promoted view of HelthWyzer West was that it was one big happy family, dedicated to the pursuit of truth and the betterment of humankind. To dwell too much on the improvement in value for the shareholders was considered bad taste, but on the other hand there was an employee options package. All staff were expected to be unremittingly cheerful, to meet their assigned goals diligently, and—as in real families—not to ask too much about what was really going on" (*MA*, 232). Apparently the positive culture

where human trafficking is so commonplace that students both in Compound and in

God's Gardeners have to learn survival courses such as "Life Skills" (*OC*, 42) and

"Predator-Prey Relationships and Animal Camouflage" (*YF*, 61).[30] And this is a world of

excessively positive culture where one can easily change (with the payment of money, of

course) "gender, sexual orientation, height, color of skin and eyes" (*OC*, 289). If you find

there is anything imperfect in your body, you can redo it. Such a society that is

characterized by excess of positivity and dissolution of negativity produces the

phenomenon of what Baudrillard calls "losing one's shadow." What happens in the event

of such a loss? "[E]ither he has become transparent, and the light passes right through

him or, alternatively, he is lit from all angles, overexposed and defenseless against all

sources of light" (Baudrillard 1993, 49). He is someone who only chooses to, or

programmed to, receive positive, affirmative, bright, and pleasurable messages; he only

accepts light and refuses darkness. As a result, he becomes a transparent, shadowless man,

that is, a man without substance, a corpse, a ghost, a specter. In other words, excess of

positivity paradoxically brings about the total negativity. Crake's "Paradice Project"

shows this paradox, for the positive-sound but deformed word of "Paradice" actually

means an annihilation of the human race with the similarly sly word "BlyssPluss."

Language in the neoliberal society of *Oryx and Crake* and *The Year of the Flood*

works as an ideology, but as the ruling principle of a society on the brink of apocalypse.

In a classical Marxian sense, ideology can be defined as an illusion, a dream that beguiles

people into a set of ideas that makes them not seeing the 'real' reality. In Althusser's

formulation, "ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real

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functions to hide the dirty secret of bioengineering experiments in the Compound. It is a symbolic
fantasy that effectively screens the real.

[30] One of the bestselling books is "survival manual" (*OC*, 151).

conditions of existence" (Althusser, 162). People do it, because they do not know it (even though they 'imagine' that they know it). Oryx is an exemplary character in terms of ideology in this sense. As we have seen, she is captured by the power of this delusional, ideological, masterful language and because of that cannot see the truth. Working as a sales executive at Crake's Paradice project, Oryx is completely unaware of his apocalyptic scheme. When Jimmy tries to point this out, Oryx answers: "I believe in Crake, I believe in his … his vision. He wants to make the world a better place. This is what he's always telling me. I think that is so fine, don't you, Jimmy?" (*OC*, 321-2) Since her early attachment to the gang leader, she has been a 'believer' of the superficiality of language and has never attempted to find something beyond it, which places her back into the position of a slave. Soon after this conversation, when the pandemic spreads throughout the world, Oryx tearfully tells Jimmy that she does not know the meaning of the BlyssPluss pills: "It was in the pills. It was in those pills I was giving away, the ones I was selling. It's all the same cities, I went there. Those pills were supposed to help people! Crake said …" (*OC*, 325).

Crake is located on the opposite side of Oryx with regard to language. While Oryx believes in language and its denotation without skepticism, Crake fully recognizes the ideological mechanisms operative within language. Unlike Oryx, he is not a believer of anything, including language. When his father's death is 'reported' as suicide, he doesn't believe the official announcement; rather he tries, and succeeds, to opens up the veil behind it by hacking the Compound computers. In fact, as one of the typical "numbers people," Crake thinks that all kinds of symbolism have the feature of mystification, which he endeavors to debunk. For example, in Crake's view, love is

merely "a hormonally induced delusional state," sex is "on the whole a deeply imperfect solution to the problem of intergenerational genetic transfer" (*OC*, 192-3), and art is "an empty drainpipe. An amplifier. A stab at getting laid" (*OC*, 168). Crake tries to disclose every symbolic acts and languages in their purely physical senses ("And we're hormone robots anyway, only we're faulty ones," *OC*, 166). He is fundamentally a Platonist who thinks only the pure idea is true and detests symbolic deceptions such as language and arts. For Crake, elaborated and attractive language and arts merely form the miserable human history ("PON for Profanity, Obscenity, and Nudity. That was the thing about history, said Crake: it had lots of all three," *OC*, 79), which then lead to the state of control and domination:

> *Watch out for art*, Crake used to say. *As soon as they start doing art, we're in trouble*. Symbolic thinking of any kind would signal downfall, in Crake's view. Next they'd be inventing idols, and funerals, and grave goods, and the afterlife, and sin, and Linear B, and kings, and then slavery and war (*OC*, 361; emphases in the original).

Thus, the Platonist scientist endeavors to build a new republic, terminating all the untrue and false symbolism. As a result, he abolishes the existing human race and creates his own "perfect" children, Crakers, post-humans who are devoid of "symbolic thinking of any kind." Most importantly, they cannot read. Without capability of doing symbolic, and in this sense human, signs and acts, they represent, for Crake at least, humans minus violence and domination: "… there's no more unrequited love … no more thwarted lust, no more shadow between the desire and the act … No more No means yes, ... No more prostitution, no sexual abuse of children, no haggling over the price, no pimps, no sex slaves. No more rape" (*OC*, 165). Crake, a seer of truth beyond the existing language, is not a slave like Oryx. He does not try to be a god-like master himself, either, as most

'mad scientist' figures in science fictions have dreamt of. Instead, as a believer in numbers, science and technology, what he does is replacing misleading symbols with irrefutable realities.

Whereas Oryx is governed by language and Crake aims to replace language, Jimmy engages in the use of language in an ambiguous way. As one of typical "word people," Jimmy shows a great talent in handling language. He has some popularity in school with his "jokes" (*OC*, 54), is good at seducing (and dumping) girls with his linguistic and story-telling skills, and in the post-apocalyptic world he is disappointed to know that Crakers have "limited vocabularies" to tell jokes (*OC*, 153). He knows exactly how to embellish language for his own purposes (his own childhood buzzword is "Bogus!"), a skill which he improves at Martha Graham Academy. Taking courses such as Applied Rhetoric, Applied Semantics, Comparative Cultural Psychology and others, Jimmy realizes that as a person proficient in the use of language, he would end up working in advertising, "decorating the cold, hard, numerical real world in flossy 2-D verbiage" (*OC*, 188). After graduation, he is hired by a minor Compound that sells self-improvement packages, where he works on presenting the "vision" of products to customers. He "make[s] up a word" and succeeds in "verbal fabrications" (*OC*, 248, 249).

What Jimmy really does is to create tricky brand names and product instructions that ultimately seduce and deceive people. He maximizes the deceptive potential of language and is even "depressed" by his activities, but this feeling does not stop him from continuing performing them as his line of work (*OC*, 249). In this sense, Jimmy reminds us what Žižek calls the cynical fetishist. Whereas traditional ideological subject does not know what he's doing but does it anyway, cynical subject knows exactly what lies behind

his task but continues doing it.[31] For a cynical subject like Jimmy, the ideological critique

that unveils the truth under the surface of text is no longer operative. Oryx's confession

of her cruel experiences does not cause Jimmy to take action against the injustices of

neoliberalism, and his roommate Bernice's activism on behalf of the environment cannot

change his attitude regarding the ecological devastation brought about by capitalist

economy. Even when Crake reveals his secret plan to Jimmy before the actual plague, he

does nothing to prevent Crake from undertaking it. Jimmy is cynical and despairing about

the future of neoliberal society, yet he nonetheless clings to his object of desire. In

Jimmy's case, the fetishistic objects are his love (Oryx) and his knowledge (words). On

the one hand, Jimmy hasn't escaped from the gaze of Oryx ever since he and Crake first

saw on an Internet child pornographic site. Even after Crake has killed Oryx and the

extermination of the human species has begun, Jimmy cannot leave behind the image and

voice of Oryx in his head. In one passage, Snowman/Jimmy's obsession with Oryx is

portrayed in a poignant manner:

> Now he can feel Oryx floating towards him through the air, as if on soft
> feathery wings. She's landing now, settling; she's very close to him,
> stretched out on her side just a skin's distance away. Miraculously she can
> fit onto the platform beside him, although it isn't a large platform. If he
> had a candle or a flashlight he'd be able to see her, the slender outline of
> her, a pale glow against the darkness. If he put out his hand he could touch
> her; but that would make her vanish (*OC*, 113).

He knows that Oryx is now dead, but he tries to live in his memories of her in order not

to "make her vanish." She comes to function as a fetish object for Jimmy, who also

knows that he can survive only by reliving his happy memories with her. On the other

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[31] "One knows the falsehood very well, one is well aware of a particular interest hidden behind an
ideological universality, but still one does not renounce it" (Žižek 1989, 26).

hand, Jimmy clings to words, even though he is aware that complex human words and knowledge are apparently useless in such a post-apocalyptic world.

> "Hang on to the words," he tells himself. The odd words, the old words, the rare ones. *Valance. Norn. Serendipity. Pibroch. Lubricious*. When they're gone out of his head, these words, they'll be gone, everywhere, forever. As if they had never been (*OC*, 68).

Jimmy's attachment on words—and their container, books—is manifestly portrayed in a scene, when he works as part-time job at the Martha Graham library. His job is to select old books for whether they are to be destructed or to be stored in digital format. But "he lost this post halfway through its term because he couldn't bear to throw anything out" (*OC*, 241). It is noticeable that both his fetish on love/Oryx and knowledge/words do not actually produce anything and he doesn't endeavor to prevent them from being destroyed. On the contrary, Jimmy acts in opposite directions of caring them: he uses Oryx's image as an object of his pornographic obsession and works as a copywriter at an advertisement department. Then, what makes Jimmy keep fetishizing these two? One answer might be that these objects of fetish give him an obscure strength to endure reality. Žižek says the role of fetish is "to cope with a harsh reality." In this sense, "fetishists are not dreamers lost in their own private worlds, they are thoroughgoing 'realists,' able to accept the way things are because by cling to their fetish they are able to mitigate the full impact of reality" (Žižek 2009, 65). Just as Martha Graham Academy fetishizes its humanities and arts courses in order to survive the world where humanities and arts become useless, Jimmy fetishizes love and language to deal with a cruel reality. He has no other thing to do than to hold on to his fetish.

Again, the attitudes of each of the three main characters in *Oryx and Crake* toward language show that language in neoliberal culture leaves us few options: Oryx's

naïve linguistic attitude makes her an eternal slave figure, Jimmy's cynical linguistic attitude drives him a fetishist of dead things, and Crake's anti-linguistic attitude logically leads to the catastrophe of the world. It is as if Atwood suggests there is no way out once neoliberal capitalism starts to dominate the world. At the end of *Oryx and Crake*, readers see that Crakers are beginning to make an idol, "a grotesque-looking figure, a scarecrow like effigy," when an injury prevents Snowman from visiting them as expected (*OC*, 360). Despite Crake's genetic planning of anti-symbolism in Crakers' DNA, they re-start the primitive type of religious ritual by inventing idols themselves. This scene sparks a gloomy signal for the future in which the post-apocalyptic world would be destined to repeat the previous human history of "PON" (Profanity, Obscenity, and Nudity, as Crake said) once again. But it turns out that Atwood, with the following two novels of the trilogy, has her own alternatives for the post-human future. Now it is time to examine Atwood's alternatives to the neoliberal culture.

Hunters and Gardeners: Utopian Desire of God's Gardeners

We have seen the futile condition of language in extreme neoliberal society in terms of the three characters of *Oryx and Crake*. Atwood's depiction of it is in essence dystopian, as language functions either as a means of neoliberal politico-economic rationality or as an object of fetishism. Although Crake tries to remedy the futility of language, he resorts to releasing a worldwide pandemic that eliminates the human race. But Atwood does not end her speculations on the future at this point, where social reality is wholly subsumed under neoliberal rationality and where the civilization itself arrives at the point of its termination. With *The Year of the Flood* and *MaddAddam*, Atwood proposes an alternative subjectivities and ways of life that offer the possibility of hope. In other words,

Atwood provides us first with the speculation on what neoliberalism would bring about in the most nightmarish way, and then, envisions a singular post-apocalyptic space in which a new kind of hybrid civilization begins to take root.

Whereas *Oryx and Crake* presents a terrifyingly logical answer—that is, the catastrophe—to the problem of neoliberalism in areas such as technological hubris, capitalist greed, social disruption, climate change, and so on, *The Year of the Flood*, which unfolds roughly within the same time-frame as *Oryx and Crake*, attempts to provide an alternative to neoliberal domination. Although the narrative of *The Year of the Flood* alternates between past and present of two female characters, Toby and Ren, it is a sect that calls itself God's Gardeners which resides in the center of the novel. God's Gardeners is a fundamentalist religious group, whose main tenets are environmentalism and anti-capitalism. Except for the first chapter, each of the novel's fourteen chapters begins with a fictional song from *The God's Gardeners Oral Hymnbook* and a sermon by Adam One, the group's founder and leader. These sermons, spanning approximately twenty years before the plague, represent not just the group's peculiar Christian-cum-environmental theology but also provide an acerbic commentary on the worsening state of the world. Its theology of fundamental environmentalism that proclaims 'all creatures are God's children' inevitably leads to the criticism of the "Exfernal World" where life is regarded merely as a means of commodification. One sermon of Adam One suggests the core critique of hubris of humans:

> In our efforts to rise above ourselves we have indeed fallen far, and are falling farther still; for, like the Creation, the Fall, too, is ongoing. Ours is a fall into greed: why do we think that everything on Earth belongs to us, while in reality we belong to Everything? We have betrayed the trust of the Animals, and defiled our sacred task of stewardship. God's

commandment to "replenish the Earth" did not mean we should fill it to overflowing with ourselves, thus wiping out everything else. ….

> We pray that we may not fall into the error of pride by considering ourselves as exceptional, alone in all Creation in having Souls; and that we will not vainly imagine that we are set above all other Life, and may destroy it at our pleasure, and with impunity (*YF*, 52-3).

In the logic of God's Gardeners, this criticism of human arrogance leads to the prophecy of a catastrophic event, which Gardeners dub as the "Waterless Flood" (*YF*, 91). Calling the description of Genesis about the destructive flood as "the First Flood of extinction," Adam One forecasts the coming of man-made second flood, providing contemporary ecological disasters as its signs:

> Yes, my Friends—any further cursing of the ground would be done not by God but by Man himself. Consider the southern shores of the Mediterranean—once fruitful farmland, now a desert. Consider the ruinations wrought in the Amazon River basin; consider the wholesale slaughter of ecosystems, each one a living reflection of God's infinite care for detail …
>
> … We can feel the symptoms of coming disasters as a doctor feels a sick man's pulse. We must be ready for the time when those who have broken trust with the Animals—yes, wiped them from the face of the Earth where God placed them—will be swept away by the Waterless Flood, which will be carried on the wings of God's dark Angels that fly by night, and in airplanes and helicopters and bullet trains, and on transport trucks and other such conveyances (*YF*, 90).

In this sermon Adam One correctly predicts the viral nature of the catastrophe, which would be spread through the globe "on the wings of God's dark Angels." Actually, this is not a pure prediction but a rational speculation based on information that has been gathered from the inside members of the Compounds. For example, Pilar, one of the Eves, warns Toby about the pills: "… those Corporation pills are the food of the dead, my dear. Not our kind of dead, the bad kind. The dead who are still alive. We must teach the children to avoid these pills—they're evil. It's not only a rule of faith among us, it's a matter of certainty" (*YF*, 105). In order to prepare for the Waterless Flood, Adam One

also suggests that members of the group, as "a plural Noah," have to cherish within them "the knowledge of the Species" (*YF*, 91). This "knowledge of the Species" is Gardeners' strategy of preparing for catastrophe, which they believe not the tragic end of the world but another chance of building a new world ("But how privileged we are to witness these first precious moments of Rebirth!" *YF*, 371). Just as millenarian movements in Europe in the late Middle Ages looked forward to the Last Judgment as the revolutionary new beginning in which the faithful poor would be chosen over the greedy rich, God's Gardeners consider it as another possibility of hope (Cohn, 16). To prepare for the end as a rebirth, God's Gardeners acquire a vast knowledge of plants, animals, organic food and clothes, as well as learning survival skills. So it turned out that many members of the group, including Toby, Ren, Zeb, Adam One and Amanda, actually survive the attack from both CorpSeCorps and the plague.

The novel portrays God's Gardeners as an alternative to the rest of the population that only lives day to day without thinking about the future. The members of God's Gardeners are the people of religious principle, while the majority living in the Compounds and the pleeblands are overwhelmingly concerned with pursuing pleasure and accumulating money. If people in the Exfernal World are consumers and sellers, members of God's Gardeners are preservers and producers. The name 'Gardeners' is interesting in the sense that it designates very different way of life in the neoliberal capitalist society. In neoliberal society as depicted in *Oryx and Crake*, where all existence is at the mercy of market forces, life becomes deprived of any security. The insecurity of present and uncertainty about the future generate unbearable fears. So people in neoliberalism tend to become hunters, who are destined to find their prey or snatch others'

just in order to survive. By contrast, God's Gardeners, who seek to live in harmony with nature, endeavor to create a utopian space that can secure the future.

Here, we can remind ourselves of Bauman's analogy of hunters and gardeners. According to Bauman, people in neoliberal times of uncertainty and insecurity, or what he calls "liquid times," exist as hunters. The only task hunters pursue is another kill or prey big enough for their game-bags. They don't care for the harmony of nature because it doesn't help their chance of survival. "When the woods have been emptied of game due to a particularly profitable escapade, hunters may move to another relatively unspoiled wilderness, still teeming with would-be hunting trophies" (Bauman 2007, 100). So after hunters leave a place, that place becomes an inhospitable wasteland. Contrary to hunters, gardeners assume that there would be no order at all were it not for his constant attention and effort. They know what kind of plants that they should plant and what kind of works they should do to preserve them. Unlike hunters, gardeners focus on the preconceived plan that best guarantees the arrangement of their garden and try hard not to turn it into a wasteland. In this sense, "[i]t is the gardeners who tend to be the most keen and expert (one is tempted to say, professional) utopian-makers" (Bauman 2007, 99).

Following Bauman, we can view God's Gardeners as an embodiment of the utopian worldview that believes in the constant rebirth and rearrangement of the world. For example, God's Gardeners prepare themselves for preserving ecological knowledge for twenty-five years, just to realize their utopian plan in the space of post-apocalyptic world. They (many of them are former scientists at the Compounds) even plan to preserve DNA codes to restore the extinct animals.[32] In terms of utopia, it can be said that

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[32] At one point, Toby, a newly appointed Eve, wonders about the gene codes that Gardeners have gathered: "Such fugitives [from the Compounds] often brought contraband information with

the strictly principled, but always tolerant, way of life of God's Gardeners is a "living *toward* a utopia," whereas that of hunters in the neoliberal consumer culture is a "living *inside* a utopia" (Bauman, 109; emphases in the original). Living inside a utopia does not know the image of the future because life of hunters always stays in the present form of utopia, a cornucopia of commodities and pleasure. For instance, a cynical fetishist Jimmy cannot maintain his life as a manipulator of commercial language without endlessly pursuing his hedonistic desires. Night by night, Jimmy goes to a bar, meets a girl, has sex with her, and then cuts off contact. Jimmy's incessant pursuit of sexual desire hollows out his spirit. This is the typical life style of people in *Oryx and Crake* and also in contemporary advanced countries in reality. On the other hand, Gardeners' posture of living toward a utopia visualizes the vindication and the ultimate triumph over the existing world order, which also provide the reason to survive, as one of the members of Gardeners, Toby, clearly shows.

Virtues and Writings: Toby as an Alternative

Life of Toby as portrayed in *The Year of the Flood* and *MaddAddam* represents how the utopian vision of God's Gardeners (and certainly of Atwood herself) can be portrayed and suggested as an alternative to the doomed neoliberal subjectivity. One of the most striking differences that distinguish Toby from Jimmy and Crake is that she is from the pleebland. Unlike Jimmy and Crake, Toby experiences hardship when both of

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them. Formulae. Long lines of code. Test secrets, proprietary lies. What did the Gardeners do with it all? Toby wondered. … As far as she could tell, they just held on to it; though it was possible that Adam One harbored a dream of restoring all the lost Species via their preserved DNA codes, once a more ethical and technically proficient future had replaced the depressing present. They'd cloned the mammoth, so why not all? Was that his vision of the ultimate Ark?" (*YF*, 247). As we realize in the final novel of the trilogy, *MaddAddam*, this plan cannot be accomplished because the post-apocalyptic world happened to be not a "technically proficient future" at all.

her parents die: she had to drop out of college, where she was majoring in "Holistic

Healing," earn money by working as a wage slave, selling her hair and ova, and endure

sexual violence from a manager at her workplace. After being saved by God's Gardeners,

she becomes a member of the group, learning the knowledge of weeds and bees,

especially. She survives the plague and, with her "tough and hard" character (*YF*, 8) and

her sincerity, finally becomes a sort of godmother of the rest of the human survivors and

the Crakers. When we think about Toby, it is hard to ignore that she embodies moral

values that are almost extinct in Atwood's world. Whereas Jimmy, Crake, and Oryx all

adhere to capitalist rationalities such as hedonist sexual desire, technocratic meritocracy,

and submission to authority, respectively, Toby embodies the traditional moral values of

sharing, caring, friendship, and solidarity, all of which she learns from the milieu of

God's Gardeners. As she learns the knowledge of weeds and bees from her mentor Pilar,

she gradually realizes the mysterious harmony between nature and man, which she never

abandons even in the times of post-apocalypse. At the end of *The Year of the Flood*,

when she and Ren, a young girl from the Gardeners, rescue Amanda, Ren's close friend

who once was a member of the Gardeners, from two Painballers, she even insists to share

the food to the Painballers because it is Saint Julian and All Souls Feast night, when

everyone shares food.

> "This is not the time," says Toby in her old Eve voice, "for dwelling on ultimate purposes. I would like us all to forget the past, the worst parts of it. Let us be grateful for this food that has been given to us. Amanda. Ren. Jimmy. You, too, if you can manage it." This to the two Painballers. …
>
> Toby continues on as if she hasn't heard. "And I would like us to remember those who are gone, throughout the world but most especially our absent friends. Dear Adams, dear Eves, dear Fellow Mammals and Fellow Creatures, all those now in Spirit—keep us in your view and lend us your strength, because we are surely going to need it."

> Then she takes a sip from the cup and passes it to Amanda (*YF*, 431).

This scene obviously evokes the last supper of Jesus, in which he shares bread and wine with his disciples including Judah who will betray him soon. Like Jesus Christ, Toby risks her own life to save Ren and Amanda; she gives food to the criminals who are ready to kill her at the first opportunity; she does not bear grudge on her former abuser Blanco; she does not discriminate against gene-spliced quasi-animals like pigoons and even loves the "Frankenpeople," the Crakers (*MA*, 19). At the end she finally gives the surviving group of humans, Crakers, and pigoons a vision of the new future. In this sense, Toby's utopian principles and practice are fundamentally different from the aimlessness of Jimmy or the megalomaniacal Crake. She lives *toward* a utopia, not *in* a utopia, by preserving the seemingly useless values of friendship and solidarity to her life. Having survived a dystopia, Toby is Atwood's depiction of the alternative to the existing subject.

It is noticeable that language plays a central role in Toby's representation of utopian values. We already viewed that how language affected the characterization of Oryx, Jimmy, and Crake. For them, language functions as an ideological means of domination, a fetishistic object of forgetting harsh reality, or a symbolism that has to be abolished. On the contrary, for Toby, language is neither a fantasy nor an embodiment of human evil. Toby saves language from its ideological and technological biases, and reappropriates it as a medium of utopia. When everything is demolished, destroyed, and forgotten, Toby continues to record. Unlike Snowman's remembering the past in his own head, Toby keeps writing, by which she can preserve the memories of the past.

> … [S]he ought to write such things down. Keep a daily journal, as she did when she was alone at the AnooYoo Spa. She could go further, and record the ways and sayings of the now-vanished God's Gardeners for the future;

> for generations yet unborn, as politicians used to say when they were fishing for extra votes. If there is anyone in the future, that is; and if they'll be able to read; which, come to think of it, are two big *if*s. And even if reading persists, will anyone in the future be interested in the doings of an obscure and then outlawed and then disbanded green religious cult? (*MA*, 135)

She is not sure of anything about what to come, but she continues to write down everything that happens to her small group. Writing for Toby is an act of preparation for the future, which is opposed to Jimmy's work of writing advertisements that is intended solely to earn profit. She is the only one in the group who remembers and sincerely cherishes God's Gardeners' tenets, calendar, and rituals (*MA*, 153, 208). This act of remembering and preserving through writing is based on the belief that history goes on. Many protagonists in post-apocalyptic narrative do write and preserve records in the same vein. For example, in George R. Stewart's *Earth Abides* (1949), Isherwood keeps writing journals and preserving his observation of the earth and the history of survivors. Thus, in *Earth Abides,* a university library, not a factory or a supermarket, is considered as the most sacred place that can save the traces of human knowledge. Toby's writing performs the same mission. In a post-apocalyptic world, Toby's act of writing and preserving history symbolizes the optimistic attitude that tomorrow is still possible.

In addition, writing for Toby also has a sense of existence. When Blackbeard, one of the young Crakers, asks Toby about what a scar is, she answers: "A scar is like writing on your body" (*MA*, 91). She actually has many scars inside her, which has made marks in her psyche like a written language. Writing here is described not just as a physical, material thing but also as an existential means of discovering herself. Again, this is strikingly different from Jimmy's writing, which has no meaningful characteristics at all. Like his fake letter to his girlfriends and his creative advertisement copy on products,

Jimmy's writing is superficial and hollow. But as Nietzsche says through his persona

Zarathustra, Toby writes with blood, from her scars, because blood means her spirit.[33]

This existential and spiritual character of writing for Toby represents her own peculiar

character of seriousness and sincerity, which is usually ridiculed and denounced by others.

Her act of writing leads to the act of storytelling. The third and final novel of the

trilogy, *MaddAddam*, is itself structured as a collection of oral history. Toby tells, and

sometimes creates, Crakers the myths of the world before and after the crisis; Zeb states

his past story to Toby, his lover; Atwood tells readers the story of the survivors. Again,

the main storyteller of the novel is Toby. She not only tells the stories to Crakers but also

teaches Blackbeard how to write and read. When Toby dies, Blackbeard takes the place

of Toby, giving other Crakers the "Story of Toby," which is based on Toby's journal, or

"the book."

> Now this is the Book that Toby made when she lived among us. See, I am showing you. She made these words on a *page*, and a page is made of *paper*. She made the words with *writing*, that she marked down with a stick called a *pen*, with black fluid called *ink*, and she made the *pages* join together at one side, and that is called a *book*. See, I am showing you. This is the Book, these are the Pages, here is the Writing (*MA*, 385; emphases in the original).

Likewise, the most humane tradition of reading, writing, and storytelling survives and

continues to be passed on to the next generation of Crakers and hybrids (of Crakers and

humans). History can be continued not only in the form of oral stories but also of written

stories, which isn't possible without Toby's act of writing and storytelling.

This re-creation of writing, story, and book in the end of the *MaddAddam* trilogy

evokes an important point. That is, it is a crucial event of negating the entire order of

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[33] "Of all that is written I love only what a man has written with his blood. Write with blood, and you will experience that blood is spirit" (Nietzsche 1995, 40).

neoliberalism, in which the medium of numbers holds the hegemony. It could even be called as the revolution that replaces the hegemony of numbers with the hegemony of language. Remember the neoliberal society portrayed in *Oryx and Crake* and *The Year of the Flood*, where the medium of numbers, along with the elite "numbers people," cruelly dominates the world. In this society, everything including human lives can be bought and sold with a price tag. Crake's plague is supposed to end such a cruel world, but his remedy derives from this same world in that he also intends to erase the medium of language, which he considers as the source of all evils. Toby's work of re-enacting language over the numbers can be viewed as a true restoration, the first ever event in the trilogy that actually alters the course of the world. An interesting example can be found when Toby informs Crakers of the function of the word 'Fuck' by comparing it with money:

> Why were the bad people doing that [pharmaceutical company's scheme of putting virus in a pill]? Because of Money. Money was invisible, like Fuck. They thought that Money was their helper; they thought he was a better helper than Fuck. But they were wrong about that. Money was not their helper. Money goes away just when you need it. But Fuck is very loyal (*MA*, 257).

It cannot be ignored that Toby's revolution is inherently a utopian phenomenon in its character. Following Bauman, utopianism designates always a posture of "living towards" one's ideals (Bauman 2007, 109). Following Thomas More's definition of utopia as 'no place,' utopianism refers not to some existing ideal place but to an attitude of trying to realize such an ideal place. Toby's act of writing is utopian partly in the sense that it presupposes the belief of the future, a temporality that has not yet come. Without the belief of the future, there is no meaning of writing or preserving something, as cynical-fetishist Snowman's non-writing shows. Besides, Toby's writing is not just an act

of recording facts but also an act of preserving the dead (Note the similarity between Toby's act of preserving the memory of the human dead and the secret internet site of God's Gardeners, Extinctathon, which refers to the already extinct animals). She remembers Gardeners' virtues of natural harmony, solidarity, love, mutual aid and friendship by writing, with which she preserves what she thinks the ideal parts of human nature. Overall, Toby's writing is an act of reaching upon an ideal place in the belief that such an ideal future is possible. In this sense, it embodies a utopian character in its purest sense.

Utopia in Dystopia, and Vice Versa

It is obvious that, in Atwood's characterization scheme, God's Gardeners (including MaddAddamites) and Toby are suggested as an alternative force that not only represents the anti-capitalist, anti-consumerist, anti-technological way of life but also reveals the new form of living that would continue after the catastrophe. Their utopian orientation is striking in contrast to the subjectivities of Oryx, Jimmy, and Crake, whose worldview and attitude correspond to fundamental aspects of the neoliberal way of life. While God's Gardeners and Toby stand for the collective solidarity and humanitarian values, Oryx, Jimmy, and Crake epitomize the servile, cynical, and technocratic values that are boosted by neoliberal rationality. The uncompromising ecological fundamentalism and anti-instrumentalist humanism of God's Gardeners and Toby seems to be Atwood's answer to the inhuman and destructive neoliberalism. Only the radical and collective human language that has been written in the deepest alley of plebeian world can fight against the seemingly invincible and profane power of brutal numbers.

But Atwood's prospect of the rebirth does not stop at humanitarian values. This can be more or less expected when Atwood criticized human greed constantly through the lips of Crake, who at one point observes, "Homo sapiens doesn't seem able to cut himself off at the supply end. He's one of the few species that doesn't limit reproduction in the face of dwindling resources." *OC*, 120). Although Crake's extreme 'cure' of human violence and greed is not accepted by Atwood, he is at least "intellectually honorable" and "doesn't lie to himself" (*OC*, 69). This is why post-human Children of Crake, who are specifically customized for a new post-human utopian era ("Paradice"), are incorporated into the remaining group of Toby and MaddAddamites. For instance, Crakers are so perfect that Toby at first fears the subversion of racial hierarchy: "They're preternaturally beautiful, thinks Toby. Unlike us. We must seem subhuman to them, with our flapping extra skins, our aging faces, our warped bodies, too thin, too fat, too hairy, too knobbly. Perfection exacts a price, but it's the imperfect who pays it" (*MA*, 36). Such a combination causes series of "cultural misunderstanding" between them (*MA*, 13), yet it ultimately evolves into the pregnancy of three human females from male Crakers—the return of hybrid culture of the pre-apocalyptic age, but this time, all-natural and non-profit. The conception of human hybrid does not have negative connotations; rather, it is described as a plain and simple course of life to which humans must adapt. Unlike the case of hybrid animals in the past, the idea of hybrid humans does not evoke the creepy sense of uncanniness. Even cannibalistic pigoons enter into partnership with the group of humans and Crakers. The language barrier between pigoons and humans is overcome by Blackbeard's translation, which leads to the stage of mutual-aid and non-aggression pact:

> "Even if you [humans] are dead, they [pigoons] will not eat you. And they ask that you must no longer make holes in them, with blood, and cook

them in a smelly bone soup, or hang them in the smoke, or fry them and then eat them. Not any more" (*MA*, 270).

Then, the tripartite team of humans, post-humans, and hybrid animals pursue their common enemies—two Painballers, who raped Ren and Amanda, killed Adam One, and one of the pigoons—and capture them. The team does not kill them immediately but follows the due process of law: putting them on trial. This groundbreaking scene gives the trilogy the touch of utopia, or wishful thinking: a peaceful bond between the species, collective resistance over evil, and the ultimate victory of virtue. After the battle, pigoons return to their place, and the human-Craker group appropriates the past Compound building for their new shelter, whose name implies the celebration of the new beginning: "AnooYoo" (*MA*, 281).

Isn't it a too easy way to present the image of utopia? Doesn't Atwood know the dangers of utopianism? As Karl Popper points out, the sweeping "desire to build a world which is not only a little better and more rational than ours, but which is free from all its ugliness: not a crazy quilt, an old garment badly patched, but an entirely new gown, a really beautiful new world" makes utopia so dangerous (Popper, 154).[34] Isn't this desire of utopia exactly the same thing what Crake tries to achieve through perfectly engineered post-humans? Certainly, Atwood acknowledges the underside of utopian desire perfectly well. She even coins a new word, "ustopia," that describes an inherent interconnectivity between utopian ideal and dystopian danger.

> But scratch the surface a little, and—or so I think—you see something more like a yin and yang pattern; within each utopia, a concealed dystopia; within each dystopia, a hidden utopia, if only in the form of the world as it existed before the bad guys took over. Even in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*—surely one of the most unrelievedly gloomy dystopias ever

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[34] For dark sides of utopian desire, see also Gray (2007) and Jacoby (2005), especially Chapter 2 on the history of anti-utopianism.

> concocted—utopia is present, though minimally, in the form of an antique glass paperweight and a little woodland glad beside a stream. As for the utopias, from Thomas More onwards, there is always provision made for the renegades, those who don't or won't follow the rules: prison, enslavement, exile, exclusion, or execution (Atwood, 2011, 85).

Behind Atwood's depiction of Crake's dystopian act of destruction lies the unquenchable utopian desire to make a perfect being and to build an impeccable world. Crake can be viewed as a scientist with a utopian yearning who wants to end perpetual cycle of violence by giving the world a chance to reboot: "Maybe it's what drove Crake on, thinks Toby. Maybe he wanted to end it. Cut that part out of us: the grinning, elemental malice. Begin us anew" (*MA*, 41). Toby also asks herself from time to time whether the previous vices come back gradually as she observes the co-habitation between humans and Crakers.

> What next? Is Crozier going native? Will he shed his clothes, take up a cappella singing, grow a huge penis that turns blue in season? If the first two items were the price of entry for the third, he'd do it in a shot. Soon every single human male among the MaddAddamites will be yearning for one of those. And once that starts, how long before the rivalries and wars break out, with clubs and sticks and stones, and then… (*MA*, 31).

Her fear concerns not with Crakers but with human (males): wars triggered by sexual rivalries. Unpredictable things can also happen to the Crakers, for "[t]heir brains are more malleable than Crake intended. They've been doing several things we [scientists] didn't anticipate during the construction phase" (*MA*, 273). As it turns out, Crakers begin to attach symbolic meanings to various objects: making an effigy of Snowman, separating sacred object and taboos. Even Toby's storytelling for the Crakers about the creation of the world bears the possibility of future conflicts. For example, from Crake's intention of getting rid of the Chaos, Crakers would get an impression that one could be allowed to do

some violent thing when intention is good. All these elements point directly to the ustopian nature, that is, the perennial coexistence of good and evil.

What has to be pondered upon is not Atwood's understanding of the complicated nature of utopia, but rather her understanding and portrayal of post-apocalyptic world. Does the trilogy register the complicated nature of reality after the apocalypse, which will most certainly invite intractable problems—scarcity of resources, climate change, unknown virus, conflict between species, and warlike competition over scant resources come to mind—that afflicted the previous world of neoliberalism? The apocalyptic event that eliminated almost entire population of human race from the earth does not necessarily erase the possibility of the return of old problems. The possibility actually exists. What if the pigoons turn against the surviving group of humans and Crakers in order to fulfill their basic instinct of cannibalism? What if the hungry humans break the pact and attack the pigoons to eat ham and bacon? What will happen to the food supply when already spreading desertification of the world becomes even worse? What if the remaining humans in other place wage wars against the pacified human-Crake hybrids in the future? Does the traditionally humanist act of writing, reading, and storytelling, which obviously stands for the disapproval of ruthless order of neoliberalism, still have power to maintain the beautiful utopian solidarity of peace and friendship that is imagined throughout *MaddAddam*? Can language solve the problem of numbers? The trilogy provides readers with the answers, and this becomes a problem, even though it definitely offers, as we've seen, the remarkable speculation of the future state of neoliberal economy, politics, culture, and subjectivity. Such a conundrum is inherent in not just the *MaddAddam* trilogy but in many post-apocalyptic narratives, which try to engage in the

criticism of inhumane state of current capitalism but doesn't bother to focus on the solutions of the future. Neill Blomkamp's post-apocalyptic science fiction film, *Elysium* (2013), is one example in this sense. The film effectively deals with the current issue of global neoliberalism such as gradual disappearance of social welfare system, rich people's monopoly of common resources, extreme inequality between the rich and the poor. Although the film depicts the protagonist Max's (Matt Damon) revolutionary action and sacrificial philanthropy as an answer to the problem, it does not want to explore the world 'after' Max's heroic achievement. The *MaddAddam* trilogy is a great 'ustopian' satire that criticizes the fundamental problems of current neoliberal order, but it leaves other issues that might result from such a context unanswered. In other words, the trilogy lacks realist engagement with the more earthly and more basic matters. It is these texts that try to foreground the realist approach, or the tension between the utopian and realist politics, to which we now turn.

CHAPTER THREE

**"THE LAW IS BACK IN BUSINESS":
COLLAPSE, SCARCITY, AND THE POLITICS OF REALISM IN
JAMES HOWARD KUNSTLER'S *WORLD MADE BY HAND***

> Bourgeois society … is morally and intellectually unprepared for calamity. On the one hand, there is the liberal temper, which redefines all existential questions into "problems" and looks for "solutions" to problems. (Again, it is the rationalist idea that to any single question there is a single answer.) On the other hand, there is the utopian assumption of limitless ends achievable through the marvelous engine of economic, if not technological, efficiency. Yet calamity has struck, and will strike again and again.
> —Daniel Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*

> What if it's not a huge catastrophe worthy of a Spielberg movie but a real drag, one that goes on for centuries?
> —Timothy Morton, *The Ecological Thought*

> The pursuit of Utopia must be replaced by an attempt to cope with reality. … Realism is the only way of thinking about issues of tyranny and freedom, war and peace that can truly claim not to be based on faith and, despite its reputation for amorality, the only one that is ethically serious. … In times of danger, stoical determination and intellectual detachment are more useful qualities, and at its best realism embodied them.
> —John Gray, *Black Mass*

Collapse Discourses: From Growth to Collapse

As Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* trilogy well shows, utopian desire, despite its noble idea of making a perfect world, has its own limitations. The supposed bearers of utopian desire can deviate from the project at any time, or the utopian project itself is only possible under the condition of destructive events, or even when utopian project is achieved there is no guarantee that the result will be preserved, cherished, and improved by later generations. But the most basic and essential impediment to most utopian projects is not the problem of capricious human wills or of uncertain future prospects, but rather the fundamental condition in which the unlimited provision of resources (food,

energy, materials) for maintaining society in a condition of abundance is simply

unattainable. That is to say, the realization of utopian project should be bound to the

materiality of earthly conditions, not to the ideality of heavenly plenitude. Although there

is a strong tradition in utopianism, following Ernst Bloch, that views utopian projects as

"never fully present in the here-and-now, and necessarily eludes all attempts to locate it

with complete empirical precision," the idea of utopia itself finds its etymological root in

physical presence (Freedman, 64). For the word 'utopia,' coined by Thomas More, refers

precisely to *topos* (a place), or territoriality.[35] Here, territoriality points primarily to the

project that requires physical space. As Zygmunt Bauman says, "[u]topian imagination

was essentially architectural and urbanistic" (Bauman 2003, 14). Utopian project as a

territorial and spatial program to be built on earth presupposes material abundance, or

economic growth, that can sustain the unbroken and consistent operation of a society.

In John Boorman's film *Zardoz* (1974), the post-apocalyptic Earth set in AD 2293

is populated by human beings reduced to barbarism, called Brutals, who are ruled by a

hidden elite calling themselves the Eternals. Eternals elevate some of the Brutals to a

warrior class, calling them Exterminators, to enslave the other Brutals. The Exterminators

do not have any contact with the Eternals, but worship a flying stone head called Zardoz,

which is operated by one of the Eternals.[36] There is a relationship of mutual dependence

between the Exterminators and the Eternals. While Zardoz provides the Exterminators

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[35] Literally, 'utopia' means 'no place' (*ou-* (no)+*topos* (place)). Even if it points to a place that does not exist, More's description of utopia is always territorially defined. "The island of the Utopians is two hundred miles across in the middle part where it is widest, and is nowhere much narrower than this except toward the two ends" (More, 31).

[36] The name "Zardoz" is later unveiled as a coinage from "Wizard of Oz." Just as the mysterious ruler of Oz is an ordinary old man with magical tricks, the operator of Zardoz is also an ordinary young man from the Vortex. This denotes that the Zardoz cult is a false, hollow belief system to manipulate Brutals and Exterminators outside the Vortex.

with guns to kill and enslave Brutals, the Exterminators supply the Eternals with grain.

When Zed (Sean Connery), with no apparent reason, sneaks into the flying head and

arrives at the Vortex, the secluded paradise of the Eternals, the film reveals that the

comfortable and civilized lives of the Eternals are only possible due to the abundant

harvests gathered from Brutals. The peaceful, creative, and intelligent utopia depends on

the exploitation and brutal oppression of those whose labors support their civilized well-

being. The highly civilized utopian community is only sustained by the unending material

provision.

In contrast to the Vortex in *Zardoz*, which is materially self-sufficient, the planet

Anarres in Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* suffers from severe resource scarcity.

One of the Hainish novels of Le Guin, *The Dispossessed* depicts two vastly different

societies on the planets Anarres and Urras, which form a double planet system. Anarres

was settled by anarchist Odonian separatists from Urras. Although Anarres is highly

egalitarian, decentralized, anti-capitalist utopian society, the people on Anarres must

contend with a harsh natural environment.[37] To survive an inhospitable, barren

environment in which scarcity poses a constant threat, the inhabitants of Anarres must

engage in demanding physical labor. Challenged by the lack of natural resources and by

the persistent fear of being invaded or colonized by the hostile society of Urras, the

people of Anarres have little spare time to give to advanced study in the arts and sciences

and achieve higher, more abstract levels of learning. This ultimately leads the brilliant

physicist Shevek to travel to A-Io, a wealthy capitalist country in Urras. Although the

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[37] A passage on the environment of Anarres: "But the Eden of Anarres proved to be dry, cold, and windy, and the rest of the planet was worse. Life there had not evolved higher than fish and flowerless plants. The air was thin, like the air of Urras at a very high altitude. The sun burned, the wind froze, the dust choked" (Le Guin, 93).

novel depicts how people in Anarres struggle in their lives to preserve the anarchist ideal

based on freedom and equality, it is uncertain whether this "little commune of starving

idealists up there in the sky" can sustain itself without the help of Urras, which will

surely unsettle the isolated planet (Le Guin, 135). As Leon Trotsky, on attacking the

Stalinist theory of 'socialism in one country,' commented, following Marx's *Communist*

Manifesto, without material abundance "only want will be generalized, and with want the

struggle for necessities begins again, and all the old crap must revive" (Trotsky, 295). He

even argues: "A socialist society … is unthinkable without the free enjoyment of these

goods [technologies and commodities]" (Trotsky, 57). Trotsky's judgment of the fate of

socialism under conditions of scarcity can be also applied to the predicament of Le

Guin's utopia, Anarres.[38]

Beyond debates over utopian projects, the problem of material abundance raises

crucial questions about the maintenance of a social system. But in spite of its importance,

the relationship between the need of material provision and the stability of society has

been neglected by theory. Instead, the issue usually disappears in the face of an almost

universal belief in endless economic growth. Whereas the Right believes in the dynamic

energy of capitalism to overcome any barriers that interrupt growth, the Left takes the

view that social welfare and economic distribution should be practiced more widely and

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[38] Peter Y. Paik's opinion on the same matter is different from Trotsky's: "… the very harshness of life on Anarres, the unceasing need of its people to struggle for necessities on a daily basis, might actually constitute the most effective means for preserving the sparks of revolutionary fervor across multiple generations" (Paik, 8). Paik rightly argues that abundance also "promotes destructive forms of competition over trifling distinctions" (Paik, 9). As we have seen, this statement is quite true in Ballard's novels on violence in luxurious community. However, it has to be emphasized that, even if harshness of life can be a means of preserving the utopian ideals, the material precariousness of utopian society cannot be sustained in the long run. One should not forget that almost all imaginative utopian portraits in literature depict the societies as naturally rich and materially abundant.

profoundly. Despite their apparent contrariness, both the Right and the Left share the

same conviction that economic growth will continue to go on. As Daniel Bell points out,

"economic growth has become the secular religion of advancing industrial societies"

(Bell, 237). Bell argues that this belief in economic growth inevitably leads to inflation,

which arises from such factors as increases in demand and shortages in commodities and

raw materials. But democratic governments, in which electoral success depends on the

favor of the masses, do not regard the restriction of economic growth as an option, nor do

they see it as being in their interest to ask for sacrifice from the public, even if it is in the

best interests of the country. Writing in the 1970s, Bell sees that the "basic framework of

socio-economic policy in the next decades will be set by the interplay of resources (food,

energy, raw materials), population, and the environment," and so finds this relationship

between endless economic growth and ultimate social failure as the biggest threat to the

capitalist system (Bell, 237).[39] Bell's concerns echo the belief of Marx that this cycle of

growth and crisis as an essential element of capitalism. Marx argued that capitalism had

to keep expanding or else it face collapse. In *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels

wrote: "Modern bourgeois society with its relations of production, of exchange and of

property, a society that has conjured up such gigantic means of production and of

exchange, is like the sorcerer, who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether

world whom he has called up by his spells" (Marx & Engels, 41). But Marx's theory of

communism was also founded on the nineteenth-century belief that technological and

industrial development would enable man to overcome the "realm of necessity" and to

enter the "realm of freedom." Marx believed that, with the help of capitalist power of

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[39] In fact, for Bell, the most dangerous element lies in the cultural aspects of capitalism, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

production, when human race at last achieves freedom over necessity, capitalism cannot

but yield its way to communism. Although Marx's explanation of communism appears as

a form that overcomes the cruel and inhuman contradictions of capitalism, communism

also presupposes perpetual economic growth. As British philosopher John Gray argues,

both Marx and Keynes believed in the power of industrialism that would defeat every

barrier, especially scarcity of natural resources:

> With few exceptions, the great economists and social theorists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries believed that, with the rise of industrialism, scarcity could be overcome. Marx and Keynes disagreed on many fundamental points, but they were one in believing that in modern industrial economics natural resources are basically irrelevant. If Marx envisioned a world in which goods had become so abundant that they need not have a price, Keynes was not far behind in declaring that mankind's economic problems had been solved. (Gray 2004, 116)

It is the problems of ecological devastation and resource depletion that for Gray

make the belief in perpetual economic growth to be a destructive fantasy. Capitalism[40] is

inextricably linked to the fate of the planet, so that the looming demise of the

environment of the earth likely constitutes the biggest disaster that human beings have

ever had to face. Capitalism must produce commodities and to sell them in the market for

the purpose of increasing profit in an endless cycle that is bent on using up all natural and

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[40] I previously argued that both capitalism and communism (or socialism) are the same in their belief in endless economic growth. Hereafter I'll only mention capitalism, for, as we know, the so-called "really existing communism" was collapsed in 1991, and ever since, communism in reality has been existing only as an 'idea.' But it has to be pointed out that as an heir of industrial progressivism in the nineteenth century, communist regimes had not been innocent in their role in ecological devastation. For instance, John Gray argues that communist regimes were responsible for some of worst ecological disasters in the last century: "… putting aside the killings of many millions for ideological reasons, some of the last century's worst ecological disasters—the destruction of nature in the former Soviet Union and the devastation of the countryside during Mao's Cultural Revolution, for example—occurred in centrally planned economies. Ecological devastation is not a result only of the economic system that exists in much of the world at the present time; while it may be true that the prevailing version of capitalism is unsustainable in environmental terms, there is nothing in the history of the past century that suggests the environment will be better protected if a socialist system is installed" (Gray, 2012).

physical resources to the sake of maintaining growth. In this regard, all economic activity

in capitalism is not production but "consumption" (Foster & Clark, 116). Without the

consumption of natural and physical resources, the capitalist system collapses. As Marx

points out, "labor is *not the source* of all wealth. *Nature* is just as much a source of use

values (and it surely of such that material wealth consists!) as labor which is itself only

the manifestation of a force of nature, human labor power" (Marx 1978, 525). Thus,

capital relies on the exploitation and destruction of what Michael Hardt calls the

ecological commons, "the Earth and its ecosystems, including atmosphere, the oceans

and rivers, and the forests, as well as all the forms of life that interact with them" (Hardt

2010, 265). A profound and inescapable contradiction emerges at the heart of capitalism:

the private nature of capital accumulation cannot overcome the social nature of the

resulting damages. Although the strategies of neoliberal capitalism have been aimed at

privatizing the public sphere, the destruction of the ecological commons by what Marx

called "the powers of the nether world," ultimately blocks the activity of capitalist

consumption, threatening the system with economic as well as ecological collapse.

According to Jason W. Moore, the act of free appropriation of ecological common from

the sixteenth century early capitalism up to the current neoliberal capitalism is now

unthinkable, because the "free gifts" of nature is almost depleted, and will not be given

again.

> Neoliberal capitalism sustained itself by appropriating what free gifts
> remained for the taking: the oil frontiers of the North Sea, Alaska, West
> Africa, and the Gulf of Mexico; the crest of Green Revolution agriculture
> in South Asia, appropriating and exhausting fertile soil and cheap water;
> the integration of the old Soviet Bloc into the world market, allowing
> cheap metals and oil to reduce production costs after 1989; the
> appropriation of the Chinese peasantry as a vast labor surplus; the

privatization of state and quasi-state firms and public services. These free gifts will not recur. The Great Frontier is now closed (Moore, 77).

Resource depletion can be understood as a principal consequence of ecological devastation. Among the natural resources now being exhausted, oil stands out for its strategic and economic importance. For oil has been the essential energy form which enabled capitalist reproduction and expansion since the first discovery of it in 1859 in Titusville, Pennsylvania. Since then, the entirety of modern civilization has been based in the cheap energy systems long made possible by petroleum, hence, modernity may also go by the name, "petromodernity" (LeMenager, 60). Without oil, there could be "no modern war machine, no global shipping industry, no communication revolution" (Szeman, 806). Capitalism we know it is also can be dubbed as what Szeman calls "oil capitalism," an economic system based primarily on, and "fueled by cheap and readily available sources of oil" (Szeman, 807). Because capitalism is indissolubly bound to oil, the possibility of oil depletion definitely has led to an explosion of discourses over the post-oil future. For instance, political scientist Thomas Homer-Dixon argues that "we'll also experience a real and worsening physical scarcity of oil" and "oil's peak will have seismic consequences for the entire world" (Homer-Dixon, 85, 100). James Howard Kunstler, in his much-debated book about peak oil, *The Long Emergency*, predicts that the depletion of petroleum stocks "represents an unprecedented economic crisis that will wreak havoc on national economies, topple governments, alter national boundaries, provoke military strife, and challenge the continuation of civilized life" (Kunstler 2005, 24-5). In the same vein, Dmitry Orlov points out that the US economy has become

dependent on both oil and debt, and if anything becomes worse in either of these two

elements, the US economy will suffer sudden collapse.[41]

> Oil powers just about everything in the US economy … When less oil
> becomes available, less can be produced, and economic growth comes to
> an end. In an economy that is designed to operate at a steady state this
> would not be such a problem, but the US economy operates on debt, and
> the value of debt is based on the promise of future growth. Without
> growth, debt pyramids begin to crumble, and once that happens, less
> money is available for such things as oil imports. (6-7)

The gravity of peak oil situation is certain to trigger geopolitical conflict. Gray points out

that most of economically valuable oil is in politically unstable regions such as the

Persian Gulf, and the "Great Game" has already begun among the great powers (the US,

Russia and China) over its oil reserves (Gray 2004, 119). Kunstler even suggests that a

military contest over oil could "eventually inflame a theater of war stretching from the

Middle East to Southeast Asia, and … such a conflict might be the Last World War"

(Kunstler 2005, 98).

    Economic growth cannot continue against the realities of ecological devastation

and resource exhaustion. And, when the economy starts to crumble, political, social, and

cultural structures, that is to say, a whole society, also come apart. As this state of

emergency continues, the possibility of a total collapse of civilization looms as well. It is

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[41] As is well known, China is the largest single holder of US government debt as of May 2011.
China holds 26 percent of all foreign-held U.S. Treasury securities (8% of total U.S. public debt).
An interesting film has been recently made to imagine that China takes over the US after the US
government defaults on its debt. Jeffrey Travis's film "Dragon Day" (2013) tells the story of an
ex-NSA engineer who has recently lost his job due to the financial crisis. When his house is
foreclosed, he and his family resettle in a mountain cabin. Then, all of a sudden, the Chinese
launch a cyber-attack, which was made possible by a computer virus that has been embedded in
Chinese manufactured computer chips (meaning almost all computers!). In result, America's
entire computer-based infrastructure comes to a halt. A disaster begins, and the country reverts to
pre-industrial conditions with a touch of anarchy. As another, more thrilling and radical, version
of Kunstler's *World Made by Hand*, this film reminds us that how fast the film industry catches
the issue of public anxiety: in this case, heavy foreign debt.

for this reason that a certain genre of post-apocalyptic narratives, the peak-oil novel, has

gained plausibility as well as popularity. It addresses such questions as: what if a sudden

economic and social collapse were to happen? What does life after collapse look like? In

time of collapse, what kinds of attitude or habits are needed for survival?

Although these collapse narratives are still often dismissed as alarmist or as a cult

phenomenon, they explore important political, social, and cultural questions about the

status quo. As the "replacement of 'solid' by 'liquid' modernity … may itself prove to be

anything but a once-and-for-all shift of history," or the modern concept of "convivance"

(harmoniously living together) may be no longer relevant and, instead, "there is now an

element of uncertainty lodged in people's minds" in the form of "survival," it is a perfect

time, at least for literature, to reconsider the fragility of normalcy, to question the

viability of capitalism and liberal humanism, and to imagine the life after collapse

(Bauman 2011, 37; Abélès, 103).

"Everything was local now": The World According to Kunstler

James Howard Kunstler's novel, *World Made by Hand*, explores the theme of life

after civilizational collapse. It takes an approach that strikingly demystifies some of the

governing conventions of post-apocalyptic narratives. Set in a post-civilizational world,

no character in this novel has to run away from gene-spliced animals (*Oryx and Crake*) or

flesh-eating zombies (*The Walking Dead*) or cannibalistic gang members (*The Road*).

Unlike other, more popular post-apocalyptic narratives, there is no bloodthirsty monster

(*The Passage*), no uncanny humanoid (*Never Let Me Go*), no intelligent robot (*I, Robot*),

no totalitarian regime (*The Children of Men*), no epidemic (*The Pesthouse*), no time

travel (*12 Monkeys*), and no planet colliding with the Earth (*Melancholia*). Compared to

Atwood's trilogy, which is full of dramatic upheavals and world-changing events,

Kunstler's novel focuses on more quotidian realities in its depiction of the rustic lives of

people who endeavor to adapt themselves to new circumstances in which they have to

engage in manual labor and use horse-drawn wagons for transportation. But the project of

Kunstler in this post-apocalyptic novel is as radical as that of Atwood in the sense that he

makes his readers imagine life without oil, electricity, federal or local government, and

the capitalist market system. For Kunstler, 'the end of the world' does not entail a

dramatic, entertaining Hollywood-style survival narrative, but a realistic speculation

about a world transformed by resource depletion. As the title of the novel shows,

Kunstler's post-apocalyptic world lacks all the conveniences and luxuries made possible

by oil – it is "a world made by hand" (Kunstler 2008, 142).[42]

Kunstler's best-selling study, *The Long Emergency* (2005), concerns the problem

of peak-oil and its implications for American society. Kunstler argues that the depletion

of cheap oil, along with ecological devastation caused by climate change, will trigger

regional or global wars over scarce resources. In the long run, human beings will lack the

means to maintain the traditional apparatus of the state, which leads to anarchy. Human

beings will have to change their lifestyle from the global and urban scale characteristic of

consumer capitalism to the rural scale defined by local communities, agrarian production,

and economies of barter. The "long emergency" is the name Kunstler gives to what he

regards as an unavoidable future. It is a crisis that opens "an abyss of economic and

political disorder on a scale that no one has ever seen before" (Kunstler 2005, 1).

Kunstler's view on life during the "long emergency" provides a stark contrast to the

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[42] Hereafter, only a page number will be given when I use direct quotations from the novel.

technologically advanced, affluent, and more humane future promised by democratic

capitalism:

> The circumstances of the Long Emergency will be the opposite of what we currently experience. There will be hunger instead of plenty, cold where there was once warmth, effort where there was once leisure, sickness where there was health, and violence where there was peace. … In a world where sheer survival dominates all other concerns, a tragic view of life is apt to reassert itself. This is another way of saying that we will become keenly aware of the limitations of human nature in general and its relation to ubiquitous mortality in particular. Life will get much more real (Kunstler 2005, 303).

The future according to Kunstler is likely to be dominated by Hobbesian insecurity. By

offering a bleak portrait of the future, Kunstler not only critiques the dominant culture of

our contemporary life, but also reasserts the new sense of reality for most of us who are

"sleepwalking into the future" (Kunstler 2005, 1).

World Made by Hand, published in 2008, can be defined as an attempt to imagine

in literary terms the social realities he describes in *The Long Emergency*. The novel tells

the story of a group of people living in a fictional small town called Union Grove in

upstate New York during the post-petroleum age. The world beyond the village has been

gone amok. The United States has lost a war to Islamic fundamentalists in the Middle

East. The president is subsequently overthrown by a military coup d'état. Finally,

jihadists have bombed Washington and Los Angeles, which has left the remnants of the

federal government into "little more than a figment of the collective memory" (15).

Furthermore, a viciously contagious Mexican flu and encephalitis have hit America,

killing many people. The world promised by rosy colored neoliberal globalization has

been replaced by a living nightmare. "The earth has stopped being flat and became very

round again" (23). No government, no economy, no oil and electricity, no car, no

television, and chaos in many parts of the country. Under these anarchic conditions, dark

and violent human behaviors have been unleashed. Gang violence, racism, anti-Semitism,

and class conflicts become prevalent, especially in big cities:

> A lot of people cut loose when Washington got hit, you know. They left there with nothing but the clothes on their backs and some firearms. You had civil disorders in Philadelphia and Baltimore, refugees fleeing, what you folks call pickers, bandit gangs. Pennsylvania became a desperate place. After a while, it was like Cowboys and Indians. … There's a grievances and vendettas all around at every level. Poor against whatever rich are left. Black against white. English-speaking against the Spanish. More than one bunch on the Jews. You name it, there's a fight on. Groups in flight everywhere (148-9).

America, the single most powerful empire in the modern age, suddenly becomes a typical

Third World country.

Union Grove, where the story takes place, is in many respects peaceful but it has

also been affected by the collapse. Kunstler, with an anthropological precision, describes

the vast changes that have taken place. There are very few cars left, because there is little

petroleum and gas available. Cars appear in a dream of the narrator, Robert Earle, a

former marketing executive with a Boston software firm who now makes his living as a

carpenter, using his services to trade with his neighbors for the necessities of life. Yet

even in the dream, Robert, while driving a car, loses control and nearly collides with a

group of massive trees (19). For Kunstler, car culture embodies American faith in

technological progress that refuses to recognize any limits. In one passage, Robert

explains to Sarah, a child who comes to live with him, oil shortages that have brought an

end to car culture:

> The cars needed a very special kind of food to run in their engines. It was called gasoline. It was made of oil, which came out of the ground. We had a lot of oil in the old days, but then we used so much that we had a

> problem getting it. We had to get more and more of the stuff from faraway places across the ocean. And that led to a lot of trouble (245).

This passage echoes Kunstler's analyses of peak oil in *The Long Emergency*. In the novel, characters who are connected to cars are depicted negatively. In one scene, there appears an elderly man who drives an automobile. This "old" man, who represents the "old" civilization, cannot accept the new situation and clings to the automobile and the associations it evokes: consumerism, individual freedom, and entertainment. "You should have been around in the 1960s, boy," he says, "*Hooo-weee*. Gas was twenty-five cents and the roads were smooth as a baby's behind. You could buy good bread and ground round anywhere, and the TV came on when you felt like it" (183). The old man then kills himself in the vehicle. Another character is Wayne Karp, who manages a public flea market called "the general" with his gang of "former motorheads" (28). Karp and his clan are involved in the killing of a young farmer from the town, and is later held accountable by the community. Kunstler makes the man who threatens peace of the town into a former trucker whose favorite pastime is to watch auto racing. Having been a consumer of cheap commodities and entertainments, he nevertheless rises to a different social position once those activities are taken from him:

> In the old days, Wayne Karp worked as a trucker for the Holland and Vesey paper mill in Glens Falls. … In his leisure time, Karp was addicted to sporting entertainments that required gasoline engines: motorcycling, motorboating, snowmobiling, off-roading, jetskiing, and watching NASCAR racing on television. He couldn't relax unless an engine was roaring somewhere near his head. … In normal times, Wayne Karp would have passed through life as just another lumpen American Dreamer, a hardworking consumer of shoddy products, chemically tweaked foods, and rude popular entertainments, a taxpayer subject to the ordinary restrictions of the social contract. But in the new era, he blossomed into a local kingpin (28-9).

Along with the car, the list of obsolescent things is long. There is no shopping mall ("The strip mall stores were vacant. … I wasn't sorry that it was out of business, but I was sorry that the remnants were still there," 11), no machines (18), no coffee and black pepper ("… anything from the Far East was no longer available," 24), no suburban expansion possible (31), no skyscrapers ("monstrosity," 33; "The immense overburden of skyscrapers in Manhattan had proven unusable without electric service," 317), no livable cities ("since so many perished in those cities," 85), no capitalist industrial economy (16), no politics and bureaucracy ("A skeleton crew … Sailing a kind of *Flying Dutchman* of government," 169-70). It should be noted that all these obsolete things in the novel are directly connected to the modern, industrial civilization that was dependent upon the energy produced by cheap fossil fuels. They are the relics of what Kunstler calls "high-entropy economy" (Kunstler 2005, 190).

Thus, the way of life in Union Grove after the collapse of industrial civilization is pre-modern and local. The people are isolated from other towns and cities: "you barely knew what was going on five miles away" (3). They use horses for transportation: "Sometimes the whole world smelled of horse. It was my [Robert] fond wish to own one some day" (5). Everyone is forced to take up agriculture: "Now, in the new times … Farming was back. That was the only way we got food" (5). But life in the town is generally peaceful and the people are "friendly" (9). There is an act of killing but it strikes the people as a shocking event: "There hadn't been an incident like this …—the killing of one person by another under any circumstances" (49). Contrary to unsettled and violent cities, Union Grove is depicted as a comparatively secure and peaceful place. In the first chapter, when Robert comes across a total stranger on the road to his town, the

first things he glances at are wagon and horse, not the stranger (5-6). Robert does not

prepare to hide or to protect himself; rather they shake hands and talk about the weather.

In Kunstler's rural upstate New York, meeting with strangers is not considered as a

foremost threat unlike other post-apocalyptic narratives. For it is nature itself, not humans,

that poses a real threat. Union Grove appears to be an advantageous place for survival

during the period of post-petroleum chaos. Kunstler, who lives in Saratoga, a small town

of upstate New York by the upper Hudson and the Mohawk River valleys, actually

proposes in his previous book that small communities will be the best places to live

during the period of the Long Emergency. He rules out big cities such as New York,

Chicago, and Los Angeles, since "the economic failure of the suburbs will multiply the

misery in the cities proper" (Kunstler 2005, 254). Instead, he argues that the focus of

society will have to return to the town or small city and its supporting agricultural

hinterlands. The small towns should be "located on rivers … with its rugged topography,"

which will be used for "local hydropower generation," and they are also best if

"surrounded by good farmland" (Kunstler 2005, 255). Although the fictional town of

Union Grove might be one of the most advantageous places to live after the collapse of

petroleum era, life there can still be harsh and even cruel. People in the village, most of

them former members of the middle class who were once managers or as professionals,

now have to work at manual labor simply in order to survive. As a "history's roadkill"

(239), they are forced to adapt themselves to a life that is "so relentlessly physical" (17).

The Resource Problem: From Abundance to Scarcity

The possible future depicted by *World Made by Hand* is dominated not by

technology but rather by nature itself. Mass production, mass consumption, and mass

communication, all of which are possible by energy provided by cheap fossil fuels, are no longer available. The credit and money economy has been transformed into barter economy; one never gets anything unless one offers something valuable in trade: "daily life became a perpetual flea market" (28). It is through manual labor that people produce the items they trade with each other. Indeed, almost all the characters in the novel are described as either a manual laborer or a skillful artisan. The narrator, Robert, former head of marketing at a computer company, is now a carpenter. His friend, Loren, a minister, earns his food by fishing and farming. Even Robert's neighbor Mrs. Myles, a seventy year-old former high school English teacher, works as a town launderer using an "immense copper tub" (26). Manual work also functions as a psychological tonic. In this world where everyone lost something valuable in the past, "motion is a great tranquilizer" (34). Those who cannot forget the good old days or cannot adapt themselves to this harsh reality are not likely to survive. As Robert says, "those with an extremely apathetic attitude toward survival tended not to last long in the new disposition of things" (30). The continuous need for manual work in the novel ultimately evokes the change in the rhythm of life that civilizational collapse has brought about. There is always a shortage of necessities. The age of abundance in resources and commodities has passed, and people are forced to manufacture or trade for the material goods necessary to support a living. Thus, scarcity reemerges from history in the post-collapse world.

Although, modern people, at least those who are living in the advanced industrial societies, are not accustomed to the problem of scarcity, the condition of scarcity is in fact the normal condition in history. "Throughout history," writes John Gray, "wars have been fought over gold and silver, access to rivers and fertile land" (Gray 2004, 115).

Political scientist William Ophuls also observes that for most of human history, conflicts over resources were quite common:

> Except for a few relatively brief periods when for some reason the burden of scarcity was temporarily lifted, inequality, oppression, and conflict have been very prominent features of political life, merely waxing and waning slightly in response to the character of the rulers and other ephemeral factors (Ophuls, 190).

Ancient philosophers accept scarcity as an inevitable constraint attached to the human condition (Schaefer, 280). For example, Aristotle, in *Politics*, is keenly conscious of how to live a good life under the condition of limited resources. He holds that there is a limit to the amount of external goods that is politically manageable and desirable. He argues that a large population can make it impossible to have a well-governed state: "A great state and a populous one are not the same. Moreover, experience has also shown that it is difficult, if not impossible, for a populous state to be run by good law; at any rate, we know of no state with a reputation for a well-run constitution that does not restrict its numbers" (Aristotle, VII. iv, 1326a25).

On the other hand, the era stretching from the sixteenth century to the present has been the exception to this fundamental condition of scarcity. The main causes behind this shift include the discovery of the New World, the discovery of the highly intensive energy source in the form of petroleum, the improvement of radical technology, and so on. The discovery of the Americas in the sixteenth century enabled the economically closed European civilization to expand and exploit a seemingly limitless quantity of natural resources. The discovery and commercialization of oil in the late nineteenth century accelerated rapidly the productivity of capitalism. When the drive to expand markets globally in the nineteenth century called for exploiting more raw materials, the

West began to colonize nearly all the other regions of the world that it had hitherto not incorporated, Asia and Africa. But according to Moore and Ophuls, the most important cause is the discovery of the New World, because this created unprecedented economic boom for the major European powers, which led to the institutions and values characteristic of modern civilization (Moore, 74-7; Ophuls 190-1).

John Locke, the preeminent thinker of modern liberalism and democracy, for instance, explains, in *Two Treatises of Government*, how a man may legitimately appropriate goods from the state of nature for his private use by mixing his labor with them. In §27 of the Second Treatise, Locke argues that when a man gets things by his own labor, those things should become his own exclusive property, because "at least where there is enough, and as good, left in common for others" (Locke, 112). Locke's argument obviously presupposes the historical situation in Europe where men could get access to abundant resources (Waldron, 319; Ophus, 191). Adam Smith, the pioneering political economist of mercantile capitalism, also asserts that removing all the limitations on economic development would generate prosperity, which would liberate men from feudal bonds. Under Smith's hopeful argument also lies the historical reality of Europe's expansion to the New World. Karl Marx was even more optimistic about the productivity of the industrial economy. In volume three of his magnum opus, *Capital*, Marx writes:

> The realm of freedom really begins only where labour determined by necessity and external expediency ends; it lies by its very nature beyond the sphere of material production proper. Just as the savage must wrestle with nature to satisfy his needs, to maintain and reproduce his life, so must civilized man, and he must do so in all forms of society and under all possible modes of production. This realm of natural necessity expands with his development, because his needs do too; but the productive forces to satisfy these expand at the same time (Marx 1991, 959).

He stresses that even though the "realm of natural necessity" expands according to one's wants but it would be overcome with the help of the revolutionary power of modern industrial production, because "productive forces … expands at the same time." Marx, following Hegel's philosophy of history, holds that when the realm of freedom is achieved by the advancement of productivity as well as by the revolutionary will of the proletariat, that is to say, when capitalism is overcome by communism, age-old conflicts would ultimately end. As John Gray observes, "Marx imagined the end of scarcity would bring the end of history" (Gray 2002, 167). Indeed, the founding thinkers of the modern West, who gave shape to the values of freedom, democracy, and liberation, were in fact all influenced by the material and technological advantages of Europe, in which nearly limitless economic expansion was made possible the colonial projects. Without this access to abundant natural resources, the humane, liberal, egalitarian and democratic values of these political philosophers might not have been actualized (Ophuls, 190-2).

Unfortunately, the time of abundance is now over. The possibility of discovering new frontiers, which could provide humans new stocks of resources to build a free and humane, if not straightforwardly utopian, society, has receded. But our predominant models of politics remain bound to the promise of abundance and the expectation of endless growth. In his critique of modern capitalism, Daniel Bell points out that what drives capitalist society to the verge of collapse is the disjunction between the social structure (the techno-economic order) and the culture (the symbolic and psychological order). The social structure in capitalism is determined and can be transformed by the scarcity of resources, in which unlimited growth is unthinkable. On the contrary, the realm of culture is ruled by psychological wants, which are unlimited. In the past, the two

realms were joined to produce a single character structure under Puritanism and Protestantism. When the cultural values of the "Puritan temper" (piety and torment obsessed with human depravity) and the "Protestant ethic" (practicality and expedience oriented to secular gain) had been dominant in American bourgeois society in the icons, respectively, of Jonathan Edwards and Benjamin Franklin, the economy and social structure could be sustained and well-managed (Bell, 55-61). However, the advent of the modernist belief in self-realization, the emergence of consumption society in the mid-twentieth century, and later the pop hedonism of the sixties, all of which have followed the logic of the market itself, have eroded the vital bond between the social realm and the cultural realm. For Bell, such changes instigated the culture of excessive spending and compulsive hedonism, which severely unsettles the foundations of the capitalist social structure. Bell calls this disjunction as the cultural contradiction of modern capitalism. The problem is that the culture of hedonistic consumption collides with the scarcity of resources:

> Where resources are prodigal, or individuals accept a high degree of inequality as normal or just, this consumption can be accommodated. But when everyone in society joins in the demand for more, expecting this as a matter of right, and resources are limited (more by cost than by quantity), then one begins to see the basis for the tension between the demands in the polity and the limitations set by the economy (Bell, 23).

What happens when scarcity becomes the dominant fact of life? Once abundance no longer serves to support the foundations of consumer capitalism and liberal democracy, strife, inequality, constraints, oppression, and severe competition are sure to follow. As William Ophuls notes, "the golden age of individualism, liberty, and democracy (as those terms are currently understood) is all but over" (Ophuls, 192). The comfortable life-styles that we have been accustomed to will disappear, and human beings will be cast into

perpetual anxiety over the harshness of nature and the dangers of everyday life. As

Thomas Hobbes observes, in the chapter in *Leviathan* called "Of the Natural Condition of

Mankind, as concerning their Felicity, and Misery," man, in a situation of danger, is

confronted with "continuall feare, and danger of violent death… And the life of man,

solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short" (Hobbes, 186).

"Reaching for the lower branches before we get to the stars": Collapse and the Realist Attitude

For Kunstler, scarcity will be the dominant fact of the post-collapse world, both in

reality and in his fiction. Kunstler's description of human behavior under conditions of

scarcity takes two related directions. One is the culture of bricolage and the other is the

attitude of realism. The culture of bricolage arises from creative, everyday responses to

the scarcity of resources. Because there is always a shortage of raw materials, people

need to be resourceful. They need to become what Lévi-Strauss calls a "bricoleur," a

person who is to "make do with 'whatever at hand,' that is to say with a set of tools and

materials which is always finite and is also heterogeneous" (Lévi-Strauss, 17). Robert, for

example, picks rose-hips to make a pot of tea that replaces his morning coffee, and brews

his own hot pepper sauce (24). Farmers have begun growing opium poppies, not for the

drug trade, but to keep the local doctors stocked with painkillers (30). Since there is no

electricity, the local dentist uses a salvaged 1920s pulley drill operated by a foot treadle,

which his wife operates like a pump organ (25). Patients bring in "their own gold, most

often jewelry," which the dentist converts into "castings or foils" (25). People in town

still get water from the reservoir. They bake walnut cakes made from ground nutmeats

and butter (113).

Yet, a more striking and important feature in the novel than the culture of bricolage is the widespread attitude of realism.[43] As Hobbes points out, when human beings are no longer protected by governmental authority, the life becomes dangerous. While the age of abundance has created liberal democracy and laissez-faire capitalism, the age of scarcity, in which "[t]he life of each of us is a chapter of accidents," generates different values that are particular to such a situation (Gray 2002, 110). Scarcity makes conflict an ever-present possibility. For realists, "the most we can do is stave off disaster, a task that demands stoicism and fortitude, not the utopian imagination" (Gray 2004, 108). Social existence is better understood as a continuation of war, rather than as a teleological process of achieving utopia. Humans are full of defects and experience contradictory needs, which are sometimes impossible to resolve. "To cope with reality," one must become aware of the limits and constraints posed by these elementary defects and contradictions.

Kunstler takes a politically realist view in theorizing scarcity and collapse. In *The Long Emergency*, Kunstler points out that human ideas are suited to a particular set of circumstances. For example, the idea of human progress is "inherent to the industrial experience, which was itself an outgrowth of the Enlightenment" (Kunstler 2005, 301). So, the time of the long emergency will mark a sharp discontinuity from the dominant ideas of the present. Kunstler argues that in a world where sheer survival dominates all other concerns, life will be tragic and "will get much more real" (Kunstler 2005, 303).

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[43] Realism here does not refer to the Lukacsian sense of the nineteenth-century technique of novels and its conventions, but rather to the tradition of political philosophy, from Plato and Lao-tzu to Machiavelli, Hobbes, Geuss, and Gray. But, of course, Kunstler's novel itself corresponds to both: it is written in realist literary technique and with political realist attitude.

Just as realists suggest, Kunstler proposes that we should adapt ourselves to the harsh

reality without illusion and without clinging to familiar norms.

In this vein, *World Made by Hand* can be read as a fiction that presents Kunstler's

political realism with literary vividness. The world in time of scarcity described in this

novel is marked by a radical change in culture, where all that was solid in the past has

melted away. People are forced to work incessantly and even to act brutally to survive.

Shawn Watling, a young laborer on a farm, complains: "I work like a dog. Harder than

this dog. From sunup to sundown, like a medieval peasant. I do it with hardly any sense

of a future" (38). But manual labor strengthens the body. Robert describes Shawn as "a

big, shambling young man who so typified our times" (35). Although the life becomes

"relentlessly physical" (17), people in Union Grove are psychologically healthier:

"people are generally better off now mentally than we were back then. We follow the

natural cycles. We eat real food … We're not jacked up on coffee and television and sexy

advertising all the time" (37-8). In terms of their mental health, people become more

resilient and stable when it comes to dealing with a social reality much harsher than the

one they knew when they were younger. When Shawn Watling is killed in an accident at

the flea market run by the Karp clan, Watling's wife Britney's response to this event

shows this change in mentality:

> Britney took it [her husband's death] in stoically. She was a young person
> who herself had endured large losses, including parents incinerated in Los
> Angeles, a brother and many friends gone, and one child still-born. She
> gave the impression of great solidity even though she was petite and pale
> (54).

This is Britney's attempt "to stave off disaster," as it were. When there is nothing she can

do she tries not to fall deep into grief and sorrow; rather, she finds a practical way to

survive in a world where single parents have a difficult time living on their own ("This isn't a good time for a single woman with a child to live alone," 121). After the funeral, Britney asks Robert, who remains single, if she and her daughter could live with him. Just as man in a Hobbesian world yearns for a security, Britney, who now left alone, makes a practical decision to live with a mature, skilled man. When Robert asks Britney why she would live with him, she answers simply: "I would feel safe here" (122).

A wife sharing becomes a new custom. Jane, Loren's wife, visits Robert's house "one night a week in a connubial way" (16), with the tacit understanding of her husband. She makes love with his husband's best friend, makes food for him, and talks about the past melancholically. Robert explains this 'wife sharing' as a phenomenon that comes not from hedonistic and pleasure-seeking culture but from a gender disproportion: "few young women left in our town… no suitable single women were around" (7, 16). The transformation of society also leads to a loss of rebelliousness in the younger generation: "Being so few in numbers, children no longer enjoyed solidarity in rebellion, and our society was too fragile to indulge much symbolic misbehavior" (13). But what reveals Kunstler's realism more strikingly than an unusual custom is his description of gender roles and class division. A town hall meeting reveals that the division of the sexes and classes has become a new norm:

> All the trustees were men, no women and no plain laborers. As the world changed, we reverted to social divisions that we'd thought were obsolete. The egalitarian pretenses of the high-octane decades had dissolved and nobody even debated it anymore, including the women of our town. A plain majority of the townspeople were laborers now, whatever in life they had been before. Nobody called them peasants, but in effect that's what they'd become. That's just the way things were (101).

The fact that the trustees administering the town are all male appears like the revival of the ancient Greek form of democracy, where the only propertied male can participate in political life. In the town hall at Union Grove, there is neither feminism nor egalitarianism. People accept these distinctions and the positions they hold. This is clearly unthinkable and politically incorrect in terms of the present era, but Kunstler advises us that egalitarianism is bound to a world of economic abundance. Although Kunstler's depiction of the reactionary form of democracy is quite unsettling, it also provides us with a chance to reconsider the current crisis of democracy. Many scholars agree on that today's democracy has become dysfunctional. French philosopher Alain Badiou, among many others, points out that liberal democracy and neoliberal capitalism today exist as an illusion:

> In truth, our leaders and propagandists know very well that liberal capitalism is an inegalitarian regime, unjust, and unacceptable for the vast majority of humanity. And they know too that our "democracy" is an illusion: Where is the power of the people? Where is the political power for third world peasants, the European working class, the poor everywhere? (Badiou, 2002)

If today's democracy is merely illusory, which is also the basic position of some political realists, what would be wrong with returning to the ancient Greek form of democracy? As a realist, Kunstler sees that modern type of mass democracy and the post-modern identity politics are neither ideal nor practical in times of extreme scarcity. When "a plain majority of the townspeople" are effectually working as peasants, there is literally no time and energy for them to participate meaningfully in the democratic decision-making process that requires discussion and deliberation.

As is hinted at the town hall meeting scene, the social structure in Union Grove is quite reactionary. Even the strict form of hierarchy, such as feudal relationship of lord

and serf, comes back after the end of industrial prosperity. A wealthy man named

Stephen Bullock is depicted as the master of a plantation, where many formerly middle-

class tenants obey him as a feudal lord:

> He [Stephen Bullock] went his own way and always had. He ran a bountiful farm. He had altogether perhaps fifty people living and working for him there, and it was rumored that many of them had entered into a relationship with him of extreme dependency, people who, out of one misfortune or another, or perhaps just a desire to be led or to live a structured existence, sold their allegiance to him for security and a full stomach. He took care of them. It was an old, old story, but one that hadn't been seen in America for a long time (61).

Even an "old, old story" can return to reality when people cannot live without it. Living

in a Hobbesian time, some become so desperate that they sell themselves in order to

acquire food and safety. Although such a relationship of dependence is regarded old and

outmoded, realism indicates this is not a strange phenomenon in human history, and may

come back if the conditions for it are right. "Human beings may want freedom," Gray

writes, "but usually only when other needs have been met, and not always then. Tyrants

are not only feared, they are often loved" (Gray 2007, 199). In the novel, there appear

other "lords," for whom people supply their labor and gain security in return. In addition

to Bullock's plantation, there is the gang led by Wayne Karp, the religious cult called the

New Faith Brotherhood led by Brother Jobe, and the criminal Dan Curry, whose clan

controls and manages trade in the city of Albany. In the post-apocalyptic setting of the

novel, the restoration of lords, serfs, and gangs seems natural, if we remember the

Hobbesian observation that living in under conditions of extreme scarcity is like living in

a state of permanent war.

All these clans, gangs, and extended families provide security and fulfill the basic

needs of people in a dangerous time. Religion also becomes more significant. When there

is no central government and public security available, religion tends to function as an institution that supplies a means, around which people unite. Religion performs its traditional role as a provider of "continuity with a past" (Bell, 157). It provides a place for the townspeople to assemble and enjoy each other's company when have no diversions like television or recreational shopping. Yet, more than that, religion becomes another type of clan or gang, minus the criminality, that provides people with both spiritual and physical security. In other words, religion in the post-apocalyptic world becomes practical and realist, in contrast to its conventional role as the defender of an unworldly morality. Whereas modernity has made religion as one of the many cultural forms in the world, the post-apocalyptic situation calls for religion again as a center of community that needs a strong pivot. It could be said the sacred replaces the order provided by secular authorities.

The New Faith Brotherhood Church of Jesus, a Christian sect of around seventy adults, who move from Virginia by way of Pennsylvania to upstate New York (59), seeks to settle in Union Grove and become members of the town. Brother Jobe, its leader, tells the townspeople at a meeting: "We are happy and grateful to have found this situation and look forward to uniting, so to say, with your community. … We expect to find new friends here and work fruitfully alongside you, and I hope you will feel the same amongst us" (59-60). The members of the New Faith, who have escaped from the violence that has spread throughout the cities, have been looking desperately for a stable, safe place to live together. At first, they are described as the latter-day Puritans, as they are "dressed in the severe clothing of the pious" (7) and use John Winthrop-style puritan phrases: "In a few years you won't recognize this place. It'll be like unto a shining city set upon a hill"

(305). But in fact they are more focused on practical matters rather than on preaching morality or trying to spread their faith. Experiencing so much violence on the way to upstate New York ("We have seen too much on the journey and come too far … Death has been our outrider all the way," 75), they have become stoic in order to deal with any obstacles to their peaceful settlement. With a practical attitude combined with stoic resolution, the New Faith Brotherhood is depicted as a cohesive and determined community in a time of instability and precariousness. Although they are also portrayed as an apocalyptic, fundamentalist group, who refer to an angry, violent, punishing God (65-9, 177, 190), they turn out to be a practical problem-solvers as well as resolute defenders of the town.

The realist aspects of the New Faith are clearly visible when compared with God's Gardeners in Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* trilogy. Both groups are Christian sects, centered on forming their own community, and get into conflict with criminal powers. But in terms of principle, they are different. Whereas the God's Gardeners are basically oriented to peaceful resistance with a grand project of preserving life by making of an ark called Ararat, a storeroom in which they collect the "bioforms" of plants and animals, the New Faith is always ready to use violence against its enemies to maintain security for themselves and their way of life. Whereas the God's Gardeners are more or less revolutionary in their teaching of anti-capitalist and ecological thought, the New Faith Brotherhood has no such ideology or dogma except its will to survive as a community. Whereas God's Gardeners stress democratic practices and actually have a decision-making committee that consists of Adams and Eves, the New Faith group has an authoritarian organizational structure led by a mysterious and charismatic leader, Brother

Jobe. Compared with the idealism of God's Gardeners, the New Faith Brotherhood is more realist in its outlook and practice. Its members endeavor to cope with reality by way of the most practical means. When some workers from the Bullock farm are held hostage in Albany, some of the brotherhood members use violence to free them. If a situation calls for a fake gesture of legality, they are willing to accept it, as when Robert makes a "public show" of arresting Brother Jobe in order to put members of Karp's gang to prison (253). The New Faith group recognizes that in times of scarcity and danger, there is not much place for idealism or utopianism. For the New Faith, the principle of realism is so simple. As Robert, a friend of Brother Jobe, says in a Nietzschean tone: "We've got to start reaching for the lower branches before we get to the stars" (254).[44] Both the New Faith group and the people in Union Grove share the same down-to-earth attitude. The addition of the members of the New Faith group to the town enables it to restore the rule of law. Before the New Faith group arrives to Union Grove, the townspeople had been worried about their behavior but didn't dare to stand against the Karp gang. They set out for punishing the gang only after their manpower has been reinforced.

But the realist attitude does not lead to a focus on practical means. It also can be found in individual behavior as well as collective action that derive from a "sense of solidarity" (56). When a young laborer from the town, Shawn Watling, is accidentally killed by a member of Wayne Karp's gang, "a stream of callers had come by the Watling house" (56), where a young widow, Britney, and her daughter remained. Unlike the novel's depiction of the world in a torrent of violence and anxiety, this scene provides a

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[44] In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche emphasizes the importance of "going under" in order to overcome the limitation: "I love those who do not first seek behind the stars for a reason to go under and be a sacrifice, but who sacrifice themselves for the earth, that the earth may some day become the overman's" (Nietzsche, 15). One should start from the earth before seeking behind the stars.

tone of compassion and sympathy that readers have not expected from post-apocalyptic

narratives.

> Jeanette Copeland and Jane Ann Holder volunteered to stay the night with Britney and her daughter. Neighbors brought dishes over to give both sustenance to the callers and some focus to the gathering. Ellen Weibel brought a ham and Jane Ann several bottles of her wine, and Eric Laudermilk brought jugs of new ale, and my neighbor Lucy Myles brought her sausage, and several women brought "pudding," a savory staple of our tables made from leftover bread scraps, which we no longer throw away, mixed with anything else you have around, say bacon, squash, kale, chestnuts—like Thanksgiving stuffing. …. For all that, the evening was hardly festive, but a very somber, measured gathering, with fussing over the dishes a way to signify that life would continue, as well as to give people something to do with their hands (56-7).

Here we see the most of the themes explored in this post-collapse novel: the commonness

of violence, the death of the young, the scarcity of resources ("a savory staple of our

tables made from leftover bread scraps"), the culture of bricolage ("mixed with anything

else you have around"), and the hope of life ("that life would continue"). Yet, this scene

also underscores the idea that if you want to survive in a time of collapse, it is best that

you should stick together and look out for each other. Compassion and solidarity are also

part of the realist attitude toward the problem of permanent insecurity. Members of the

New Faith Brotherhood offer their help (59), and all the townspeople gather at the funeral

of Shawn (63-5).

This is one aspect of the novel that is strikingly different from other, more

familiar post-apocalyptic narratives. In a zombie apocalypse, for example, bands of

survivors often fear each other more than the zombie attacks, because unlike zombies,

rival human groups usually intend to take the other group's food and other possessions to

secure their own survival. In non-zombie post-apocalyptic novels such as Cormac

McCarthy's *The Road* and Jim Crace's *The Pesthouse*, dangerous crises are always

associated with strangers. In a sense, this moving scene seems strange and bizarre in the normal convention of post-apocalyptic narratives. The narrator Robert explains the logic under this act of solidarity.

> In the days that followed Shawn Watling's funeral, everyone made an effort to attend the needs of his widow and their daughter. There were no official safety nets in our little society, no more social services, no life insurance, nothing but the goodwill of neighbors (70).

Acts of solidarity and compassion arise from a clear awareness of harsh reality. In times of perpetual insecurity, act of self-interest can be regarded as rational and reasonable. But in terms of realist viewpoint, rational knowledge or scientific reason is another human myth. As John Gray observes, "[s]cience will never be used chiefly to pursue truth, or to improve human life. The uses of knowledge will always be as shifting and crooked as humans are themselves. Humans use what they know to meet their most urgent needs— even if the result is ruin" (Gray 2002, 28). Gray's point is relevant to contemporary neoliberal society, where the ideology of self-help and meritocracy replaces the feudal idea of reciprocal obligations and the modern institution of the welfare state. When there is nothing to lean on, "the goodwill of neighbors" could be the most realistic approach to survive as a human being. In addition to depicting a renewal of collective spirit in the town, this scene also initiates the crucial event of the novel. Mourning the death of Shawn and witnessing the solidarity of people in town and the resolution of the members of the New Faith, Robert, who has not been active on behalf of the town, begins to change. He realizes that people have become so "demoralized" in not wanting to cope with the crime behind the killing. "Nobody wanted to disturb Wayne Karp and his bunch any more than they would poke a nest of rattlesnakes with a stick" (57). He says to Loren, "[w]e really have to get our act together around here… We don't have to surrender to

conditioning" (98-9). He calls for a town meeting, accepts the office of mayor, and promises to bring Wayne Karp under the law. What follows are bloody incidents in and out of the town.

"The law is back in business here": Politics of Realism in Times of Scarcity

The concept of 'realism' in political philosophy has a broad spectrum of meaning. However, there is one attitude that realists share in common, namely that we should not "evade, displace, or escape from politics" (Galston, 386). If politics refers to the means of coping with human conflict, politics is in essence an unstable, contradictory, and turbulent realm just as life is. Thus, it is delusional, or even destructive, to yearn for a world beyond politics. If conflict and instability are perennial possibilities in reality, and the role of politics is to deal with reality, we have to consider seriously that there shall never be a permanent state of peaceful coexistence in reality. Humans are prone to conflict and disagreement. Gray writes: "There is progress in knowledge, but not in ethics" (Gray 2002, 155). In this sense, setting up an ideal model for society to follow is not only misleading but also dangerous. Humans should never assume that a good once secured is secured forever, because "[d]isruption is always possible, and the task of shoring up the conditions of decency is never-ending" (Galston, 394).

Thus, the primary goal for realists is not pursuing the best but preventing the worst. Many realists argue that the worst disasters in human history have occurred because of their best intentions. Instead, the leaders of a community should focus on addressing "tragic contingencies" rather than pursuing "the dreams of progress" (Gray 2002, 194). To prevent the worst, leaders should recognize the point where a community must start ("We've got to start reaching for the lower branches before we get to the

stars," 254). But tragic contingencies may occur at any time, and there is no conclusive solution to them. Then what would be the objective for this incessant process? As Bernard Williams observes, the goal of realist politics is "in Hobbesian terms as the securing of order, protection, safety, trust, and the conditions of cooperation. It is 'first' because solving it is the condition of solving, indeed posing, any others" (Williams, 2-3). To fulfill this goal of securing order requires coordination. And to bring about effective coordination, a community needs strong and resolute leadership. When the situation of consent is not possible, the coordination will require coercion or force. They have to understand that sometimes it may not be possible to build democracy through democratic ways (Galston, 391-2).

Kunstler's *World Made by Hand* is realist in both the literary and political sense. Kunstler shows the realist worldview at work in his post-apocalyptic reality. His depiction of individual and collective culture emphasizes practicality in dealing with things, down-to-earth manners, stoic responses to tragic events, determination in upholding the social order, compassion and solidarity for sustaining the community, and so on. Kunstler's realism is grounded firmly upon the problems of scarcity and insecurity in the post-oil future.

The condition of scarcity forces us to confront the core political issue. When resources are scantier than human needs, and people identify their well-being with the use of these resources, there must be conflicts over the resources. To prevent the perpetual struggle in a war of all against all, there must be a civil authority that is able to regulate scarce resources. In other words, to prevent a community from destruction in endless conflicts, a certain "coordination of action" is unavoidable (Geuss, 21). Thus, the

condition of scarcity makes politics ineluctable. This 'politics' that admits the need for coordinated action is in essence politics of realism, for it aims, first and foremost, at the securing of order and safety of a community. As Ophuls argues, it is a question of "how to protect or advance the interests of the collectivity when the individuals who make it up (or enough of them to create a problem) behave (or are impelled to behave) in a selfish, greedy, and quarrelsome fashion" (Ophuls, 199).

Reading *World Made by Hand* in this context reveals how the novel acts as a political allegory. It is the story of how a small community in post-apocalyptic times of scarcity and violence succeeds in securing order by subduing outside threats. There are four groups or collectivities in the novel, each of which represents a particular type of political regime. The four groups are: Township of Union Grove, New Faith Brotherhood, Stephen Bullock's plantation community, and the gangs of Wayne Karp and Dan Curry. First three groups and the Wayne Karp gang reside in and around Union Grove, whereas the Dan Curry clan is in the city of Albany.

Let us briefly sketch each of these groups. Township of Union Grove symbolizes a representative democracy. It has apparatus of justice and law such as a magistrate, a constable, a mayor, town hall meeting, and trustees. Although, in the initial stages of the novel, people knew "the apparatus of justice had dissolved" (57), they continue to preserve the representative system, with which they try to deal with public problems. Robert Earle, newly elected mayor, represents the system. The New Faith Brotherhood moves to the town and becomes a member, but its political system is not democratic. Although the members of the church call themselves as brothers and sisters, they have a charismatic leader, Brother Jobe, who exclusively represents the church and makes

decisions on crucial matters. In this sense, the New Faith group can be viewed as an

authoritarian system that depends on a leader's sole authority. Stephen Bullock's

plantation is also in this category. Just like the New Faith group, Bullock's farm was built

upon the resources of Bullock and governed by his leadership. Robert, when he visits

Bullock, describes the atmosphere of the farm that is ruled by Bullock like a feudal lord:

> The men working around the new cane mill greeted Bullock
> enthusiastically. … It was hard to tell whether the workmen's enthusiasm
> on seeing their boss was that of free, happy men or of people who had to
> put on a face to authority. Bullock's relations with the people who lived on
> the plantation was the subject of much speculation among us who lived
> back in town. Being a world of its own, there was no way we outsiders
> knew what his people had to say about how things worked there, except
> that it pretty obviously wasn't a democracy (81).

The portrayal of Bullock and his farm reminds us of the image of a *kolkhoz* in the Soviet

era or of a collective farm in North Korea when the 'dear leader' visits. In fact, the

Bullock farm has an aura of socialist commune. At the plantation, which is called as the

"New Village" (82), residents live in the similarly designed houses, work and dine

together, and entrust their children to the same playschool. "Bullock's people all

generally took a midday meal together there and schooled the few children they had

managed to produce" (82). And just as the Soviet Russia did during the Cold War period,

the Bullock group also endeavors to enhance its productivity and self-sufficiency.

Bullock's farm was the only place around the town "where you might still hear engines

running" (78), where farmers "are doing everything [they] can here to become as self-

sufficient as possible" (88). Indeed, Bullock's farm evokes a mild version of socialist

authoritarianism. Although Brother Jobe's church and Bullock's plantation share the

same authoritarian structure, it cannot be said that two groups are tyrannical or

totalitarian. Hannah Arendt distinguishes the concept authority both from persuasion and

from violence. Whereas persuasion presupposes equality and works through argumentation, authoritarian order is always hierarchical. Whereas violence implies external means of coercion, authority fails when force is used. According to Arendt, what differentiates authoritarianism from tyranny is the attitude toward laws. "The difference between tyranny and authoritarian government has always been that the tyrant rules in accordance with his own will and interest, whereas even the most draconic authoritarian government is bounded by laws" (Arendt, 97). The legitimacy of an authoritarian regime derives not from violence and coercion but from the laws, which are regarded as "superior to its own power" (Arendt, 97). As for Brother Jobe, his authority comes from his belief in a punishing God, while Stephen Bullock gains his authority from his great wealth and his communitarian scheme of making a "New Village."

In case of the gangs led by Wayne Karp and Dan Curry, they represent what Plato considered to be the worst type of political regime, tyranny (Plato, 279-82). The Wayne Karp gang, comprised of former motorheads or "trailer trash" (236), is under the rule of Karp who rules with an "iron fist" (272). Unlike Brother Jobe and Bullock, Karp is cruel, brutal, and has no respect of the law. When one of his men kills Shawn Watling, he reveals his lawless character: "But don't expect too much from the law. The truth is, we're our own law in these times, like it or not" (48). Karp and his gang pose a threat to the town. When all the townspeople, except Britney and her daughter, go to the Bullock's for a celebration one night, some members of the Karp gang come to the empty town, stealing things and molesting Britney (224). Whereas the gang members led by Wayne Karp are small-time crooks, the Dan Curry is a mob organization that has taken control over the whole city of Albany (201). Under the rule of Dan Curry, who is the self-elected

"mayor" of the city, the gang controls all the trade, imposes a tax on local commerce, and kidnaps people for ransom money. When Robert goes to Dan Curry's headquarters to negotiate the ransom of Bullock's men, he describes the architectural style of the building. It is a building that resembles the work of Nazi architect Albert Speer, in which he senses the power and terror of the murderous dictatorial regime:

> Beside the big brick cube that housed the pump machinery, stood a gallows, a place of execution, a symbol of order and terror meant to reinforce the basis of Dan Curry's administrative authority. Just up the bank from that loomed a building designed to be formal and dignified, but in a crude approximation of Greco-Roman construction: Dan Curry's headquarters. … It made up for its roughness by its impressive mass, and altogether the place radiated an aspiration to be dignified within the limited means of our hard times. It possessed a kind of swaggering charm, of something new, alive, and breathing in a time when most things were shrinking or expiring. This was reinforced by the numbers of people, mostly men, hanging around the portico, which was a good fifty feet wide by twenty feet deep—a spacious outdoor room in its own right, well supplied with chairs. … I assumed they were all, in some way of another, dependent on Curry's favor (159-60).

Dan Curry is a dictator who rules with a terrifying "gallows" and by giving kind "favors." Although he is a charismatic leader such as Brother Jobe and Bullock, his rule is based on lawlessness just like Wayne Karp: "This is just a time when nobody seems to know how to do anything, to get things done. A fellow makes a few things happen, and the world falls at his fit" (162).

These four groups fall into one of two categories: a group that tries to secure law and order (Union Grove, New Faith, and the Bullock plantation) and a group that exploits anarchy and disorder for its own selfish gain (the Dan Curry gang and the Wayne Karp gang). The novel is about the war of these two groups, and the ultimate victory of the group that seeks law and order. As Robert proudly declares when arresting Wayne Karp on a warrant, "the object is to inform them that the law is back in business here" (254).

This is a literary depiction of a Hobbesian politics that attempts to establish political sovereignty to manage and control the forces of lawlessness that threaten the commons as well as the well-being of the town. The Dan Curry gang and the Wayne Karp gang both represent the forces of chaos, as they both rely on robbery and violence to enrich themselves. The Karp gang commits a killing and robs people from the town, while the Curry clan seizes a boat and two farm laborers of Bullock (191). It is clear to the other groups that they need to unite to protect their own resources that are so crucial in times of scarcity.

In terms of political regimes, the plot of the novel indicates the need for the elimination of tyranny and dictatorship from the possible forms of political rule. For without due respect for common rules there would be no chance of coexistence among human groups. If tyrannical regimes have enough power to dominate all the other groups, then the only choice remaining for members of the other groups other than death would be becoming a slave. It might be a rational choice for one to become a slave in giving up freedom to receive security, especially in times of permanent uncertainty. Yet, that choice would always be not secure, not only because one has no guarantee of security under the rule of a whimsical dictator but also because the dictator's group would fight against other groups to accumulate more wealth and power. Rather, it would be a much safer choice to become a member of a group that has a relatively consistent and coherent system of law and order. The factions of Union Grove, New Faith, and Bullock's farm acknowledge this wisdom by uniting to act against the tyrannical gangs. This alliance is itself interesting, because each group has different type of political formation. But if scarcity and uncertainty requires politics, it must be realism, for its principles

emphasizing order, stability, and safety more than any ideal is required by harsh and cruel post-apocalyptic reality. Thus, Kunstler in a way argues in his novel that in such times when today's consumer capitalism no longer works, liberal democracy will not be a workable option if it does not adopt strongly realist features.

World Made by Hand is not just another post-apocalyptic fiction that borrows the situation of collapse to sell a thrilling pulp narrative but a serious thought experiment that forces readers to consider the coming of resource scarcity. Kunstler's novel questions the all-too-human liberal democratic ideas in terms of its material basis by imagining the world where scarcity and security are the primary concerns and conflicts over resources among groups become permanent threats. But what if the enemies are not just the humans but also flesh-eating ghouls? What if humans have an option of either becoming the undead or becoming the dead? What does the imagination of zombies suggest for us humans in terms of the topic of subjectivity? We now move from the world made by hands to the world overwhelmed by torn limbs to imagine a new kind of ontological situation, and to explore a more popular as well as the most fearful and disgusting type of post-apocalyptic narratives.

CHAPTER FOUR
OF ZOMBIES AND MEN:
THE EVOLUTION OF THE ZOMBIE
AND THE RISE OF THE REALIST SUBJECT

> From a psychological point of view, the imagination of disaster does not greatly differ from one period in history to another. But from a political and moral point of view, it does.
> — Susan Sontag, "The Imagination of Disaster"

> The zombie's arrival was perfectly timed.
> — Jamie Russell, *Book of the Dead*

> However, how men live is so different from how they should live that a ruler who does not do what is generally done, but persists in doing what ought to be done, will undermine his power rather than maintain it. If a ruler who wants always to act honorably is surrounded by many unscrupulous men his downfall is inevitable. Therefore, a ruler who wishes to maintain his power must be prepared to act immorally when this becomes necessary.
> — Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*

Zombie Diaspora: Zombie as an Allegory of Social Discontents

One of the most notable developments in US popular culture in recent years has been the widespread popularity of zombie narratives. Often disregarded in the past as a crude and excessively grotesque category of horror, the zombie narrative has now become one of the most popular genres in mainstream entertainment. From Hollywood films and cable television shows to popular fictions and comic books, in video games and in smartphone applications, the zombie has become ubiquitous. The fascination with flesh-eating ghouls has extended beyond the US to formerly uninfected countries such as Norway (*Dead Snow*), Germany (*Rammbok: Berlin Undead*), the United Kingdom (*Shaun of the Dead*), Cuba (*Juan of the Dead*), and South Korea (*The Neighbor Zombie* and *I Am Alive*). The word zombie has even moved outside the boundaries of fiction to describe common real-life phenomena: computers have been turned into "zombies" by

viruses which cause them to send e-mail spam to other computers; the economic crisis turned banks into "zombie banks," the costume festival 'World Zombie Day' has swept major American and European cities; political protesters from New York to Seoul have used zombie makeup and costumes in their demonstrations.[45] As a widely circulating symbol with contradictory range of meanings (e.g. slaves, consumers, capitalists, and so on), the figure of the zombie has been used to make a point about contemporary political and economic issues in diverse contexts. Such popularity of the zombie in narratives and in reality calls for a serious engagement with its meanings and implications.

So we should ask at the outset: what is the zombie? The essence of the identity of the zombie can be found in its paradoxical character. Indeed, the zombie *is* a paradox itself as suggested by its other name, the living dead. The zombie has a human appearance but has a voracious appetite for human flesh. The zombie is, in terms of its

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[45] A zombie computer is a computer connected to the Internet that has been controlled by a hacker or computer viruses and be used to perform malicious tasks under remote direction. Most owners of zombie computers are unaware that their system is being used in this way. One recent magazine article points out the similarity between snow-stormed Atlanta and the fictional post-apocalyptic Atlanta described in the popular TV series *The Walking Dead*, arguing that people 'premediate' real apocalyptic situations by practicing through media (Ian Bogost, "Snowpocalypse in Atlanta and *The Walking Dead*," *The Atlantic* (30 January 2014), http://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2014/01/snowpocalypse-in-atlanta-and-em-the-walking-dead-em/283450/). As for some of the serious books that use zombie metaphor in their analysis of economics, politics, and society, see Henry A. Giroux, *Zombie Politics and Culture in the Age of Casino Capitalism* (Peter Lang, 2011), Daniel W. Drezner, *Theories of International Politics and Zombies* (Princeton University Press, 2011), and Chris Harman, *Zombie Capitalism* (Haymarket Books, 2010). As for the annual World Zombie Day, visit https://www.facebook.com/WZDHQ. According to the organizers, the event celebrating 'the living dead' is in fact a very humanistic one: "World Zombie Day is a day where cities around the world hold zombie walks/festivals and usually collect food for their local food banks or collect for a charity of their choice." From anti-capitalist Wall Street occupiers to Rhode Island high school students protesting against test-score policy of the state (February, 2013), zombie makeup is so versatile a tactic that not only draws immediate public attention but also sends a clear political message in the form of visually theatrical performance. As for the Rhode Island demonstration, see http://news.providencejournal.com/breaking-news/2013/02/student-zombies-march-on-ri-department-of-education-in-protest.html. For an article regarding the theatrical character of zombie makeup protests, see Rebecca Schneider, "It Seems As If … I Am Dead: Zombie Capitalism and Theatrical Labor," *TDR: The Drama Review* 56.4 (Winter 2012).

biological status, both non-human and non-animal. As living dead, the zombie has little

interest in any activity other than feeding itself. Its lack of intelligence and emotion

separates the zombie from other monsters. Whereas the vampire is often depicted as

sexually desirable, the zombie is a walking corpse who cannot speak or think. Whereas

the werewolf may live a normal human life except one night a month, the zombie is

destined to straggle incessantly, searching for human flesh on which to feed. Being both

non-human and non-animal, the zombie is a monster situated in between the boundary of

life and death and that of reason and instinct, which renders it abhorrent to us. It is an

example of what Julia Kristeva describes as an "in-between, ambiguous, composite"

entity that "disturbs identity, system, order" and "does not respect borders, positions,

rules" (Kristeva, 4). Such absence of boundaries magnifies the anxiety and fear of the

subject. The zombie, which is neither human nor animal, and exists in the zone between

life and death, is an object of disgust in its most extreme sense.

The sense of disgust that the zombie evokes, often by displaying bodily organs

and fluids, constitutes what Kristeva calls the "abject," which she observes is closely tied

to our understanding of ourselves. For Kristeva, the sight of the bodily fluids and

excrement are disturbing because they remind us of the inevitability of death and shatter

the belief in the stability of the ego. Because they remind us of the fate that we will one

day be "on the part of death," we try to hide these horrible secretions:

> A wound with blood and pus, or the sickly, acrid smell of sweat, of decay,
> does not *signify* death. In the presence of signified death—a flat
> encephalograph, for instance—I would understand, react, or accept. No, as
> in true theater, without makeup or masks, refuse and corpses *show me*
> what I permanently thrust aside in order to live. These body fluids, this
> defilement, this shit are what life withstands, hardly and with difficulty, on
> the part of death. There, I am at the border of my condition as a living
> being (Kristeva, 3; emphases in original).

In this respect, the most terrifying image is the corpse. "The corpse, seen without God and outside of science, is the utmost of abjection" (Kristeva, 4). As a "body without soul, a non-body, disquieting matter" that is "excluded from God's territory as it is from his speech," the corpse is the "fundamental" manifestation of "pollution" (Kristeva, 109). A corpse that moves like the living, the zombie, doubly violates the boundary between human and non-human.[46] The fear and disgust that the zombie evokes thanks to the ontological condition of in-betweenness and its state of defilement are its defining characteristics as a particular type of monster. As a bringer of death and decay, the zombie's monstrosity taps into the most fundamental and primitive fears of human beings, and almost every zombie narrative focuses on the fear and disgust aroused by the living dead.[47]

Yet, like other monsters, the zombie is a product of a historically specific moment, and as such it bears particular meanings in connection with its time. According to Jamie Russell, "[t]he monsters that dominate any particular culture or period offer an unusual

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[46] It is worth noting here that ecologist Timothy Morton insists the uselessness of dividing the boundary between human and non-human. Pointing out that the act of "erecting rigid walls" is all too anthropocentric (Morton, 88), Morton argues that with the ecological perspective there is in fact no clear line between human and non-human: "The ecological thought contemplates a subaesthetic level of being, beyond the cute and beyond the awesome. We can't call it beautiful (self-contained, harmonious) or sublime (awe-inspiring, open). This level unsettles and disgusts. It doesn't mirror our fantasies. It isn't hard to love Nature as a reflection of oneself. It isn't hard to love Nature as an awe-inspiring open space. It's far harder to love the disturbing, disgusting beings who do not so easily wear a human face. Some of these beings are human. One task of the ecological thought is to figure out how to love the inhuman: not just the nonhuman (that's easier) but the radically strange, dangerous, even "evil." For the inhuman is the strangely strange core of the human" (Morton, 92). Although his suspicion of our deep-rooted humanist conception deserves to be noted, Morton does not teach us "how to love the inhuman." Still, the inhuman, or the non-human, being such as the zombie triggers mainly fear and disgust. To fear it is one thing, and to try to find from the inhuman the "strangely strange core of the human" is another.

[47] For the analysis of the relationship between fear and film through the concept of historical trauma in the zombie films, see Adam Lowenstein, "Living Dead: Fearful Attractions of Film," *Representations* 110.1 (Spring 2010).

insight into the specific fears and anxieties that characterize that historical moment"

(Russell, 8). As the etymology of the word indicates, 'monster' is from the Latin verb

'*monstrare,*' meaning 'to show, to display, to de*monstr*ate.'[48] Monsters are "meaning

machines," whose body is inscribed with fears and anxieties that a particular historical

period collectively shares (Halberstam, 21). For example, the vampires and the Janus-

faced doctors/murderers in nineteenth-century British gothic novels disclosed "the not-

said, the unspoken, the hidden, and the silent" with regard to sexuality, gender,

nationality, race, and empire in a period defined by patriarchy, racism, and colonialism

(Halberstam, 21). Similarly, film critic Robin Wood argues that monsters in American

horror films represent the Freudian return of the repressed.[49] Every society maintains its

sense of normality by repressing from earliest infancy the desires that are at odds with the

predetermined cultural roles and social values within society (Wood, 64). So most of

population more or less experiences a certain neurosis from this repression. But these

repressed desires return unconsciously in the form of nightmares, slips of tongue, and so

on. For Wood, horror films are another form of this return of the repressed. As "our

collective nightmares," horror films portray the monsters that we have struggled to

repress in our normal lives (Wood, 70). The basic formula of horror films focuses on the

depiction of normality threatened by the monster. In this sense, the monster serves as an

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[48] Stephen T. Asma also notes that the word 'monster' is derived from the Latin word
'*monstrum,*' which is also originated in '*monere,*' meaning 'to warn.' See Asma, 13.
[49] This notion of "return of the repressed" is from Freud's study of the uncanny [*unheimlich*].
Freud defines 'the uncanny' as "species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well
known and had long been familiar" (Freud, 124). After various examinations of the uncanny
phenomena, he concludes that the origin of the uncanny can be found from childhood anxiety,
from "something that has been repressed and now returns" (Freud, 147). The true manifestation
of this fear occurs when a repressed familiarity (e.g. death) returns in a disturbing way (e.g.
corpse). Hence "the acme of the uncanny is represented by anything to do with death, dead
bodies, revenants, spirits and ghosts" (Freud, 148). The figure of zombies, or the walking dead,
thus, constitutes the perfect representation of the Freudian fear of the uncanny.

allegorical figure of society, "the conflicts that rip our social fabric apart" (Newitz, 2). Similarly, W. Scott Poole points out the intimate relationship between American history and American monsters. In his view, "American monsters are born out of American history. They emerge out of the central anxieties and obsessions that have been a part of the United States from colonial times to the present and from the structures and processes where those obsessions found historical expression" (Poole, 4). By examining the monster as an allegorical figure of social conflicts within the history of a nation or empire, we find out what society tries to hide, repress, and cover up.

As with other monster narratives, what is significant about zombie narratives is not the zombie itself but what it represents in a particular historical and psycho-social setting. In its origin in the Caribbean Vodou cult, the zombie was a figure that was bound up with the experience of slavery and colonialism. From Martinique to Haiti, the worst fate imaginable for the inhabitants, whose ancestors had been captured, shackled and shipped out of Africa to the islands of the Caribbean, was to be turned into one of the living dead by the black magic of a Vodou sorcerer, and be forced to work at a sugar plantation at night. In the 1920s and the 1930s, when the zombie myth was imported to the United States via William Seabrook's travelogue *The Magic Island* (1929) and Victor Helperin's film *White Zombie* (1932), the figure of zombie not only underscored to Americans the rightfulness of their occupation of the barbaric and primitive state of Haiti but also conjured up a vivid image of their own powerlessness that they felt during the crisis of the Great Depression. When George A. Romero reinvented the zombie in the setting of suburban Pittsburgh in *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), his film revealed the deeply hidden anxieties about the bourgeois nuclear family, the racial oppression of

African-Americans, the ultimate failure of student movements in the 1960s, and the

trauma of the Vietnam War. Romero's second zombie film in the late 1970s, *Dawn of the*

Dead (1978), underscored the repetitive, often mindless, practices of American

consumerism, and his third, *Day of the Dead* (1985) also highlighted the macho politics

and sexist culture of the Cold War period in the 1980s. The recent boom of zombie

narratives and protests in zombie make-up in the 2000s reminds us not just of the

permanent precariousness of the ordinary people (so-called 99%) in the age of global

neoliberalism but also of the fear and anxiety that people share in a dysfunctional post-

democratic political space.[50] Thus it is not an exaggeration to say that monstrosity of the

zombie, from Haiti through America to the globalized world, has functioned as an

allegorical figure for social problems as diverse as slave labor, colonial occupation,

patriarchal family, race tension, consumerism, terrorism, and global capitalism. The

zombie narrative bears the mark of crisis. As Susan Buck-Morss notes, the figure of

allegory reflects "the mode of perception peculiar to a time of social disruption and

protracted war, when human suffering and material ruin were the stuff and substance of

historical experience" (Buck-Morss 1991, 178).

 If we look into the history of the zombie narratives, we can recognize three stages

of the mutations of the zombie: (1) classic hypnotized corpses in Haitian sugarcane field

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[50] For example, in South Korea, since around the late 2000s, "zombie" has been widely used by both conservatives and liberals to mock the opposite demonstrators. Conservative citizens call liberal demonstrators, who mainly follow the political legacies of the late presidents Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun, zombies in the sense that liberals are uncritically endorsing Kim and Roh. Similarly, liberals often condemn violent right-wing conservatives, who follow the former president Lee Myung-bak and the current president Park Geun-hye, by calling them zombies in the same reason. This phenomenon of zombie-interpellation shows that the apparently stable democracy in South Korea since the 1987-regime is in fact deeply problematic. Conflicts between conservatives and liberals have been increased, often violently, especially since the deaths of Roh and Kim in 2009, and are still going on over the neoliberal policies and the North-South relationship.

(1930s), (2) brain-dead cannibals in an American suburb (from the 1960s to the 1980s), and (3) the millennial harbinger of global pandemic (from the 2000s to the present). Of course this model does not fit exactly every single zombie narratives from the 1930s until now, but this three-stage division can be useful in analyzing the figure of the zombie as a distinctive social allegory in American culture. For example, the three-stage formula corresponds to the great changes in the form of capitalism. Under the surface of the zombie films in the 1930s laid the traditional form of industrial capitalism, in which slaves or the slave-like proletariat worked for a greedy master/capitalist. From the 1960s to the 1980s, Romero's reinvention of the zombie dealt with the emergence of a voracious consumer capitalism and its discontents. Since the 2000s, zombie narratives have absorbed the features of global capitalism and its corresponding set of contradictions.

This chapter focuses on the transformation of subjectivity that is to be discerned in the evolution of the zombie narratives. In apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives, the problem of subjectivity is an essential theme in relation to the experience of social crisis. This chapter will argue that under the recent zombie apocalypse narratives lies the urgent call for a new subjectivity that fits the harsh and cruel reality the narratives commonly describe. This chapter will call this subject 'the realist' as opposed to the currently dominant liberal humanist subject, and will try to examine what aspects of the present zombie narratives directly or indirectly demand the realist attitude. Connection between the zombie narratives and the problem of subjectivity has not been unnoticed; especially nowadays, when fear and anxiety is spreading globally, discourses of the post-apocalyptic narratives and the post-humanity are not hard to find. One such discourse is

Lauro and Embry's "A Zombie Manifesto," the apparent nihilism of which will be a focus of analysis. In order to do this, it is necessary to briefly examine the first two stages of the zombie mutations.

The 'Working' Dead: Haitian Origin and *White Zombie*

The zombie is modeled first and foremost on the figure of the slave. Awakened from the grave and possessed by black magic, the original image of the zombie in Haitian folklore is an unconscious slave who is completely under the control of his or her master. Unlike other monsters such as the ghost, vampire, werewolf, and Frankenstein's monster, the zombie is the only one that is depicted as a captive, a prisoner, and a servant of others. Being a somnambulistic creature utterly devoid of independence, freedom and will, the zombie is the most miserable and cursed among these creatures.

The pathetic condition of the figure of the zombie is connected to its historical-cultural origin: Afro-Caribbean slavery. The zombie originates in Afro-Caribbean religious practices, and is traceable to colonial-era Central Africa. Since the early eighteenth century, when France colonized Haiti, thousands of slaves were brought from Africa to Haiti as workers in sugar cane plantations. The slaves suffered extreme brutality in Haiti, where the life expectancy of a slave laborer on a plantation was only seven years (McAlister, 464). Vodou ritual and practice, a hybrid of elements from African deities, Roman Catholic Christianity, European mysticism, and Freemasonry, gradually emerged among the slaves mainly as a way of enduring the brutal life on Caribbean island far from their lands of origin.[51] The Haitian *zonbi* (a returned soul), from which the word 'zombie'

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[51] "Vodou," writes Susan Buck-Morss, "was constructed out of the allegorical mode of seeing that experiences history as catastrophe. For those who have been defeated by history, whose social relations have been severed, who live in exile, meaning drains out of the objects of a world that has been impoverished by physical distance and personal loss" (Buck-Morss 2009, 127).

is derived, had to do with a Vodou practice of making a bottle containing the spirits of the recently dead. The basic concept of the *zonbi* was soul without a body (McAlister, 462-9). Later there emerged the figure of the *zonbi kò kadav*, or walking corpse, a body without soul, which is the reverse of the *zonbi*. It was an extreme form of punishment imposed on an accused criminal, in which "his spirit is extracted from his body and his body is sold into modern-day slavery to cut cane on a sugar plantation" (McAlister, 469). Here emerges one of the quintessential fears evoked by the zombie narrative: it is better to die than to be one of them. Throughout the alternating movements of revolution and re-colonization of Haiti,[52] these two types of *zonbi* practice have survived and are still performed in Haiti. Among other things, for Haitians, the practice works as a symbolic act of remembering the bloody history of slavery.

It was William Seabrook who first introduced the presence of *zonbi* to American public at the time of the US occupation of Haiti. In his best-selling book, *The Magic Island* (1929), he recorded his first impression of the "supposed zombies":

> My first impression of the three supposed *zombies*, who continued dumbly at work, was that there was something about them unnatural and strange. They were plodding like brutes, like automatons. Without stooping down, I could not fully see their faces, which were bent expressionless over their work … The eyes were the worst. It was not my imagination. They were in truth like the eyes of a dead man, not blind, but staring, unfocused, unseeing. The whole face, for that matter, was bad enough. It was vacant, as if there was nothing behind it. It seemed not only expressionless, but incapable of expression. I had seen so much previously in Haiti that was outside ordinary normal experience that for the flash of a second I had a

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[52] Slaves frequently raised rebellions against the French colonialists/planation owners, and finally gained liberation by declaring abolition of slavery and independence from France on January 1, 1804, which was the historically unprecedented event. But the republic became politically chaotic and economically unstable after the revolution, which led to the re-colonization of Haiti by the United States from 1915 to 1934. For the influences of the Haitian revolution to the European philosophy, in particular Hegel's famous formula of slave and master, see Buck-Morss 2009. For the history of slave rebellions in Africa and the Caribbean in the 18th century, in which the Haitian revolution was one of the centerpieces, see Linebaugh and Rediker, 2000.

> sickening almost panicky lapse in which I thought, or rather felt, "Great God, maybe this stuff is really true, and if it is true, it is rather awful, for it upsets everything." By "everything" I meant the natural fixed laws and processes on which all modern human thought and actions are based (Seabrook, 101).

What interested him was not *zonbi* in the form of the Vodou ceremony or the myth of *zonbi kò kadav,* but the actual sugar plantation laborers that were rumored to be the living dead. Seeing the workers' "expressionless" eyes resembling those of "a dead man," he experienced deeply unsettling fears of an upside-down order. The harsh work conditions of the zombified plantation laborers described by Seabrook was in connection with the actual plantation company called HASCO, Haitian-American Sugar Company, which is owned by American interests. As one of the few economically prosperous business companies during the American occupation, HASCO's profit margin was mainly predicated on the drastically low wages paid to the local Haitian laborers. During the occupation, Haitian laborers earned 20 cents for every 12 hours of work, reminding us of the cheap labor at sweatshops in Southeast Asia today (Fay, 87). As was described in the above passage, only zombies could endure such a relentless and brutal working conditions in HASCO. When he has recovered from the shock, Seabrook concludes that "these zombies were nothing but poor, ordinary demented human beings, idiots, forced to toil in the field" (Seabrook, 101-2). So we see that, just as in the original *zonbi* myth in colonial Haiti, the first instance of a "modern zombie" recorded by a white explorer in occupied Haiti was the proletariat, the slaves of capitalism. They were in fact the 'working' dead, as it were, not the walking dead.

The image of the zombie as proletariat is captured in a scene of Victor Halperin's film, *White Zombie* (1932), which is the first Hollywood film about zombies. Produced

and released during the US occupation of Haiti, the film tells the story of an American couple, Madeline (Madge Bellamy) and Neil (John Harron), who go to Haiti to hold their wedding ceremony there. They do not realize that their ceremony is a part of a plan of an American financier, Charles Beaumont (Robert Frazer), who has invited them and plots to take Madeline away from Neil with the help of a plantation owner-cum-black magician, Murder Legendre (Bela Lugosi). Having mastered the practice possessing a man's soul by turning him into a zombie, Legendre runs his sugar mill with the free and extremely alienated labor of the zombie-proletariat. When Beaumont goes to Legendre to ask him to make Madeline into a zombie, we are shown Legendre's sugar mill, which is known to have modeled after the real HASCO. First we are introduced to the sugar processing in a full shot with the grinding sound of millstone. When Beaumont enters the mill, there is a shot of somnambulant workers who slowly but obediently carry baskets of cane to the thresher, which is powered also by human labor. The camera takes a close-up shot of the giant sieve, and then a full shot of one of the workers who falls into the sieve. Without stopping, the camera cranes down to the exterior of the sieve that goes on processing the body of the fallen worker. No one cares for the "death" of this worker, because they all are zombies. When camera captures both the zombie workers in the foreground and Beaumont in the background, we notice from the expression on his face that, unlike a zombie worker's expressionless face, he realizes how terrifying his plan actually is.

This stunning scene connects the extremely brutal working condition of the zombified laborers in Haiti to the deadening, cruel, low-wage factory labor under the

capitalist system in general.[53] When Beaumont meets Legendre, he says proudly that

"[t]hey work faithfully and they're not afraid of long hours," and offers Beaumont some

zombie workers for his own plantation. For the American workers who had experienced

the brutal forces of capitalism at their own factories, the scene must have appeared oddly

quaint. In reality, when this film opened in 1932, American workers were having a

terrible time due to the Great Depression. Most facets of the working class life had

worsened: wages were low, gap between the rich and poor had widened, unemployment

rate was soaring, strikes were brutally suppressed, and hungry people either went begging

or killed themselves. According to Howard Zinn,

> While from 1922 to 1929 real wages in manufacturing went up per capita
> 1.4 percent a year, the holders of common stocks gained 16.4 percent a
> year. Six million families (42 percent of the total) made less than $1,000 a
> year. One-tenth of 1 percent of the families at the top received as much
> income as 42 percent of the families at the bottom, according to a report of
> the Brookings Institution. Every year in the 1920s, about 25,000 workers
> were killed on the job and 100,000 permanently disabled. Two million
> people in New York City lived in tenements condemned as firetraps (Zinn,
> 382-3).

The film's huge commercial success may have been possible from the miserable workers'

identification with the zombie laborers under the hands of an evil magician/capitalist. In

1930s America, the zombie might have expressed the helplessness that so many people

felt as they suffered under a collapsing economy that often turned whole families into

street beggars. As the film critic David Skal points out, "[m]illions already knew they

were no longer in control of their lives; the economic strings were being pulled by

faceless, frightening forces. If the force had a face, it was likely to be that of zombie-

master Bela Lugosi, commanding you mesmerically" (Skal, 169). It is uncertain that

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[53] Four years later, in *Modern Times* (1936), Charlie Chaplin re-appropriate this scene by slightly
changing it into a more famous image, in which a factory worker (Chaplin) is literally swallowed
up by a giant machine.

Halperin was aware of the film's relation to wretched condition of the workers during America's most terrible economic depression. However intentionally or not, *White Zombie* offers uncomfortable parallels between the slave labor of zombies in sugarcane factory and the proletarian labor of workers in capitalist factory.

Aside from the poor condition of laborers, the film was also resonant with racial anxiety in America in the 1930s that had been amplified by the ongoing flood of European immigration and the migration of African Americans to the industrial states of the North. The kidnapping of an innocent white woman by the help of an apparently foreign black magician in Haiti[54] and enslavement of her as one member of the black zombies—hence the film's title, 'white zombie'—embody the fear that a white female could easily be forced into the position associated with black female slaves.[55] The film managed to use the zombification of a white woman to touch on the fear of miscegenation that was widespread in America for much of its history. Naturally, the film provided the viewers with the resolution to their fears. In the end, the Vodou magician is defeated by the brave and smart white male protagonists. White reason ultimately beats black magic and saves white beauty. As Chera Kee notes, "[f]ilms like *White Zombie* may have provided a fantasy of reclaiming a sense of white control over society" (Kee, 18). And it also should be noted that such "a sense of white control" was mediated by a helpless and passive white woman. Here we see how the film juxtaposes racial anxiety with gender stereotypes.

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[54] Actually the actor Bela Lugosi was an immigrant from Hungary, who became previously famous for his role of Dracula. Part of the reasons behind the production of *White Zombie* was to instantly employ both Lugosi's trademark look of Dracula and the set of the 1931 film *Dracula*.
[55] The setting of Haiti also confirms such fear, because Haiti in the 19th century was the first black republic in history that drove the white colonial power out of the island. Horrible murders of white plantation owners by black slaves had been well known throughout the western countries including America. See Buck-Morss 2009.

In both the origin of zombie in Afro-Caribbean history and its transplantation in the Hollywood film industry during the Depression era, the zombie served as an allegory of the wretched condition of the slave. The zombie in this stage represents those human beings who had their souls as well as their freedom taken away by masters taking the form of colonialists, plantation owners, and industrial capitalists.[56] The nightmare that one can be totally controlled by someone else and become a slave was the worst fear that the early zombie narratives evoked. But during the decades preceding World War II, zombie narratives had no implications of an apocalypse on a global scale. Although there was an element of social allegory in depicting slave labor being used in a factory, it is hard to find a sweeping critical perspective associated with the figure of the zombie. Just as Seabrook's memoir was mainly read as an account of expedition to an exotic island, *White Zombie* relieved the viewers by restoring order: after the repentant Beaumont kills himself along with Legendre, Madeline, who was zombified, reawakens and is reunited with her fiancée Neil. The film fails to explore the condition of slavery, which the zombie vividly embodies in Haitian folklore, nor does it denounce colonialism and capitalism. Rather, it was advertised as an exotic horror story, or was politically insinuated to justify the US occupation of Haiti in the renovated form of White Man's Burden. Depiction of the opposition between the brainless, zombified native Haitians and the reasonable, humanistic white American male gives grounds for American rule of Haiti. We should also note that *White Zombie*, as the earliest feature-length film about the figure, alludes to the possibility of the inversion of social hierarchy, which is an essential feature of the zombie genre today. The film portrays a white person becoming quickly enslaved, as a

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[56] For a study of Haitian zombie in the context of imperialism, see Kyle Bishop, "The Sub-Subaltern Monster: Imperialist Hegemony and the Cinematic Voodoo Zombie" 2008.

white woman easily becomes an object of desire for an evil foreigner and falls into his hands, and how Americans can be deluded and ruled by un-American manipulator. However, as the convention of horror genre used to dictate, normality wins over monstrosity and the inversion of social order is ultimately rectified with the reestablishment of *status quo*: the racial hierarchy, traditional gender stereotypes, and imperial fantasy are all restored, though not without a few scratches. This had hardly changed until George A. Romero transformed the zombie genre into a comprehensive allegory of social criticism, in which the social order never fully recovers from its inversion.

Ordinary Monster and American Anxieties: George A. Romero and the 'Living Dead' Trilogy

The turning point came when George Romero made a low-budget, black and white zombie film *Night of the Living Dead* in 1968. Romero's zombies were different from the previous ones in many respects. Firstly, he removes the zombie from its racial and postcolonial context. Previously, the zombie was represented mostly as black as depicted in Legendre's sugar mill. One source of fear that *White Zombie* evoked was that even members of the white race could become zombies, which belies the assumption that the zombie as well as the slave was destined to be black.[57] In Romero's 'living dead' trilogy, the zombie is not racially specific entity.[58] In case of *Night of the Living Dead*, all zombies it depicts are white. Second, Romero alters the gender specificity of the zombie. The original zombies and its first Hollywood copies were mostly male. Romero's zombies are both male and female. Anyone, i.e. members of one's family, neighbors, and

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[57] Annalee Newitz argues the general undead narratives are best understood in the context of race relationships that develop in the wake of colonialism (Newitz, 89-91).

[58] Yet there appear no Asian zombies in the trilogy. Romero's zombies are either white or black.

children, could be turned into a zombie. Third, Romero eliminates the figure of the magician. If the zombification was previously performed by a wicked Vodou master, in Romero's films there is no such mastermind. Rather, the causes behind the rise of the zombies remain a mystery. In *Night of the Living Dead*, the survivors desperately watch TV but cannot get a satisfactory explanation. In *Dawn of the Dead* (1978), we see in the first sequence that inside the TV studio there is only chaos and disagreement on what creates zombies or what they actually are. Fourth, in place of the evil master Romero introduced the motif of plague and infection. Zombification becomes a disease caused by a viral infection: if the zombie bites you, you become one of them. Romero's 'living dead' trilogy has the plague motif at its center, shifting the zombie horror from the localized, exotic, colonial context into the national, common, American context for the first time. As a result, Romero liberated the zombie from its shackles of slavery, as it were, and made it an autonomous, infectious, monster that comes from one's immediate environment. Finally, Romero adds the element of cannibalism. Unlike the Haitian zombie that serves as a hypnotized automaton under the control of a magician, Romero's living dead are now driven by their desire to devour human flesh. The cannibalistic hunger of the zombie becomes its most monstrous characteristic in Romero's films. As Elspeth Probyn writes, the cannibal "reminds us of that which cannot be included in *the polis*, the social life of man. Yet its very exclusion serves to define humanity" (Probyn, 88). The cannibalistic zombie exemplifies the condition of in-betweeness: the zombie has a human shape, but cannot be included among humanity.

These new characteristics—infectious virality, cannibalism, and the vulnerability of all human beings to becoming infected—redefine the figure of the zombie. The

repulsion aroused by zombies and the fear of becoming one of them were no longer

situated within a limited geographic context, i.e. the island of Haiti, or associated with the

arts of magic. Rather, it now becomes a creature that stalks the landscape of America

itself. Romero transformed zombies into a quintessentially American monster: they roam

the typically American space of the isolated farmhouse, the suburbs and shopping malls;

they used to be ordinary people who wear familiar clothes; and the newly transformed

zombie apocalypse evokes distinctly American political, social, and cultural anxieties.

These changes in the figure of the zombie alter the shape of the zombie narrative itself. In

earlier zombie films like *White Zombie*, the central question was how to rescue a

zombified white woman from the evil hands of a foreign magician. Now, in Romero's

zombie films, in which anyone, even family members and neighbors, can become

zombies, the central question becomes how to survive from the incessant approach of

others. In addition, Romero made the zombie story neither as a grudge-ridden personal

revenge story nor as a mysterious supernatural phenomenon that is caused by a mad

scientist. Rather, he expanded the scale to a global level, so that civilization itself

collapses from the contagion. In a nutshell, the focus of the zombie genre has shifted

from a rescue narrative to a survival narrative in a thickly apocalyptic atmosphere. It was

this radical shift that enabled Romero to not only examine the anxieties of present society

but also reimagine the subversion of existing social conventions.

The transformation of the zombie narrative is clearly established in the first

scenes in *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), which was Romero's debut feature film. The

film starts with a long take of a nondescript country road in Pennsylvania. A car comes

and enters a graveyard, where a "cemetery entrance" signpost is blotted with several

black spots, obviously blood. The film cuts to a bleak view of graveyard with an

American flag waving on the right side of the frame. The combination of images of the

blood-spotted cemetery signpost and the American flag suggests a particular cluster of

meanings: America as a graveyard, where bloody events might take place. This

foreboding first scene is also connected with the changing times. America is no longer an

optimistic dreamland – it has been at war in Vietnam much of the past decade, and an

ominous atmosphere has come over it. The first line of the film promptly indicates this.

When the car stops, Barbara (Judith O'Dea) says to her brother Johnny (Russell Streiner):

"They ought to make the day the time changes the first day of summer. It's eight o'clock

and still light." The time is out of joint in some sense. This sense of dislocation continues

when Johnny complains about their meaningless annual ritual on their father's grave:

> *JOHNNY*
> *Look at this thing [wreath]. 'We still remember.' I don't. You know, I*
> *don't even remember what the man looks like.*
>
> *BARBARA*
> *Johnny, it takes you five minutes.*
>
> *JOHNNY*
> *Yeah, five minutes to put the wreath on the grave and six hours to drive*
> *back and forth. Mother wants to remember, so we trot 200 miles into the*
> *country and she stays at home.*

From the conversation we sense the psychological conflict in the family members.

Johnny, who doesn't even remember his father's face, is complaining about his mother's

insistence that they visit his grave. Although Barbara does disagree with him, she reveals

her own sullen feelings by pointing out that the ritual will be very short ("it takes you five

minutes"). So we notice from here that there are numerous troubling discrepancies:

between the time and the level of light, between father and son, between brother and

sister. Then, just after Barbara and Johnny finish their short ritual at their father's grave, a man stumbles towards them. The man looks fairly ordinary, appearing to be just another graveyard visitor, but is soon revealed to be a zombie. Thus, another discrepancy appears, this one between the living and the (living) dead. The man attacks them, kills Johnny, and pursues the panicked Barbara. Barbara sees a farmhouse, towards which she desperately runs for a shelter. The 10-minute first scene from the graveyard to the arrival at the farmhouse displays some of the most essential features of Romero's zombie narratives: the sense of dislocation, deep psychological conflict in the family, discord between the older generation and the younger generation, and the utterly ordinary appearance of the zombie. Later as the film develops, more discord is exposed between husband and wife, between black man and white man, and so on.

Ordinariness applies to not just to the zombie but also to the human characters. Those whom Barbara finds at the farmhouse are all ordinary people that can be met at town, though the arrangement of them—a nuclear family (husband, wife, and a daughter), a young couple, a single white woman, and a single black man—must have been intentionally made. Even the posse that shots zombies at the end of the film are all ordinary folks that try to reestablish the dislocated order. The fear that this film evokes is also connected to ordinariness in the sense that it is aroused largely from how these ordinary people can be a fatal danger to one another either by becoming a zombie or by killing others out of resentment. Johnny, killed and transformed into a zombie at the graveyard, returns to the farmhouse and grabs at his sister Barbara. Karen, a girl bitten by a zombie before the film starts, comes back as a living corpse, biting her father in the arm and killing her mother with a masonry trowel. Harry Cooper (Karl Hardman), the father

of Karen, locks Ben (Duane Jones) out of the back door in order to save his own life and that of his family; and when Ben kicks the door in, he beats Harry and shouts, "I ought to drag you out there and feed you to those things!" Soon afterwards, when Harry grabs Ben's rifle and threatens to shoot him, Ben wrests the gun away and shoots Harry to death. As the only survivor at the mayhem of the night, Ben is absurdly killed by a member of the posse in the morning. In Romero's setting, primal danger comes not from the attack of the zombies, because zombies become just a stumbling human corpse once the information on how to kill zombies is broadcast on TV; rather, the real threat comes from other living humans, who kill either out of spite or to save their own lives.

This feature of ordinariness continues to define the texture of the second film of the trilogy. In *Dawn of the Dead* (1978), the four survivors are two members of a TV station staff, two SWAT team marksmen, who happen to find their refuge at a huge shopping mall. As a satire of consumer capitalism, the film erases the stark boundary between humans and zombies. Not only do the human surviviors explicitly compare zombies in the shopping mall to the consumers they were in their former lives, but the humans themselves are portrayed as not so different from zombies. Noticing the zombies swarming at the shopping mall, Stephen (David Emge) observes: "Some kind of instinct. Memory of what they used to do. This was an important place in their lives." In another scene, Peter (Ken Foree) also points out, "They [zombies] are after the place. They don't know why. They just remember. Remember that they wanna be in here. They're us, that's all." Just as zombies are attracted to the shopping mall by their memory and instinct, so do the human beings. Four survivors find the mall a perfect place that provides them with both security and material needs, as Stephen says to his fiancé Francine (Gaylen Ross),

"You should see all the great stuff we got, Frannie. All kinds of stuff. This place is terrific. It really is. It's perfect!" Later, other survivors, a violent bike gang, outside the mall also "remember" what the shopping mall used to provide "the great stuff." They soon break into the mall and proceed to loot it ("Hey, you in the mall. You just fucked up real bad! We don't like people who don't share."), which ultimately enables the zombies to come in and destroys the refuge altogether. As in *Night of the Living Dead*, this film also poignantly shows where the fatal danger comes from: zombies are killed and burned by the humans; but the real danger to humans is from other humans, who in the sequel readily tear down the secured mall entrance to take things by force. The film depicts both zombies and humans in the mall share a common feature: they were consumers before the disaster happened; and they still are in a fundamental sense still consumers who find the shopping mall attractive and "terrific."

It is interesting that the element of ordinariness in Romero's zombie films is closely connected to particularly American anxieties. *Night of the Living Dead* is heavily inspired by the turbulent times around the year 1968, namely the Vietnam War and the civil rights movements (Poole, 197-200). The American public watched the horrific images of war in Vietnam on television and experienced political assassinations, violent riots, and cruel suppressions of the riots, promoting "the view that America was on the edge of a violent cultural civil war" (Phillips, 89). The neighbors suddenly becoming monsters and attacking others, human flesh and blood everywhere, soldiers, cops, and sheriff's posse shooting civilians-turned-monsters, and black man mistakenly killed by white vigilante—all these scenes from *Night of the Living Dead* evoke images of the War in Vietnam and civil unrest that shocked viewers during the 1960s. Especially for the

younger generations, their mood at that time was defined by the rise and decline of

countercultural movements such as anti-war protests, Civil Rights movements, student

movements, and hippies. A "youth revolution," which aspired to overturning the

institutions of existing society and making something new, became divided and began to

dissolve in 1968. As Kendall R. Phillips noted, "The year saw an increase in violence,

divisiveness, and an increasingly bitter and cynical sense that all the dreams of revolution

were dissipating" (Phillips, 88).[59] The nihilistic narrative of *Night of the Living Dead*, in

which almost everyone in the farmhouse is either killed or turned into a zombie, and the

sole survivor is shot dead at the end, resonates with the "bitter and cynical sense" felt by

the younger generation in 1968: the old violent social order, represented by the ruthless

posse and military operation, was finally restored.

Whereas the anxieties aroused by *Night of the Living Dead* were related with the

social unrest, especially racial conflict and the dissolution of counterculture movements

in the late 1960s, the anxieties in *Dawn of the Dead* point to the nature of consumer

capitalism in the 1970s. Many critics and scholars have pointed out the satiric nature of

the film about the consumer capitalism (Horne 1992; Harper 2002; Bishop 2010), or, in

Shaviro's words, "capitalism's logic of endless consumption and ever-expanding

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[59] In a recent documentary film about the relationship between *Night of the Living Dead* and the social context in the sixties, *Year of the Living Dead* (2013), Romero also connected the film to the collective anger and disappointment in the sixties: "I had read the novel called *I Am Legend* by Richard Matheson. And it seemed to me that it was about revolution underneath. We were, you know, also very aware of the time and, you know, the sort of anger in the sixties. … There was good deal of sort of anger. You know, I think mostly the sixties didn't work. You know, we thought we have changed the world, or we were part of some sort of reform that was gonna make things better. And all of a sudden, it wasn't any better, wasn't any different. So I think there was bit of rage, bit of disappointment. So I've invented these characters which in my mind were just ghouls. The dead are coming back to life: that's the revolution, that's the big thing that everybody is missing."

accumulation" (Shaviro 1993, 94). Changing the location from an isolated farmhouse to a huge shopping mall, Romero could develop the survival story in a larger context of American consumerist culture. But the film is not a superficial criticism of consumer capitalism but a delicate analysis of the limits of the pleasures of consumption. The four survivors in the mall at first revel in taking any item they want to use without any restraint, and the shopping mall becomes a Land of Cockayne in the midst of catastrophe, where all their needs and desires are almost instantly fulfilled. These desires include not just enjoying consumer goods but also the yearning for violence and for male bonding. SWAT members Roger and Peter use shopping as a practice of actual battle. Before and after the shopping, they always study the map, discuss the escape plan, and kill zombies during the mission. Peter, who at an early moment in the film shed tears in killing the zombified Puerto Ricans, becomes accustomed to kill zombies and enjoys it. The three male survivors, Peter, Roger, and Stephen, build a male bonding experience in their shopping/killing missions, which causes Francine to feel isolated and estranged. "Nobody cares about my vote," she complains. Earlier in the film, the helicopter pilot Stephen, who has terrible aim, does not get along with Peter and Roger, but he ultimately joins them after he actively practices shooting and reading maps. Just as in J. G. Ballard's novel *Kingdom Come*, which makes a strong connection between consumer culture and violence, this film portrays how a traditionally female act of shopping turns into a masculine activity of procuring supplies, killing enemies, and building manly bonds. In other words, the shopping mall in the post-apocalyptic setting becomes a convenient space for realizing otherwise impossible male fantasies: they do battle in the mall, they stuff several packets of bills into knapsacks at a bank, they pick up various kinds of guns

at a gun shop, and risk their lives running through zombies. It is thus no surprise that the predominantly male bike gang wants to do the same thing in this shopping mall.

Yet this multiple pleasure of shopping, killing and bonding does not last long. As time passes, material abundance loses its allure, and the secure status of the mall needs no more violence to keep it safe, male bond becomes broken when Roger, the one of the more conventionally masculine characters, dies, and boredom kicks instantly in. After this point, the relationship between the survivors get worse, as the end of pleasure brings new conflict. One noteworthy scene depicts Peter, Stephen, and Francine sitting around the dinner table. The TV set is on, but it receives no signal. Francine angrily says to Stephen, "There hasn't been a broadcast for three days. Why don't you give it up?" She throws down her silverware, stomps over to the TV, turns it off, and returns to the table. Then Stephen stands up, moves to the set and clicks it back on. Peter watches them sheepishly. Their refuge is a comfortable suburban middle class house with refrigerator, TV, sofa, lamps, and silverware. The three people have become a family of sorts with all kinds of material comforts, but they are unable to communicate to one another. Francine says to the two men, "What have we done to ourselves?" Just after this scene of domestic conflict, the next scene shows the bike gangs planning to raid the mall. The consumer's haven is not safe both from inside and outside. Although the material abundance is procured, humans cannot live securely at all. This is not just the limit of consumer culture, but also the limit posed by conflict between human beings. As in *Night of the Living Dead*, the ultimate threat in this film comes not from zombies but from living humans: the psychological anxieties inside the human group and the physical conflict among different human groups.

Day of the Dead (1985) also addresses cultural atmosphere of the Reagan era in the 1980s, when Cold War with Soviet Union continued and macho male action heroes played by Sylvester Stallone and Arnold Schwarzenegger became popular. The film uncompromisingly goes against the aggressively nationalistic, right-wing atmosphere in its crazed depiction of military-science complex. The soldiers in the underground bunker are another kind of monsters, sadistically killing zombies not for their own survival but just for fun. They are also overridingly misogynist and male chauvinist, continually making sexual threats against the only female in the complex, the scientist Dr. Bowman (Lori Cardille), and bullying another soldier Miguel (Anthony Dileo Jr.), who is also husband of Bowman. It is Miguel, who at the end of the film opens the gate of the bunker and sacrifices himself to the zombie horde. The two scientists in the group search for the solution to zombie outbreak under the protection of the soldiers. Unlike their military partners, the lead scientist, Dr. Logan (Richard Liberty), is so dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge that he appears to enjoy researching zombies for its own sake, rather than with the goal of finding a cure. Obsessively trying to solve the mechanism of zombie behavior, he secretly feed the corpses of the soldiers to his specimen zombie, whom he affectionately calls "Bub." Although he clashes with the soldiers over how to find a solution to the catastrophe, the soldiers and scientist are in fact the same: they are little better than monsters who act in ways that are violent and cruel or otherwise inhuman, thus ultimately bring about catastrophe from the inside.

In Romero's films, as we have seen, there exists a structural consistency to the narrative. It could be formulated as simple as this: 'disorder – order – disorder'. Each film starts with 'disorder,' namely the zombie attack. In *Night of the Living Dead*, the

zombie phenomenon was reported "two days beforehand" and affects "the eastern third

of this nation." In both *Dawn of the Dead* and *Day of the Dead*, the whole country has

been already overrun by the zombie epidemic. The film then turns from establishing

'disorder' to the portrayal of 'order,' that the survivors manage to achieve. In *Night of the*

Living Dead, seven survivors are boarded themselves up in a farmhouse; in *Dawn of the*

Dead, four survivors find a shelter at a shopping mall; in *Day of the Dead,* a dozen

survivors live relatively securely in an underground military bunker. The main narrative

in each film builds on the situation of this "order." But in every film "order" is ultimately

overturned and the zombie horde enters the protected zone. The protection provided by

the farmhouse, the shopping mall, and even the underground bunker breaks down not

because of zombies but because of conflicts between humans. The farmhouse in *Night of*

the Living Dead would have been safer if Ben and Harry did not fight each other; the

shopping mall in *Dawn of the Dead* becomes the site of a rampage by the bikers; the iron

underground bunker in *Day of the Dead* is opened to the zombies by a bullied, suicidal

soldier. This structure repeats itself again in Romero's 2005 zombie film, *Land of the*

Dead. The world is in 'disorder' by zombie epidemic, while part of Pittsburgh is

relatively safe with rivers and electric fences. But this "order" is finally disrupted when

humans in the city become divided against each other and when the zombies, developing

a basic intellect along with rage toward humans, march toward the city.[60] In Romero's

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[60] It is noteworthy that Romero has depicted a sort of evolution of zombies. Beginning with *Dawn of the Dead*, where one character observes that zombie has "memory" or remembering ability, Romero has developed this motif. In *Day of the Dead*, a zombie named Bub remembers his former musical taste (Beethoven's Symphony No. 9), acquires basic intellectual understanding by training, and even obtains emotion (he shoots and kills Rhodes as a revenge for the killing of his 'teacher/father' figure, Dr. Logan). In *Land of the Dead*, this evolution spreads to the zombie horde around the city. Zombies are becoming able to divide good people from the bad. It seems that this is closely related to Romero's gradual depiction of zombies as human

zombie narratives, unlike earlier zombie films like *White Zombie*, the state of "disorder"

occupies the central position, while human "order" is unstable and is always on the verge

of destruction. It should be emphasized that this narrative structure, this anti-humanist

view that indicates strong skepticism towards the essential goodness of human nature is

also predominant in contemporary zombie apocalypse.

Romero's subversion of order in his zombie films has also extends in many

respects to a critique of social prejudices. Indeed, inversions of social prejudice are

common in his films. The racial hierarchy, for example, is constantly disrupted. Ben in

Night of the Living Dead, who is black, is the most reliable and sympathetic character in

the film. He is resourceful, confident, brave, and it is he who turns the house into a

fortress. But while Ben is the most articulate and the most intelligent of the people in the

farmhouse, the white characters are by comparison nervous, panic-stricken, and

incompetent. Ben tells off a bigoted survivor, Harry, "Now get the hell down in the cellar.

You can be the boss down there. I'm boss up here." He is even described, if ambiguously,

as symbolically involved with white woman, Barbara. He and Barbara first finds each

other in the farmhouse, and in one scene, he takes off her coat, because he remembers

that she said, "It's hot in here, hot!" and slips on her feet the shoes he finds in the closet,

because she lost her shoes while fleeing from the zombie. Although Ben is shot dead at

the end, the film delivers that event not as symbolic punishment but as ironic social

criticism. Peter, the black protagonist in *Dawn of the Dead*, also shows leadership

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victims. Zombies have become objects of hunting (*Night of the Living Dead*), abuse (*Dawn of the Dead*), experiment (*Day of the Dead*), and violent spectacle (*Land of the Dead*). In Romero's world, zombies are successively depicted not as murderers but as either victims or the oppressed. It is humans that Romero has located in the position of abusers, attackers, and exploiters. It is in this sense that we might read Romero's narrative of human vs. the zombie as the horror version of Hegel's master vs. slave narrative.

qualities – he is handy, realistic, practical, and understanding. Unlike Ben, he escapes from the mayhem with the pregnant white woman Francine at the end of the film, which symbolically suggests a new family. John, the black helicopter pilot in *Day of the Dead*, is not a leader, but a resourceful helper and an ideological opponent of the soldier-scientist complex. He saves the white, female scientist Sarah and, with another white, male technician McDermott, escapes from the hellish bunker. The ending suggests that the three will form a radical polygamous family. In Romero's films, black males are portrayed as the most reliable man of resources, which contrasts with the mainstream images at the time.

The inverted racial order corresponds to the inverted sexual order. All three films start with woman protagonist. They are either chased by zombies or woken from nightmares, and often repress some kind of traumatic experience. Aside from *Night of the Living Dead*, where the female protagonist is inactive and passive all the way to the end of the film, the role of the female characters changes in the other two films. Francine in *Dawn of the Dead* is nurturing and caring at the beginning, but as the film goes on she tries to do more than the jobs traditionally reserved for women, claiming her right to do her part in making the mall secure.

> FRANCINE
> *… I don't wanna be treated any differently than you treat each other. And I'm not gonna be den mother for you guys. I wanna know what's going on. And I wanna have something to say about the plans. There's four of us, okay?*
>
> STEPHEN
> *Jesus, Fran.*
>
> PETER
> *Fair eno*ugh.

Here, it is noticeable that while Francine's fiancé Stephen responds irritatingly to her declaration (and Roger says nothing), only Peter understands her situation. Then Francine demands to learn another male skill: "I wanna learn how to fly that helicopter. If anything happens to you, we have to be able to fly out of here." Again, only Peter perceives the reasonableness of her demand, saying, "She's right, man." After this, she becomes more equal with other men by learning conventionally male activities (how to shoot, how to fly a helicopter, etc.), while the most stereotypically masculine character, Roger, literally turns into a baby in a stroller. It is no coincidence that Francine, now steering the helicopter, and Peter escape from the destroyed mall at the end. Sarah in *Day of the Dead* is more bold, daring, and a professional. She argues fiercely with Captain Rose and finds out Dr. Logan's secret. Standing opposite of the military-science complex, she represents the possibilities of a new order that is not based upon mad violence (military) and mad knowledge (science). Again, the black pilot John is depicted as her most credible helper, advisor, and fellow escapee.

It is worth noticing that as the scale of zombie epidemic grows bigger and bigger, the role of women and blacks also becomes more important and decisive. As white women and black men take the position of symbolic (sexual, marital) partners of a new order beyond *status quo*, the white male partners are depicted as violent, incompetent, and threatening: Harry is shot dead by Ben, comes back as a zombie, and is devoured by his daughter (*Night of the Living Dead*); Francine's fiancé Stephen becomes a zombie and leads the other zombies to Peter and Francine (*Dawn of the Dead*); and Sarah's husband Miguel feeds himself to zombies and allows them to destroy the bunker (*Day of*

the Dead). No traditional couple survives intact in Romero's zombie trilogy, though the new relations other than the normative type are suggested at the end.

Romero transformed the mythical Haitian figure of the zombie into an American monster that is resonant with post-World War II American history and culture (Dillard 1987; Wood 2003). By reinventing the zombie narrative as an apocalyptic survival story, Romero opened a new space in which the inversion of social order could be provocatively reimagined. As he made the 'living dead' trilogy between the late 1960s and mid-1980s, Romero not only opened a new way of portraying the figure of the zombie but also used the historical and cultural atmosphere of America as a politically significant subtext for his films. He overturned conventional racial stereotypes and went against the dominant gender images. Romero made the zombie narrative into potent medium of social critique, exposing the social anxieties and fears of the period.[61] It was Romero's films that have shaped the way we think about zombie narratives in the present: in a catastrophic situation, in which governmental and legal institutions have collapsed, any kind of order is possible and even an inverted order becomes desirable. In a world in which everything familiar has to be reconfigured, traditional gender roles, racial prejudices, class consciousness, and even the definition of humanness should be rethought. Romero's films feature motifs that have become regarded as typical of present-day zombie narratives: survivors finding shelter in a temporarily safe place, a racially mixed survivors, strong female characters, broken marital bonds, interracial relationships, hysterical male characters, violent militarism or vigilantism, human conflicts that causes the ultimate implosion of the community, incompetent authority,

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[61] *Night of the Living Dead* was at first shown in Pittsburgh only. The film got its critical as well as commercial acclaim in Europe in 1969. Thanks to its European success, the film reopened nationally in America in 1970 (Phillips, 82).

evolving zombies, ambiguous hopes at the end, and so on. After Romero, zombie narratives become a form of thought experiment as it were: what conditions turn the present situation into a "collective nightmare" (Wood, 70); how might the current order collapse; what sort of men might rise up as leaders; what characters lead certain type of people die first; which human qualities are most resilient under catastrophic condition; what makes an individual a human being or a monster; what difference is there between humans and zombies. Contemporary zombie apocalypse re-engages these questions through the thought experiment of the zombie pandemic. Although Romero's legacy still casts a long shadow, the post-Romero zombie film focuses on new kinds of threats, fears, and dangers. It is this area we now turn to.

The Rise of Global Zombie Apocalypse: Globalized Fear and American Anxiety

The return of the zombie horde that started in the early 2000s, with the instant success of films and comics such as Paul W. S. Anderson's *Resident Evil* (2002), Danny Boyle's *28 Days Later* (2002), Robert Kirkman's *The Walking Dead* (2003-present), Edgar Wright's *Shaun of the Dead* (2004). As described at the outset of the chapter, the recent zombies have not just roamed over the film screen but also spread into various fields of novel, news report, scholarly research, video game, and political demonstrations. The contemporary popularity of the zombie, or its "remarkably adaptive polysemy" in diverse areas, underscores its versatility as a metaphor that can link collective fear and anxiety to many dimensions of sociopolitical contexts (Muntean and Payne, 255).

Although the motifs introduced by Romero—cannibalism, contagion, living corpse, and ordinariness—still take up a large share of the present zombie narrative, the zombie narratives of the 2000s have undergone some major shifts that are distinguished

from the previous ones: The causes of zombification are explained not as a mysterious

local legend or a curse of the dead but scientifically as a viral infection (*In the Flesh, 28*

Days Later, Resident Evil); the object of zombie cannibalism includes not just human

flesh but animals (*The Walking Dead*); the zombies acquire a basic level of cognitive

ability which develops further into emotional expression and moral judgment (*Land of*

the Dead). Yet the most prominent change in the characteristics of zombies is its

intensified speed and power.[62] Recent zombies tend to be swift, powerful, and ferocious

predators that barely give human survivors time to react to their attacks (Zack Snyder's

Dawn of the Dead, *28 Days Later,* Marc Forster's *World War Z*). A key example of this

transformation comes at the beginning of Snyder's 2004 remake of *Dawn of the Dead,*

when Luis (Justin Louis) and Ana (Sarah Polley) are woken at dawn by their young

neighbor Vivian, who is standing in their bedroom. As soon as Luis approaches, she

instantly bites his throat. Ana is able to pull her off of Luis and locks her out of the room,

but Luis dies from blood loss, then reanimates and attacks her. The whole scene takes

only about a minute. In contrast to the speedy attack of Vivian and the quick reanimation

of Luis, Romero's zombies in his original *Dawn of the Dead* are tremendously slow in

their speed and reanimation time. After Roger was bitten, for example, it takes two or

three days when he finally comes back to a zombie. During the time, Roger could still

talk with the other characters, who in turn had time to mourn the impending

zombification of their friend. The quick and ferocious zombies rob humans of this time of

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[62] Peter Dendle argues that the rise of the speedy, dexterous, energetic, and even intelligent
zombie type corresponds to the rise of so-called the "Millennial Generation," those who were
born around the time MTV was introduced in 1981 and raised immersed in video games, the
Internet, and text message. Being accustomed to fast images and multitasking, they are well
known for short attention spans. The millennial zombie's unconventional features are "uniquely
situated to haunt the imaginations of today's youth" (Dendle, 177).

mourning; the survivors have to kill their infected loved ones as soon as possible, or else be attacked by them after they have reanimated—this is a tip Selena gives to Jim in *28 Days Later.*

The quickening of zombie's speed and reanimation time also serves to introduce one of the quintessential elements of contemporary zombie narrative: the ceaseless migration of human survivors. Facing the horde of zombies that rush at them with wild abandon, humans have barely a chance to procure a safe space that can guarantee their lives for even a short amount of time. Whereas the humans in Romero's zombie films can, if only temporarily, settle down at a shopping mall or an underground bunker for several months, those in the 21st century zombie films are mostly described as fleeing nomads.[63] Thus, many contemporary zombie stories take the form of a 'road movie': Humans are depicted as being mostly on the road, searching for a provisional haven in which to rest their exhausted bodies for a day or two; then they travel again worrying about "the known unknown."[64] This motif of the interminable journey provides the recent zombie narratives with an effective mechanism for imagining the aftermath of the destruction of the societal infrastructure we have known. Following the band of survivors, the audience experiences a strange feeling by seeing in an unfamiliar light the urban landscapes with which they are now familiar. In *28 Days Later*, when Jim walks on

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[63] Of course, this description only applies to the later two films of Romero's trilogy except *Night of the Living Dead*. Although one of the representative example of the zombie renaissance examples, Kirkman's *The Walking Dead* also is an exception to this trend, for it faithfully follows Romero's zombie tropes. Yet the theme of continual migration holds a central place in *The Walking Dead*. This is not because of the speedy zombies and the quick reanimation, but because of the conflicts with other human groups.

[64] The phrase is from the former US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld in a 2002 news briefing: "Reports that say there's—that something hasn't happened are always interesting to me, because as we know, there are known knowns; there are things that we know that we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns, the ones we don't know we don't know."

a vacant London street, or in *The Walking Dead*, when Rick Grimes, riding on a horse, enters the empty highway to Atlanta, the absence of human life from these normally crowded and noisy spaces evokes an uncanny, ominous feeling. But, at the same time, scenes depicting deserted urban streets, half-rotten human bodies, and anarchic human groups remind us, as the first scene of *28 Days Later* suggests, of the TV news reports on wars, demonstrations, natural disasters, and terrorist attacks that have becoming more common nowadays. With the motif of constantly migrating survivors that travel around the various parts of devastated landscape, the millennial zombie narratives furnish us with a foreboding sense of ambiguity, the feeling that the world we have known becomes at once unfamiliar and familiar.

This ambiguous feeling is accompanied by the increased, global scale of the zombie attacks, which is another important change in the genre. Whereas the early zombie narratives were set almost exclusively on the island of Haiti and Romero's zombies were portrayed within the geographic and cultural context of the United States, the millennial zombie narratives relate a tale of global apocalypse. For instance, *28 Days Later* is set mainly in Britain, but suggests, through the footage of riot scenes collected from various countries, that the conditions of the zombie plague—precisely, "rage virus"—exist outside Britain; the zombie virus in *Resident Evil* is created and spread at a transnational pharmaceutical company called the Umbrella Corporation; Max Brook's best-selling zombie novel, *World War Z* (2006), is based on a fictional interviews performed by a United Nations agent traveling through many countries that cover all continents except Antarctica.

One noteworthy characteristic that has emerged with the expanded scale of the

21st century zombie narratives is the explicit representation of a completely ruined

civilization, or the post-apocalyptic background. The genre has now become identified

with a post-apocalyptic setting, which incorporates the breakdown of social infrastructure,

violent conflicts with other surviving humans, the inevitable overcoming of order by

disorder in the form of the destruction of whatever shelter the characters find, and the

ultimate survival of the fittest (Bishop 2009, 20). All of these elements and motifs can be

found in Romero's films as we've seen, but in contrast to previous zombie films they

have become central features of the narrative and lead to more graphic depictions of

violence. In *Dawn of the Dead*, the breakdown of civilization is suggested only by the

depiction of deserted roadside restaurant and the shopping mall full of zombies, while in

Day of the Dead, the post-apocalyptic situation is relayed in the film's second scene,

when a helicopter carrying Sarah, Miguel, John, and Bill lands in an apparently empty

city in Florida only to find a horde of the dead walk towards them. The camera cuts from

currency bills scattering on a street to an alligator coming out of a bank, indicating that

the civilization has fallen apart completely. After this five-minute scene, the story unfolds

exclusively in an isolated underground bunker until a brief final scene. Contrary to such a

restricted and confined setting, the 2013 zombie blockbuster film *World War Z* takes the

audience to many regions of the world, from Philadelphia and South Korea to Jerusalem

and Wales, showing images of chaotic downtowns, a ruined American military base,

deserted rural towns, and so on. Millennial zombie narratives have become identified

with global apocalypse.

Technical factors such as the rapid improvement of CGI technologies and the

vastly increased budgets have obviously influenced the enlarged scale, but we can also

uncover some sociocultural factors behind the renaissance of zombies and the rise of global zombie apocalypses since the 2000s. First and foremost, fear and anxiety have become an essential part of contemporary life. Few periods have witnessed such widespread fears and anxieties as our times. In a globally connected world, news of infectious disease, terrorist attack, natural disaster, climate change, and social unrest is so common that nobody can be outside of it. Snyder's *Dawn of the Dead* depicts how fast the uneventful everyday life could become a nightmare. Ana wakes up one morning to find out that the peaceful suburban community has turned into a battlefield: a young neighbor attacks her husband, her husband tries to kill her, a neighbor points a gun at her, an ambulance hits the man, looters are running around, and the sky is full of smoke from an unknown explosion. But this chaos, fear, and violence Ana observes are disturbingly similar to world news footages that we see almost every day. Max Brooks also imagines the undead world as chaos:

> When the living dead triumph, the world degenerates into utter chaos. All social order evaporates. Those in power, along with their families and associates, hole up in bunkers and secure areas around the country. … With the total collapse of law and order, small hands of individuals emerge to assert their authority. Looters, bandits, and common thugs prey on the survivors, taking what they want and indulging in whatever pleasure they can find. It is common at the end of any civilization to have one last massive party. … Isolated cities become open battlegrounds, with scattered groups of citizens fighting to defend barricaded areas from both ghouls and human renegades. … Casualties will continue to mount as many well-protected and well-supplied but weak-willed humans take their own lives out of sheer despair (Brooks 2003, 155-6).

Current global zombie apocalypse narratives capture this fear and anxiety in the form of the zombie disaster, although each zombie narrative focuses on different issues. *28 Days Later*, for example, taps into the fear that comes from the threat of global pandemics, such as AIDS, SARS, H5N1 (Avian Flu), anthrax, Ebola virus and other viral outbreaks.

The Walking Dead centers on the fear of anarchy in times of scant resources by depicting other surviving human groups as more threatening than the brainless zombies. As Kyle Bishop notes, "For lawless renegades, the only real sports left are slavery, torture, rape, and murder, which appease base appetites that cannot be satisfied by simply going to the mall" (Bishop 2009, 22). Romero's 2005 *Land of the Dead* focuses on the so-called 'illegal' immigration problem, which corresponds to the militarization of the US-Mexico border during the Bush administration. Zombies in the film are depicted as a dangerous Others or foreigners who might threaten our property and security, which is why they should be detained outside the fence.

The end of the world has become the ultimate social fear, and it is made all the more vivid by the current globalized world order. One essential element of globalization is its affirmation of openness and connectedness, which have become the central causes of insecurity in our times. Zygmunt Bauman writes, "On a globalized planet, populated by the forcibly 'opened' societies, security cannot be gained, let alone reliably assured, in one country or in a selected group of countries: not by their own means, and not independently of the state of affairs in the rest of the world" (Bauman 2006, 97). This openness and connectedness of globalized order produces not just positive outcomes such as flexible movement of capital, trade, investment, and knowledge but also negative ones such as the movement of viruses, contagious disease, violence, and terrorism. The progress of the good does not correspond to a defeat of evil. Rather "Good and Evil advance together, as part of the same movement" (Baudrillard 2002, 13). This is why zombies had not been popular in the 1980s and the 1990s, when the advancement of globalized world order along with the proliferation of neoliberal capitalism seemed to

create good economic outcomes as well as be politically unassailable: The Cold War was over, the Soviet Union had disintegrated, the Berlin Wall had fallen, Gulf War was won by coalition of global forces, economic growth was maintained, and so on. When people saw complacency and stability in their lives, zombies never fit the mood (Bishop 2009, 18). Zombies began to come back in the early 2000s, when the globalized order began to reveal its negative aspects: economic crises swept various regions, while neoliberal economic strategies provoked protests from the poor and the abandoned, and viral pandemics became reported more frequently in the media. The invincible power of America stirred up a backlash from the Muslim fundamentalists. Then came the September 11 attack in 2001 on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, which caused a serious sense of insecurity all over the world. Anxieties were more prevalent and insecure feeling was more tangible in the US, where the events of direct inland invasion had been almost unimaginable (Pearl Harbor had been always considered as an exception). Although many parts of the world already had direct experience of insecurity, but it was the first time that the US came to feel such an acute sense of vulnerability. Zombie films thus resonate with the widespread fear and anxiety of living in a ubiquitously connected, wide-open globalized world. They depict not only desolate urban streets and chaotic suburban areas but also migrating human survivors who lock themselves up from the ultraviolent attackers. In other words, in a zombie narrative, the predominant world order of openness and connectedness has been converted into a condition of closure, isolation, and alertness. In most zombie narratives since the 2000s, encountering others including zombies and humans is depicted less as a new hope or solidarity than as an amplification of the threat of fatal danger. In *28 Days Later*, for

instance, the protagonists' decision to respond to the radio broadcasting from the group of soldiers results in the death of Frank and a threat of rape for Selena and Hannah. In *The Walking Dead*, tragic events such as cutting off of Rick's hand, rape and torture of Michonne, and imprisonment of Glenn result from their search for a helicopter and encounter of the Woodbury gang led by cruel Governor.

Zombie apocalypse narratives resonate with the sense of insecurity and fear of others especially for Americans, who have experienced the traumatic events of 9/11, Hurricane Katrina, and War in Iraq in the 2000s. The terrorist attack of New York City in 2001 particularly looms large. Not having encountered a serious threat from other nations, except for the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor during the War II, Americans are deeply unsettled by the terrorism inflicted on the mainland. The explosive increase in zombie narratives since the 9/11 relate closely with this disturbing mood in America. As Bishop notes, "a post-9/11 audience cannot help but perceive the characteristics of zombie cinema through the filter of terrorist threats and apocalyptic reality" (Bishop 2009, 24). But the figure of the zombie represent more than the mere allusion of "terrorist threats."

The zombie has become a general metaphor of the Other, who threatens our peaceful lives, rapes our women, kills our fellow citizens, and threatens the freedom of our society. According to Noam Chomsky, popularity of zombie films in America reflects the nature of American country as "an unusually frightened country" (Kaufman 2014). Historically Americans have always feared that some terrible enemy might destroy them, and the only way that could subdue this fear was to find actual enemies and crush them. Chomsky argues that the list of these enemies continues from Indians and slaves to

Russian communists and Hispanic narco-traffickers. Zombies are an imagined enemy that is related with this collective fear. It is interesting in this vein that Susan Faludi's report that the most extraordinary response of American culture after 9/11 was to resuscitate old Western heroes as a way of symbolically compensating for America's wounded pride: "The post-9/11 commentaries were riddled with apprehensions that America was lacking in masculine fortitude, that the masses of weak-chinned BlackBerry clutchers had left the nation open to attack and wouldn't have the cojones for the confrontation ahead" (Faludi, 8). One needs a powerful masculine hero that can hunt and subdue the enemies that threaten America. So zombies are represented as the predominant Others that should be eliminated. As Gerry Canavan argues that as colonial narratives objectify natives under the gaze of colonialist subjects, zombie narratives establish the framework in which zombies are looked at as a mere object to be removed, while subjects—American viewers—have power of looking at them: "Zombies—lacking interior, lacking mind—cannot look; they are, for this reason, completely realized colonial objects. Zombies cannot be recognized, accommodated, or negotiated with; once identified, they must immediately killed" (Canavan, 437). Zombies now fulfill the role of the Other – they are the enemies of America that must be killed, or serve as "proxies for marginalized, unseen, and unwanted denizens" that should be kept off from our borders (Saunders 90). This attitude of dominating the inferior under the sovereign power of the superior, which is one central element of zombie narratives, is after all an imperial viewpoint, or what William Appleman Williams argues as the typical American worldview, "empire as a way of life" (Williams, 14). This attitude is sarcastically portrayed in Romero's *Land of the Dead* in scenes where human survivors in Pittsburgh capture zombies and use them as

objects of entertainment.[65] In *The Walking Dead,* the gang led by Governor uses zombies and other humans as a part of gladiator-style combats. In the 2006 zombie comedy, *Fido,* the humans, who finally won "Zombie Wars," invent special collars with accompanying remote controls to control the zombies' hunger for flesh so as to use them as slaves or servants. In these films, zombies are depicted as the colonized Other, who must be either eliminated or controlled only to serve humans.

Beyond the Pleasure Principle (1):
***28 Days Later* and the Ideological Representation of the Realist Subject**

Yet the most outstanding characteristic of the millennial zombie narrative would be that it focuses more on humans than on the zombies. In most of the recent zombie narratives, the zombies, as might be expected, still function as a plot device, by means of which all the critical motifs of the narrative can be developed. But the emphasis of the narrative has moved onto the behavior of humans from the zombie itself. The millennial zombie narrative puts humans in an extremely dangerous situation and explores the complex, unexpected, abrupt, or sometimes anticipated, human behaviors that result. On this basis, various political, philosophical, and sociological questions are, directly or indirectly, raised. Whereas *White Zombie*, what lies at the center is the never-before-seen figure of the zombie, Romero's trilogy is based on the relationship between the zombie and humans, the interactions between them. They suggest how the human reaction to the inhuman or non-human Other reminds us of something historical, and perhaps how humans and zombies might be fundamentally similar. But the recent zombie narratives focus more on the human behaviors under severe, unimaginable pressure. For example,

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[65] This idea of zombies used as playthings or experiment objects has been continued in Romero's works. In *Dawn of the Dead,* zombies are 'abused' by the bike gang, and in *Day of the Dead,* human soldiers and scientists keep zombies in a cave and use them as a biological experiment.

they ask: In times of civilizational collapse, will humans still act in a human way? In situations in which survival becomes the sole purpose of life, will humans still maintain a democratic way of life? Which group is more dangerous, the zombies or humans? How far would you go to protect yourself or your family? Will human groups still live peacefully when social order crumbles? Will democracy survive in the barren post-apocalyptic future? Is it wrong to depend on a charismatic, authoritarian leader? Are our cultural practices immune from the rapid change of external circumstances?

To most of these questions, the millennial zombie narratives offer negative answers. What they usually portray are the small human groups or societies that are made up of survivors of the zombie plague. Cities stand abandoned; zombies lurk everywhere; death, disease and starvation are pandemic and social and political infrastructures have crumbled. Being alert all the time against the incessant attack from zombies, the group has to focus entirely on its preservation. Aside from zombies, rival human groups are depicted as more dangerous and threatening, because people need food, water, weapons, drugs, cars, and other supplies to live. So humans become wolves to other humans and kill others simply to take possession of supplies. It is easier to kill brainless zombies than it is to deal with a clever, cunning, and greedy human adversary. For the protagonists in these narratives, safety takes priority over any other concern, and the group is often depicted as needing a strong, decisive, and, resourceful leader to preserve itself. Most of the characters look to the leader to protect them from zombies and other humans, and hopefully enable them to escape the condition of constant danger. In this world, where preserving one's life can justify almost any act, there is little room for humanitarian sentiments or rule of law. The millennial zombie narratives are in this sense a political

allegory of the fate of democracy in the global era. Recent zombie narratives depict the collapse of political institutions and the economic system, which forces their characters to adopt a realist ethic in a world without any kind of governing authority.

From this predicament arises a particular type of human subject: the realist. The realist is someone whose act is not based upon moral norms or utopian plans, but upon the particularity of situations and events. The aim of the realist is to actually solve a problem, without depending on certain ideal or legal principles that have no actual empirical basis. Raymond Geuss defines the realist attitude as follows:

> First, political philosophy must be realist. That means, roughly speaking, that it must start from and be concerned in the first instance not with how people ought ideally (or ought "rationally") to act, what they ought to desire, or value, the kind of people they ought to be, etc., but, rather, with the way the social, economic, political, etc., institutions *actually* operate in some society at some given time, and what *really* does move human beings to act in given circumstances (Geuss, 9; emphases added).

The essential element of the realist attitude resides in these "actually" and "really." So the realist's dictum is something like, "Don't look just at what they say, think, believe, but at what they actually do, and what *actually happens* as result" (Geuss, 10; emphasis in the original). It does not mean that the realist only accepts cold facts and excludes the imagination or principles. The realist considers the imagination or principle in relation to how they operate in reality. As we discussed in the previous chapter, the realist attitude becomes increasingly relevant in situations in which resources become limited and norms no longer hold, as in wars, economic depressions, disaster, catastrophe, and other examples of social upheaval. In such circumstances, one's thought and actions are more strongly limited according to actual material conditions, while previous attitudes or what was thought to be common sense start to lose power. If there is no norms people obey, it

is foolish or dangerous look up to them. Under catastrophic conditions, in which human actions are perpetually limited by external hardship, the imagination of post-apocalyptic zombie narratives force us to confront the bare face of reality.

It is useful to contrast the realist with Nietzsche's 'the last man.' For Nietzsche, the last man in the nineteenth century Europe refers to the type of man whose exclusive purpose is to secure one's own small comfort and happiness:

> The earth has become small, and on it hops the last man, who makes everything small. … 'We have invented happiness,' say the last men, and they blink. They have left the regions where it was hard to live, for one needs warmth. One still loves one's neighbor and rubs against him, for one needs warmth (Nietzsche, 17).

The last men were the peculiar type of humans optimized for bourgeois ideal of individual complacency and a life of consumerism. They were satisfied with everything that is proper and moderate: moderate material comfort, moderate happiness, moderate warmth, and moderate entertainment. Anything requires "too much exertion" has to be evaded, even if it is gratifying (Nietzsche, 18). If the last man seeks to be comfortable above all and avoids harshness, the realist accepts that existence can demand cruelty and coldness. Although he wants to be comfortable, he realizes that it is no longer possible to attain comfort and so readily embraces and adapts to life's hardships. Whereas the last man can choose self-satisfaction, the realist has nothing to look forward to but extending his life or improving his chances of survival.

This focus on survival tends to work into nihilistic endings without the experience of catharsis. Like other post-apocalyptic narratives, zombie narratives do not end with a heroic resolution or a promising hope. The zombies often cannot be entirely eliminated, and vicious humans are found everywhere; there is hardly anything to do other than

escaping from this mayhem without any chance of permanent settlement. This lack of resolution and closure is emblematic of millennial zombie narratives. Such a feature however allows a space for criticism of our current hegemonic way of life. In zombie films, anyone who holds onto his previous values is rapidly destroyed either by zombies or by himself. The portrayal of the realist in the recent zombie films, comics, and novels can be interpreted as an anticipation of, and a call for, a new monstrous subjectivity in the age of post-democracy yet to come.

Both *28 Days Later* and *The Walking Dead* portray the realist subject in the setting of the post-apocalyptic world plagued by zombies. The two texts depict the conditions for the emergence of forms of subjectivity that are different from those of the everyday experience of consumer capitalism and liberal democracy. The crisis of social collapse renders normal, civilized behavior obsolete. They thus force us to face the possibility that liberal democratic society would be ill-equipped to cope with harsh situations on which the post-apocalyptic narratives are commonly based.

The British film director Danny Boyle's hugely successful post-apocalyptic film *28 Days Later* (2002) tells the story of a few survivors search for a safe shelter after a terrible virus has swept over Britain. In this film, the monsters are not the Romero-type zombies but half-dead humans called "the Infected," who are contaminated by a virus that transformed them into an uncontrollable, devouring rage. Incessantly growling, the red-eyed infected run at humans and bite them like rabid dogs. Unlike the zombies, they are neither undead nor cannibalistic. They attack humans at night, bite their necks, and make them into the Infected as well. The first scene guides us the origin of the virus. Camera shows the footages of graphic human brutality in civil protests and police

suppressions all over the world. Then it turns out that the violent video images are provided to captive chimpanzees in a medical laboratory in a university. When a group of animal liberation activists break into the lab to free the chimpanzees, a scientist interrupts and warns them that the chimpanzees are infected with a "rage" virus: "The animals are contagious. The infection is in their blood and saliva. One bite … Stop! … Stop! You've no idea!" Not listening to the scientist's warnings, the activists move toward the cage to liberate the chimps from the cruel psychology experiment. All of a sudden, when one activist opens a cage, a chimpanzee immediately attacks her, leading her to infect everyone in the lab. In less than 28 days, the entire island of Britain, and possibly the world, has been infected. The efficiently brief first sequence of the film strongly implies that before the actual rage virus infects its victims, the world is already full of various kinds of rage, i.e. police fighting civilian demonstrators and animal activists taking action against the anti-humane science, so the global catastrophe in fact originates not in chimpanzees but in humans who are violent, aggressive, and brutal in their nature. The skeptical perspective towards humans that the first sequence embodies is repeated first in the form of the Infected, and then the surviving humans themselves.

The film's basic plot involves the exodus of Jim (Cillian Murphy) and Selena (Naomie Harris) across Britain in hopes of joining a group who declare they have found a cure to the virus that has destroyed the nation. Meeting other survivors Frank (Brendan Gleeson) and his teen-age daughter Hannah (Megan Burns), along the way, they travel north from London to find a small company of soldiers, whose radio broadcast claims that they have "the answer to infection." The four survivors board Frank's cab in search of the signal source and, throughout the trip, bond with one another in various situations.

The film relates that the bond is not just strengthened by the mutual help they give each other in escaping from the infected, but also by a shopping spree they enjoy. In homage to Romero's shopping mall in *Dawn of the Dead*, one short sequence depicts the four survivors breaking into an empty grocery store. With cheerful, warm electric melodies as background music, the four survivors instantly become shoppers and spend an enjoyable time together for the first time since they have met. Just as the act of shopping allows for bonding experiences in *Dawn of the Dead*, we see in the film examples of both male bonding (middle-aged Frank advises Jim how to choose a good single malt whiskey) and female bonding (Selena and Hannah pick up chocolates together). They become a symbolic family that shops groceries together. This brief sequence not only conveys the emotional bond between the survivors but also signifies that they are still 'human' in caring for each other. It is interesting that in both *Dawn of the Dead* and *28 Days Later*, the shopping scene allows the audience to revel in consumption. Only once consumerism is uncoupled from affluence, can it appear ecstatic and euphoric. For only in a post-apocalyptic setting when there's no possibility of capitalism, consumerism can be 'pure,' meaning that humans limit shopping for their own purpose of surviving. They cannot and do not shop out of habit, or to display their wealth, or to accumulate objects for no practical purpose. To use Marx's term, in a time when 'exchange value' remains obsolete, shopping in the post-apocalyptic setting strictly corresponds to products' use value.

This flicker of happiness abruptly disappears when the four finally arrive at their destination, an alleged "answer" of salvation. Frank becomes infected when a drop of blood from a dead body falls into his eye. He is shot dead by the arriving soldiers, who

then take the remaining group to a fortified mansion under the command of Major Henry

West (Christopher Eccleston). Soon Jim realizes that the soldiers have no "answer" for

the infection; what they really want is women. As West confesses to Jim:

> *MAJOR WEST*
> *We fight off the Infected or we wait until they starve to death and then*
> *what? What do nine men do except wait to die themselves? I moved us*
> *from the blockade, I set the radio broadcasting, and I promised them*
> *women. Because women mean a future.*

From then on, the film centers on the struggle of Jim's group against the soldiers. The

ultimate conflict is about how far humans will go beyond ethical boundaries. While Jim's

group consists of normal, ethical subjects, Major West represents the ultra-realist subject

who believes that new times require a new ethics. Major West has no fantasies about the

good will of human beings and their readiness to help in the face of harsh reality. He

believes that human nature is fundamentally violent; as soon as the social order collapses,

humans return to their violent, animal instincts. For him, the Infected are not monsters.

Rather, they are the mirror images of humanity. Being a soldier, he must have seen

enough terror of wars in many regions and understood that every kind of unimaginable

thing happens when the world is turned upside down. Although his plan of providing his

soldiers a woman seems inhumane and insane, he must have known how women during

war times easily become sexual slaves for soldiers. Just as Japanese military provided

their soldiers with so-called 'comfort women' during World War II, Major West plans to

do the same. He seems very sincere when he talks of his plan to Jim. Unlike other

soldiers, he does not take pleasure in this scheme of allowing the women to be raped by

his soldiers, but accepts that it is the only way to keep his soldiers from madness. His

gesture suggests that he even wants some advice or help from Jim. It is easy to criticize

West's plan for its apparent insanity and inhumanity, but it is more useful when we try to

understand this plan as a part of a realist attitude. In one scene, humanist Sergeant Farrell

says: "If you look at the whole life of the planet, we, you know, Man has only been

around for a few blinks of an eye. So if the infection wipes us all out, that is a return to

normality." Major West snaps at him with a skeptical observation:

> MAJOR WEST
> *Tell me, Farrell, exactly why did you join the army in the first place? This is what I've seen in the four weeks since Infection. People killing people. Which is much what I saw in the four weeks before Infection, and the four weeks before that, and before that, and as far back as I care to remember, people killing people. Which to my mind puts us in a state of normality right now.*

West's observation actually rings true when we refer to human history. The British

philosopher John Gray might agree with West's view on human nature. As a radical

skeptic of human nature and its progress, Gray points out that human nature itself is not

progressive. Unlike science, moral values can too easily disintegrate as things go wrong.

In Gray's words:

> Science and technology are cumulative, whereas ethics and politics deal with recurring dilemmas. Whatever they are called, torture and slavery are universal evils; but these evils cannot be consigned to the past like redundant theories in science. They return under different names … Any reduction in universal evils is an advance in civilization. But, unlike scientific knowledge, the restraints of civilized life cannot be stored on a computer disc. They are habits of behavior, which once broken are hard to mend. Civilization is natural for humans, but so is barbarism (Gray 2013, 75).

If evils can always return, civilization is a fragile myth that conceals the barbaric side of

human beings. As we've already seen in previous chapters, J. G. Ballard depicts the

return of savage violence in the most civilized, wealthy, lively communities, and

Margaret Atwood portrays a more extreme neoliberal state for a future America, where

all kinds of trafficking and violence are needed to support the technocratic system.

Human civilization is so brittle and fragile that it easily turns into hell whenever

propelled by the right amount of disorder. Post-apocalyptic narratives are thus

straightforward in their function: they imagine such a catastrophe on a global scale,

enquire into possible outcomes, and force us to look again our world and culture in an

entirely new perspective.

Indeed, as a character Major West represents a unique subjectivity. In the genre of

zombie narratives, there has not appeared any other character like him. He is an ultimate

skeptic who thinks humans are no different from animals. He is a radical realist who

accepts that politics is typically a choice among conflicting evils and who can sacrifice

anything for the continuance of his group.

Being confronted by the danger posed by Major West to him and his friends, Jim

becomes like the officer. Escaping his execution, Jim runs back to the mansion to save

Selena and Hannah from rape. Utterly furious, he frees the infected soldier and sets him

on the other soldiers, and he himself saves Selena by killing her captor, Corporal

Mitchell. Every soldier including Major West is either killed or infected by the virus. In

this violently passionate sequence, Jim is depicted like one of the Infected, a speedy,

ferocious zombie almost wholly possessed by rage. Half naked, bare-footed, and running

quickly in the dark, he kills his enemies "in a heartbeat," and, appears, at least in the

moment of revenge, infected with the rage virus like the chimpanzees and the humans-

turned-monsters. Watching Jim cruelly kill Mitchell by gouging his eyes, even Selena is

so frightened by Jim that she grabs her machete. In this revenge sequence, Jim also

unconsciously follows Major West's realist outlook. In order to save Selena and Hannah

from the soldiers, he does anything that required to achieve his goal. In the film, this is

the only moment when viewers actually see Jim kill someone.[66] Jim's transformation

shows a troublesome paradox: if you want to save normality, you should be able to

overcome or transgress normality. If Jim sticks to his humanist principles, he would

never have been able to save his beloved friends. It is only when he becomes a monster,

that he is able to save his friends from other monsters. In this sense, Major West and Jim

are not very different from each other. Just as Major West lures women to his fortress to

save his soldiers—soldiers who have ability to kill the Infected and possibly to rebuild

civilization, Jim kills the soldiers to save his friends. The film characterizes Major West

and his soldiers being monsters, but it is important to note that the film also depicts Jim's

monstrosity.

Jim's change is interesting, for he was at first humane and idealistic before he

turned into a realist. Jim, who wakes up in a vacant hospital like Rick Grimes does in *The*

Walking Dead,[67] does not know what has happened in the world. He first goes to a

cathedral and is chased by an infected priest there. The Catholic cathedral must be related

to his Irish blood; but this first visit implies his religiosity, his idealistic nature, and his

belief in authority. After he was told what happened by Selena and Mark, who rescue him

at the site, the first thing he does is ask them about the government and the authorities:

> *JIM*
> *What about the government? What are they doing?*
>
> *SELENA*

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[66] Before getting to the military base camp, Jim first 'kills' an infected child in an abandoned roadside restaurant. But the scene doesn't show Jim kills this boy.

[67] The origin of this motif goes up to John Wyndham's 1951 post-apocalyptic novel, *The Day of the Triffids*. The novel Protagonist, Bill Masen, who has been in a hospital for having been splashed with droplets of triffid poison that he had researched, wakes up after the end of the world.

There's no government.

JIM
Of course there's a government! There's always a government. They're in a bunker or a plane—

MARK
—No, there's no government, no police, no army. No TV, no radio, no electricity.

After failing to find functioning authorities such as church or government, he insists on going home to find his parents, which summons the infected and as a result costs Mark his life. He becomes more careful after Selena's prompt killing of the infected Mark, but his sense of moral restraint does not change until he hears Major West's plan. He is read to believe that Frank and Hannah are good people when he and Selena first meet them, and agrees with Frank's plan to go to the military base camp in North Manchester. He is still far from adopting a realist attitude about his situation; rather he cherishes some kind of ideal hope that there is something out there to help us. Taking Valium pills indicates this aspect of his character. He wants to meet his loving parents even in his dreams, which in reality might cause danger, as he oversleeps in the field and nearly misses the group's early morning departure. Contrary to Major West, who is a harsh realist that decides only by the present limitations, Jim is naturally more of an idealist than realist, except when he is upset by the soldier's plan to rape Selena and Hannah. But in our context it is more important that he acts as a realist, which includes using violent methods, to fulfill his aim, namely, to save his friends.

Selena is also important in this regard. As a chemist, she is a descendant of Romero's tradition of strong female protagonists in *Dawn of the Dead* and *Day of the Dead.* She is also a black heroine who kills the infected white men "in order that the

world might be returned to a version of "normalcy" (Bakke, 405). But most prominently in the film, Selena is a realist, who accepts that one must choose among conflicting evils. Her realist attitude is first shown when she immediately kills his colleague Mark after he was bitten at Jim's house. Frightened by her instant response, Jim asks her:

> *JIM*
> *How did you know? How did you know he was infected?*
>
> *SELENA*
> *The blood.*
>
> *JIM*
> *Yeah, but there was blood everywhere. It was on me, it was on you.*
>
> *SELENA*
> *I didn't know he was infected, okay? He knew. I could see in his face. If someone gets infected, you've got between 10 and 20 seconds to kill them. It might be your brother, or your sister, or your oldest friend. It makes no difference. Just so you know where you stand, if it happens to you, I'll do it in a heartbeat.*

She is a woman who can kill her family or friend "in a heartbeat" when she could "see" that they're infected. Her explanation reveals that she acts according to "not interest rather than value, particularity rather than universality, causality rather than agency," as Mark Philp defines the realist elements in judgment (Philp, 636). Unlike Jim, she is careful to be and distant towards others before she arrives at a judgment of a person's character. When Selena and Jim first meet Frank and Hannah, who rescued them at a high-rise in London, she speaks to Jim privately about her cautious, ruthless approach:

> *SELENA*
> *Good people? Well, that's nice, but you should be more concerned about whether they're gonna slow you down.*
>
> *JIM*
> *Right. Because if they slowed you down—*
>
> *SELENA*

—I'd leave them behind.

JIM
In a heartbeat.

SELENA
Yeah.

JIM
I wouldn't.

SELENA
Then you're gonna wind up getting yourself killed.

But as Jim changes when Selena and Hannah are in danger, Selena changes during the trip with the others. Seeing that Frank and Hannah cheerfully frolicking with each other, she says to Jim, "It doesn't really mean anything to Frank and Hannah because … well, she's got her dad and he's got a daughter. So I was wrong when I said staying alive is as good as it gets." She implies that friendship is what makes one's survival worthwhile, which is also the film's general conclusion about the post-apocalyptic situation. It is at this point when Selena abandons her harshly realist attitude and becomes more generous and hopeful, if not idealistic. The scene moreover implies that Selena is falling in love with Jim—she kisses him on his cheek soon after she speaks the line. This change in Selena is interesting compared to those of other female characters in Romero's later two films in the trilogy. Whereas both Francine and Sarah change themselves from passive to active, Selena changes in the opposite direction. Whereas Francine and Sarah develop their characters from a caring woman to a practical, independent subject, Selena goes the opposite: from a ruthless, autonomous warrior to a victim in danger of impending rape and a motherly protector of a young girl.

This change of character, along with Jim's belief in hope and West's cruel death by the Infected, points to the film's main ideological limitation. Although Boyle's film portrays realist subjects, all slightly different from one another, and depicts ethical and political choices and actions in a world where liberal humanist values have become impractical, what the film really arrives at the end is an affirmation of liberal humanism. That is to say, the film closes with the perspective that humans can stay human even if everything has gone amok: one must cherish hope (as Jim does), one shouldn't violate other human beings' rights (as Major West does), one must do what one ideally ought to do as a human being. The narrative disapproves of Major West's radical realist standpoint by having him killed and transforms Selena's harsh realism into maternal affection and romantic yearnings. As the apparently happy symbolic family, in which Jim stands as the father, Selena the mother, Hannah the child, spells out the final word "HELLO" on a sign for a passing flying jet, *28 Days Later* ultimately reaffirms the possibility of virtue and the goodwill of human beings, while refusing to face the possibility of permanent disaster, in which there would not remain any hope. But, overall, one thing remains true after all: people kill people, if need be.

Beyond the Pleasure Principle (2):
***The Walking Dead*, the Realist Subject, and the Critique of Nihilist Attitude**

Robert Kirkman's popular zombie comic *The Walking Dead* (2003-present),[68] in this vein, is gloomier and more ruthless in depicting the post-apocalyptic conditions than *28 Days Later.* And it deals with the rise of the realist subject in a more anti-humanist way than Boyle's film. The basic plot is simple: in the world where zombies have been

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[68] This research covers the first eight volumes (48 issues) of the comic book. It is based on the first volume of the two parts of compendium editions. As of January 2014, the trade paperback edition of *The Walking Dead* has published 120 issues.

running rampant, a few human survivors are on the move, searching for a safer place not just from the walking dead but also from the other rapacious human groups. Without the state, the economy, the military, there are no more institutions they can rely on. The survivors must face a reality that is perpetually dangerous and threatening. As can be recognized from the post-apocalyptic setting, the actual danger is in fact not the zombie but the reality itself. The back cover of the first compendium edition of the comic reveals the similar intention:

> How many hours are in a day when you don't spend half of them watching television? When is the last time any of us REALLY worked to get something that we wanted? How long has it been since any of us really NEEDED something that we WANTED? The world we knew is gone. The world of commerce and frivolous necessity has been replaced by a world of survival and responsibility. … In a world ruled by the dead, we are forced to finally start living (Kirkman, et al. 2011; emphases in original)

As the passage shows, the comic tries to emphasize the sudden and enormous difference between our present complacency and "a world of survival and responsibility." In such a world, no one can spend one's time watching television or drinking beers at a bar. In a post-apocalyptic world, one is forced to take things because without them one's life will be endangered. It is a world where the reality principle dominates over the pleasure principle.

The protagonist of the comic is police officer Rick Grimes, who is a leader of the group of survivors that includes his wife Lori and his seven-year son Carl. Rick's group consists of people who represent the diverse population of the US: there are working class white males, middle class white families, retired old man, a Korean-American man, a few African-Americans, and so on. The comic displays the utopian irrelevance of race as a social category: human beings are thrown together and forced to set aside whatever

prejudices they might have held previously. Originally coming together at the outskirts of Atlanta, the group moves on to safer places whenever it loses certain members to zombie attacks. First they go to a gated community; from there they relocate to a farm; and finally they take over a state penitentiary, apparently the ideal place for a life safe from the zombies. As Rick says, "Look at all the land inside the fence … safe, secure. We could make a life here." The group goes inside the penitentiary, kills every zombie, and turns it into a shelter. (Note here the spatial inversion: bourgeois gated community, which they visited earlier, is revealed as a place where hidden dangers lurk, while a criminal penitentiary becomes a safe haven.) But later another human group, led by a brutal and sadistic warlord called the Governor, discovers the penitentiary. Soon war between the two human groups breaks out and results in the most vicious sorts of violence: kidnapping, raping, killing. The first compendium ends with the destruction of the prison fence, through which march the zombie hordes, while the remaining survivors escape from the cannibalistic orgy.

The Walking Dead is a story of a continuous migration. From one place to another, Rick's group moves in search for a perfect safety that never comes to be realized. The survivors have to live in a perpetual state of anxiety and precariousness, to which they struggle to adapt themselves. Anyone who doesn't adapt to the new, harsh reality dies almost immediately. Rick's group quite smoothly adapts itself to a new condition. In chapter 1, for example, Rick allows his seven-year-old son Carl to have a gun to protect himself. Rick justifies his decision by relying on the principle of safety: "I know he's young, but just for safety's sake, he's going to carrying his own gun from now on." When his wife Lori gets upset about this decision, he repeats his reasoning again ("Dammit,

Lori … will you stop? He's safer this way"). Here, the desperate need for safety makes

something that was previously unimaginable possible. At the end of chapter 1, when Carl

witnesses his father Rick is being threatened by Shane, he shoots and kills Shane. The

frightened Carl says that it's "not the same as killing the dead ones," and Rick hugs him,

crying. The important thing is not that a seven-year-old boy kills a human being with his

gun, but that a boy can save his father with his gun. Such a ready acceptance of realism

makes *The Walking Dead* more plausible than some of other post-apocalyptic novels that

lack the reality principle. For instance, in Cormac McCarthy's critically acclaimed novel,

The Road (2006), unlike the precocious and down-to-earth Carl, the young boy is

depicted as extremely innocent and pure, almost like an angel. But in *The Walking Dead*,

killing other human beings is described as understandable, inevitable if the circumstance

allows. Tyreese confesses that he didn't feel bad about killing the person who killed his

daughter: "I'm not beating myself up because I did it … I'm beating myself up because I

don't feel bad about doing it." Moral principles that have served to govern human

behavior in normal times no longer apply, or become extremely ambiguous.

The same is true in the realm of culture. For instance, feminist argument against

patriarchal hegemony, which has rarely been challenged in the United States at least since

the late 1960s, is now regarded as an unrealistic gripe, if not totally absurd, in the post-

apocalyptic world of *The Walking Dead*. When Donna complains about the division of

labor according to gender ("I just don't understand why we're the ones doing laundry

while they go off and hunt."), Lori stresses the need to be realistic: "This isn't about

women's rights, it's about being realistic and doing what needs to be done." In many

scenes, the comic locates women in their traditional gender roles—doing laundry, caring

babies, making food, and patting men on the back. Even women themselves want to be

ruled out from the administrative committee of the group ("Lori, Carol, Andrea,

Maggie—they all said they wanted us in charge. … I think they just want to be

protected"). Although women are encouraged to be strong enough to survive, physical

weakness compared to men makes it more natural for them to be protected and governed

by men, as we've seen in Kunstler's novel in the former chapter. This portrayal of

returning to traditional gender roles reminds us of the certain political attitude that the

zombie comic endorses: realism.

In every realm of life, realism becomes dominant and is represented as a reliable

way of guaranteeing survival. The comic devotes considerable amount to this theme by

depicting unfamiliar and strange human behaviors that are suited to needs of a

nightmarish reality. When a character is not able to adapt to this reality, he or she

becomes erased from the narrative. A typical example is Carol, an emotionally fragile

single mother who asks for constant emotional and physical support from others. When

she finds out his lover Tyreese has been cheating on her with Michonne, she suggests that

to Lori that she be allowed to enter into a polygamous relationship with her and Rick:

> I kinda want to marry you. Not just you, you understand—you and Rick.
> Just hear me out—it's not as crazy as it sounds. … This just makes sense
> to me. I love you both and we could all raise Carl and Sophia and the new
> baby together. I know it seems weird now but we don't have to follow the
> old rules, we can make new ones. We could all be happy together (Ch. 5).

We see Lori's look of suspicion in response to Carol's desperate plea. Carol's suggestion

may not be "crazy" in times of upheaval, but for Carol her very will to live depends on

her plan. She is not willing to accept rejection and move on with her life in the hope that

she will find someone else. After being turned down by Lori and becoming unable to

endure the emotional loneliness, she commits suicide by allowing herself to be bitten by a

zombie, telling the zombie that the undead are better than humans because they do "not

judge people." Overall, the comic forces us to face ourselves, asking whether we could

intend to survive in the world of pervasive gloom and uncertainty. If one is vulnerable,

nostalgic, or rigid, it is likely that one cannot go on. The harsh reality calls for an

opposite subject, who is strong, practical, and flexible in response to difficult or

unfavorable circumstances.

It is the protagonist Rick who is presented as the most dramatically affected by

the changed world. At the outset Rick is depicted as a gentle, kind cop from Kentucky,

who hopes that the government is protecting people somewhere in the big city. But as

leader of a group, he adapts to a new reality that requires a heavy burden of

responsibility, quick decisions, and practical judgments. He changes into a harsh,

dictatorial man. As he becomes restless under extreme stresses of leading a group, he

turns violent. He even kills a person, who he think is dangerous for the entire group. As

his emotional, compulsive behavior disturbs the other members of the group, the other

men decide to form a committee in the hope of sharing the leadership role. Disappointed

by the group's suspicion of him, Rick gives a passionate speech about his convictions:

> Things have changed. The world has changed—and we're going to have to
> change with it. Understand? Do you people still think we're going to be
> rescued? Do you? They're not coming! … We will change! We will
> evolve. We'll make new rules—we'll still be humane and kind and we'll
> still care for each other. But when the time comes—we have to be
> prepared to do whatever it takes to keep us safe. Whatever it takes! … We
> have to adapt to this world if we are going to survive. Have I gone a little
> crazy? Maybe—but so has the world. … I will do whatever I have to do to
> keep us safe. Whatever it is—I will do. … It's obvious now that I'm the
> only sane one here! We already are savages (Ch. 4).

This speech shows that he has been completely transformed into a realist subject. He emphasizes preparation, safety, and adaptation over the virtues of kindness, humaneness, and caring. Survival is set prioritized as the main goal of life, while other virtues are subordinated to this objective. He realizes that humans in the plague-stricken world become savages and monsters; there is no difference between humans inside the penitentiary and the walking dead outside of the fence in that both of them follow their own desires to satisfy their needs or to procure resources for further survival. In a way, Rick's speech echoes Major West's argument in *28 Days Later*: Human nature is violent and savage, so no need to stick to old rules. If there is no boundary between humans and monsters, what does it matter for one to become monstrous? If becoming a monster is the only chance to be safe in a monstrous world, why hesitate? Like Major West and Jim, Rick chooses to become realistic, which is to be monstrous as well, since his decision leads his group into a fatal battle against another, larger group.

Yet *The Walking Dead* is also striking different from *28 Days Later* in its narrative elements and its depiction of realist attitude. Whereas *28 Days Later* describes realist characters but ultimately endorses liberal humanist values like hope and solidarity, *The Walking Dead* never does that. Unlike Boyle's film, Kirkman's zombie narrative incessantly drives its characters into cruel moral dilemmas and nightmarish situations, in which they are confronted with harsh realities and are forced to submit to the force of circumstance. All become more or less monstrous subjects, from which tough questions arise: How far would you go to save yourself and your family? How inhuman can you be when situation forces you? What is to be human and what is not? These questions point

to one principle: in a world where necessity rules, there is nothing you can do other than to be the realist.

In this vein, it may as well be interesting to compare realist characters like Major West or Rick Grimes with Robert Earle in *World Made by Hand.* West and Rick realize that social norms no longer hold when there is no government or law. Robert Earle also believes this as well. What makes these characters realist is their resolution to act according to their circumstances, not according to pre-existing ideals or values. But realism takes a different form in these narratives. For Earle, it involves bringing back some semblance of law and order to a lawless town, which of course involves restoring the monopoly on violence exercised by the institution of justice. For West and Rick, it entails resorting to any *ad hoc* rule to protect and secure their small group, which has nothing to do with establishing the institution of justice and often deviates from the rule of law. They all have common enemies that threaten their respective groups: the Wayne Karp clan in the case of Earle and his Union Grove community, the Infected for West and his soldiers, and the zombies and the Governor and his gang against Rick and his group. Their ways of treating the enemies are also different. While Earle organizes other members of the community to enforce the laws broken by the Wayne Karp gang, West and Rick just try to destroy their enemies. As for the result, Earle's community gains peace and order, whereas West and his soldiers are all killed, and Rick's group loses the penitentiary. All these differences are connected to their own circumstances. While Earle's world lacks only petroleum, West and Rick lack everything from women to sources of energy. In a nutshell, West's and Rick's world of zombies is much more dangerous and tragic than Earl's. Earle's action implies that even under difficult

circumstances, there still has a room for law and order. But in case of West and Rick, who are always chased by zombies and other humans, there is no room for establishing anything other than providing the groups with resources to maintain their lives for one more day. Realism in this sense is not singular or universal, but plural, particular, and sensitive to specific necessities.

The realist characters that are portrayed in *28 Days Later* and *The Walking Dead* generate a new subjectivity that is not found in the first two waves of zombie narratives. If a monster constitutes an allegory of social discontent, the emergence of the realist subject points to a sense that it is urgent to adapt to an instantly shifting global atmosphere. Living under an insecure global order, which involves cyclical economic crises, terrorism, growing social conflict, natural disasters, climate change, etc., one senses that it is necessary to become more adaptable, skillful, resourceful, and practical not to succeed in a neoliberal economy but in order to survive. If one fails to adjust oneself to changing situations, one is surely to be confronted by even worse hardships. Permanent anxiety and fear of falling down remains unresolved, and the prospect of future is ever more ambiguous.

The rekindled popularity of the zombie narratives has reflected such a global sense of crisis. The zombie figure is variously interpreted as standing for greedy capitalists in Wall Street, paperless immigrant workers, thoughtless citizens preoccupied by social media, and so on. As Rebecca Schneider writes, "[t]he overt theatricality of zombies' ambivalent stance between life and death is a register of precarity" (Schneider, 153). The portrayal of zombified world of threatening attacks and extreme precariousness represents the contemporary world that hangs on the edge of disaster. In such a

challenging atmosphere, one has few options but to adapt to a new situation and survive. The realist subject seems to be the only possible character that is appropriate to this horrible calamity.

In another sense, emergence of the realist subject symbolizes the exigencies of a new subjectivity, that is to say, the present discontent with the currently hegemonic subjectivity of liberal democracy. From Plato's fear of the anarchic rule of democracy to Philip Rieff's analysis of self-oriented psychological man, the democratic subject shares similar features: unquenchable need of fulfilling one's desire. Yet it has been revealed that this liberal idea of self-satisfaction, which had been regarded as natural and desirable, increasingly faces a dead end. As most of post-apocalyptic narratives have been imagining, economic prosperity is not going to be endless, social tensions are worsening, and ecological disasters are threatening the world itself. Blindly believing that a complacent lifestyle and affluent conditions of life condition will keep continuing, democratic men and women are in fact sleepwalking into calamity. This owes much to the culture of liberal democracy in late capitalism. Although democracy has fostered great progress in terms of political equality and freedom, it also has created the culture of self-serving hedonism, isolated individualism, and perpetual strife, all of which are proving fatal in the face of our future.

In this circumstance, it is almost inevitable to try to imagine a new type of subjectivity that can and should replace the current democratic man. One unique attempt in conjunction with the zombie narratives is Lauro and Embry's posthumanist approach presented in their essay, "A Zombie Manifesto." As the essay's title suggests, Lauro and Embry's argument is straightforwardly clear: if we want to imagine a future beyond

status quo, we should annihilate our persistent hope for individual subject. Current global

hegemony of capitalism-cum-democracy needs a particular kind of subjectivity, which is

to be perfectly in harmony with the continuation of social order. The "liberal humanist

subject" performs this role (Lauro and Embry, 95). "Capitalism depends on our sense of

ourselves as having individual consciousnesses to prohibit the development of a

revolutionary collective and to bolster the attitude that drives it: every man for himself"

(Lauro and Embry, 106). Always desiring to satisfy its insatiable yearnings, the liberal

humanist subject demands the economic system that provides them with commodities

(capitalism) as well as the politico-cultural regime that satisfies the desire for complete

individual freedom and equality. Yet, the humanist construction of mind, self, and the

sacredness of the individual are "the bars of our imprisonment" (Lauro and Embry, 93). It

is nothing but "a fiction that allows for ideological control" (Lauro and Embry, 93). That

is to say, capitalist-democratic system endeavors to produce a subject that can be easily

controlled. To escape from this vicious circle, a new subject is needed that would be

impossible to control and manipulate, a subject that would "disrupt the entire system," a

subject that would be beyond human (Lauro and Embry, 94). The only subject that is

compatible with this uncontrollability is the zombie:

> If, as Horkheimer and Adorno suggest, the individual is a fiction conjured by the economic structure to ensure greater domination, then for us the only answer to this bind comes in the form of the zombii[69]—a literalization of what has already happened: the death of the individual that continues to lumber forward. The zombii thus suggests how we might truly move posthuman: the individual must be destroyed. With this rupture, we would undo the repressive forces of capitalist servitude. But at what cost? The zombii's dystopic promise is that it can only assure the destruction of a corrupt system without imagining a replacement—for the zombii can offer no resolution (Lauro and Embry, 96).

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[69] Lauro and Embry are inclined to use "zombii" instead of "zombie," because the latter is merely an American name imported from original, Haitian zombii.

As a fundamentally irreconcilable, irresolute, paradoxical subject, the zombie is a perfect

embodiment of the logic of anti-Enlightenment, i.e. negative dialectic. It is an antisubject

that remains "antiresolution, anticatharsis, and cannot speak" (Lauro and Embry, 106).

For Lauro and Embry, the zombie subject does not bear a symbolic and

metaphoric sign. Rather, they literally view the zombie subject as an authentic alternative

for the democratic individual subject without irony. They argue that we have to "truly

become posthuman," that is to say, the zombie itself.

> Here, in an era when global capitalism forecloses all attempts to withdraw
> from the system, the only option is to shut down the system, and the
> individual with it. … When we become zombiis, when we lose our
> subjectivity and the ability to rationalize, there will be no difference
> between the two. Therefore, when we truly become posthuman, we won't
> even *know* it (Lauro and Embry, 108; emphasis in original).

Although their diagnostics about the relationship between capitalism and individual

subject tells the truth, this suggestion embarrasses us. Two questions immediately arise.

First, if we don't even "know" whether we become the zombies or not, what benefits are

from the transformation? What does it mean for us to become the zombies if we don't

realize whether capitalism has become a concept of the past? We shouldn't throw out the

baby with the bath water. Second, what if becoming a zombie is the last thing that

humans want? It is extremely hard to find in the zombie narratives someone who wants to

become the zombie. We can find a few examples, but it is also obvious that in these cases

humans let their bodies to be devoured not because they want to become the zombie but

because they can't find any more meaning in maintaining their lives. Only the extreme

depression, either from losing one's loved ones or from nostalgia for the past, leads them

to choose such an option. Moreover, no one wants to become one of the zombies in order

to overcome capitalism. The zombie is an ultimate model of the Other that embodies everything that humans fear and loathe. Lauro and Embry admit that the essay is "not a utopic fantasy in which man is liberated from the subject/object conundrum, nor is it a riotous celebration of the apocalypse that would ensue if humanity were able to get free of the subject/object bind" (Lauro and Embry, 91). This could at least explain their extraordinarily circumspect attitude, but it does not change that their argument is contradictory, if not irresponsible. Becoming zombie is nothing to do with imagining a new subjectivity, because the zombie means antisubject; and if antisubject means a subject who is brainless enough not to recognize anything, then there is no point in criticizing capitalism and democracy in the first place. Lauro and Embry's bold suggestion is a sophisticatedly disguised nihilism.

In fact, the zombie narratives take nihilism as its essential element. Yet nihilism as a concept is Janus-faced. It must be emphasized that nihilism has more than one meaning. On the one hand, it is a "promise of creative destruction"; on the other hand, it turns to "sheer destruction, annihilating the very context of creativity" (Diken, 6). If nihilism is originally a product of radical idealism, overcoming of nihilism is only possible to turn towards the opposite of heavenly ideal: earthly reality. If we find at least one lesson from the millennial zombie narratives, it must be that the nihilistic metaphor of the zombie creates the realist, a subject who focuses not on "what ought to be" but on "what is" (Herz, 18). He is the man who re-appropriates nihilism from its feature of "sheer destruction" and endeavors to make a new creation out of it. Like the *pharmakon*, nihilism is both poison and remedy at the same time; and the realist subject is the man who can draw a medicinal aspect out of poison. Facing the world-changing catastrophe,

the realist does not give up his or her life to the zombies but tries to find a chance at continuing his or her life. It is true that the realist characters in the recent zombie narratives are often not sympathetic. They sometimes do terrible things in order to maintain hope of survival; he may ruthlessly kill others to save his loved ones; and he becomes increasingly cruel and dictatorial to his group in order to protect it from destruction. In one sense, he can be viewed as a return of extreme macho attitudes or of fascist desires that have become repressed in liberal culture. But on the other hand, he is a realist who can see things without mystification or predetermined assumptions, having the courage to choose among conflicting evils. He is not a desiring machine that is prevalent in our times, nor is he a destructive nihilist who wants to become a zombie to overcome social injustice, as Lauro and Embry suggest. He is a realist who can accept the evil in the hope of preserving the good. As nihilism is a double-sided concept, he is partly the zombie ("we are the walking dead") but he is also a human who wants 'life,' not dead 'flesh.'

The realist subject is the final destination to which the millennial zombie narratives have taken us. The lesson is simple: imagination of collapse should not be thought of as a sheer catastrophe or as the end. As we've seen, collapse can be transformed into a chance where a new subjectivity can be born. The decomposing zombies, violent humans, and cruel disasters imply that we are able to start something new. Paradoxically enough, in utter hopelessness one can finally bear a flicker of hope; but this hope comes only from reality, from the courage to face the facts. It was exactly such a paradox that Ernst Bloch found in his search for the principle of hope:

> *True genesis is not at the beginning but at the end*, and it starts to begin only when society and existence become radical, i.e. grasp their roots. But

the root of history is the working, creating human being who reshapes and overhauls the given facts (Bloch, 1375).

CONCLUSION

> Just as the term enemy, the word combat, too, is to be understood in its
> original existential sense. It does not mean competition, nor does it mean
> pure intellectual controversy nor symbolic wrestlings in which, after all,
> every human being is somehow always involved, for it is a fact that the
> entire life of a human being is a struggle and every human being
> symbolically a combatant.
>
> — Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*

Apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives are clearly popular. I began working
on this project in the summer of 2012. Of course I noticed at that time the surge of
apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives in Anglo-American cultural context since the
early 2000s. In fiction, film, TV shows, and video games, apocalyptic themes have
become the focus of people's attention and imagination. Writers of literary novels such as
Kazuo Ishiguro and Cormac McCarthy adopted the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic
setting to create their stories. Blockbuster films, such as *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004)
and *2012* (2009), independent or art house films (*Melancholia*, 2011), and even an
animated film for children (*WALL-E*, 2008) were hugely successful. TV shows such as
Britain's *Survivors* (2008) and video games such as *Abomination: The Nemesis Project*
(1999) were also popular. Even Romero himself, the "Shakespeare of zombie cinema"
came back, in 2005, with a contemporary version of zombie narrative, *Land of the Dead*,
which deals with greedy, super-rich capitalists and the impoverished masses (Dendle
2001, 121). This phenomenon has been still continuing on as I near the completion of my
research: In fiction (Chang-rae Lee's *On Such a Full Sea*, 2014), in Hollywood film
(Neill Blomkamp's *Elysium*, 2013), in the TV shows *Defiance* (2013-) and *In the Flesh*
(2013-), in video games (*The Last of Us*, 2013), and even in philosophy and critical
theory (John Gray's *The Silence of Animals* and Timothy Morton's *Hyperobjects* (both

published in 2013), an apocalyptic atmosphere is ubiquitous. What I list here is in no way comprehensive.

If there is one thing that links all these disparate texts together, it would be the cruel specter of a total violence that destroys the world as we know it. The causes of apocalypse are multiple—natural disasters (earthquake, climate change, pandemic, flood), man-made disasters (war, nuclear explosion, failure of technology, peak-oil), and otherworldly disasters (rise of zombies, alien invasion)—but all apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives share the one crucial element of a violent event that annihilates most of the human race, civilization, and natural environment. As a narrative device, this violence functions to create what Claire Curtis suggests is "a state of nature," the hypothetical conditions of what the lives of people might have been like before societies came into existence. If the philosophies of Plato, Hobbes, or Locke tried to *look backward* in order to trace a state of nature of humans or human society, post-apocalyptic narratives do it by *looking forward*, by imagining the fictional violence that shatters human civilization and bares human nature in its most elementary forms. From there, apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives also portray how these humans are able to gather together to make a group, how they interact with other groups, how they manage conflicts inside and outside the group, so that humans form a new society out of a state of nature. As Curtis observes:

> The violence and destruction of the end creates a state of nature. All hierarchies, laws and systems for organizing people have been destroyed. People are seen stripped of the restraints society has imposed upon them and these novels reveal arguments about the potential for human savagery. Yet, in the chaos of the end comes the opportunity for a new beginning (Curtis, 7).

The texts I've read in the previous chapters treat the same question in a different way. Whereas Atwood's trilogy concentrates more on the process of apocalyptic annihilation than on the formation of human groups after the catastrophe, both Kunstler's *World Made by Hand* and Robert Kirkman's *The Walking Dead* clearly center around how human groups endeavor to survive in the world of perpetual danger sometimes by establishing law and order or other times by using sheer violence. In case of Ballard's late pre-apocalyptic quartet, the similar question of "a state of nature" is treated as a fundamental problem of the human condition that would disturb the civilization itself even if there were no apocalyptic event to force human beings to return to the state of nature.

These motifs of apocalyptic violence and post-apocalyptic community-formation are illustrative of the fundamentally political nature of post-apocalyptic narratives. Being 'political' usually means achieving or wielding power, with which to influence others' action. In this sense, there is nothing uniquely political in post-apocalyptic narratives as in other narrative genres. For all narratives, in one way or other, deal with human interactions. Rather, I use the word 'political' in the sense what German political scientist Carl Schmitt defines. In *The Concept of the Political* (1932), Schmitt traces the ultimate distinction that the concept of 'the political' rests on. Compared with other concepts, he suggests:

> Let us assume that in the realm of morality the final distinctions are between good and evil, in aesthetics beautiful and ugly, in economics profitable and unprofitable. … The nature of such a political distinction is surely different from that of those others. … The specific political distinction to which political actions and motives can be reduced is that between friend and enemy (Schmitt, 26).

For Schmitt, the distinction between friend and enemy concerns itself not with abstractions but with "inherent reality and the real possibility" (Schmitt, 28), which

means that, unlike economics or aesthetics, politics always deals with an actual situation of "extreme antagonism" (Schmitt, 29). The "enemy" in politics must be fought "in order to preserve one's own form of existence" (Schmitt, 27). Whereas the ugly (in aesthetics) or the unprofitable (in economics) or the evil (in morality) needs to be avoided, negotiated, or rectified, enemy in politics should not be spared because it will threaten my, or my friend's, existence. Overall, the realm of politics, for Schmitt, is presumed as a real combat or an actual war that one takes part in; and only on the combat field, friend-enemy antithesis can be revealed.

> One can say that the exceptional case has an especially decisive meaning which exposes the core of the matter. For only in real combat is revealed the most extreme consequence of the political grouping of friend and enemy. From this most extreme possibility human life derives its specifically political tension (Schmitt, 35).

As we've seen in the previous chapters, one thing that post-apocalyptic narratives strive to portray is this Schmittian concept of life as a war. In a world where most human beings are dead or where resources are hard to find, one should face the reality and try anything one can do to survive. In this world, anyone can be an enemy. It could be another human being who wants to take my food, another monster that threatens my life, or a world itself that incessantly drives me into cruelty. Protagonists of post-apocalyptic narratives accept this warlike condition and manage to preserve what they have, be it their lives, resources, or companions. They constantly meet strangers during the journey, which forces them to decide instantly whether the strangers are friends or enemies. Out of these decisions, a kind of morality, aesthetics, and economics starts to re-formulate: Protagonists risk their lives to save their companions, enjoy the beauty in a passing moment, and do not always trade something merely in terms of economic calculation.

But these are described as something that is only possible when the fundamental friend-enemy distinction has been laid down.

In this context, the inherently Schmittian character of post-apocalyptic narratives evokes the contemporary post-political situation, where the distinction between friend and enemy is erased and is neatly divided into either winner and loser or the profiteer and the exploited. Yet under the apparently utopian projection of neoliberal capitalist society, which believes in unending economic growth, democratic hegemony, and unlimited availability of natural resources, lie the dark possibilities of economic collapse, political unrest, and exhaustion of resources. Life under late capitalist post-political world seems to be constantly on the verge of sudden destruction, from which fear and anxiety of the doomed future are intensifying. Post-apocalyptic narratives, in this sense, can be regarded as an imagined experience of the cruelest situation of life as war, a thought experiment that evokes the possibility of the harshest realities that can be envisioned. It works as the reminder of a "fact that the entire life of a human being is a struggle and every human being symbolically a combatant" (Schmitt, 33).

This is part of the reason why the characters in apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives, who are put into a cruel situation or a difficult existential dilemma, tend to show a realist attitude as their quintessential feature. The realist attitude is not fixed and reveals different qualities depending on the situation, as we've seen with Robert Earle in *World Made by Hand,* Major West in *28 Days Later*, and Rick Grimes in *The Walking Dead*. Yet we can find a certain continuity between these and other characters who adopt a realist attitude, which is to face reality and to choose among the evils rather than strive to achieve an ideal harmony. Such realist attitude fits the condition of struggle and of

war, in which one is forced to confront an enemy—deadly antagonism, lethal violence, and the possibility of destruction. In this study I tried to show that this evoking of the political is located in the center of apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives. This is why we cannot and should not approach these narratives as a mere amusement, or as what Ted Steinberg calls "faux disaster," a disaster as a form of entertainment that is enjoyed from a position of relative safety (Steinberg, 5).

Then, why are apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives so popular in America? Why do Americans are fascinated with the narratives depicting a new beginning after the near total devastations, whether it's plague, depletion, mass destruction, and zombie apocalypse? What motivates Americans' devouring of the depressing narratives that are heavily loaded with Schmittian antagonism and the attitude of realism? Since *Genesis* and *The Odyssey*, the story of near-annihilation and survival has been popular among human beings. But the recent rise of apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives in America cannot be explained in terms of a universal appeal held by narratives of doom and collapse throughout human history but as a phenomenon that corresponds with the particular historical situation in America. That is, in America the popularity of horror films is closely related with harsh realities or traumatic events. As I wrote in Chapter Four, the importation of Haitian zombies in the 1930s could not be isolated from the poverty-stricken lives caused by the Great Depression. Also, Romero's reinvention of the zombie followed by cultish response from American public in the late 1960s was strongly connected with the horrors of Vietnam War that had unsettled Americans at that time. In the same vein, it is not unexpected that the terrorist attack of World Trade Center and the surge of post-apocalyptic narratives share similar features. As David P. Goldman

observes, "[t]he horror that attended the Vietnam War had far-reaching cultural effects even though not a single shot was fired on American territory. All the more so should we expect the attack on the World Trade Center and its aftermath to have such consequences" (Goldman 2009). Of course the 9/11 was not the end, but the beginning. Natural disasters and economic collapse have followed since the fall of the Twin Towers. The chain of depressing events has made "what [Americans] thought was the *third world* into *our world*" (Dean, 48). In addition, as the discourses forecasting the decline of America, or what Fareed Zakaria calls "the rise of the rest," have prevailed, Americans are losing faith in the possibility of the so-called American Dream (Zakaria, 5). Overall, the downward tendency of America since the 2000s has evoked a growing sense of hopelessness, in which there might no longer be no bright future for many Americans. In this sense, those catastrophic disasters in post-apocalyptic narratives are, in a way, stand-ins for the devastating realities and the darkening prospects in American life. The extreme versions of future catastrophe in apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives might function as a psychological buffer, through which Americans strive to accustom themselves to the coming realities of harshness, insufficiency, and antagonism.

Although not as popular as in America, it is interesting that the influence of apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives has been expanding to the other parts of the world including Europe and Asia. This is, I assume, partly because fear and anxiety that the narratives convey have become a common emotion in a globalized world, in which the reports of disasters are part of everyday life. Specifically in case of Korea, where there was no traceable literary and cultural tradition of apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives, the genre has been gradually extending its territory in film, literature, and

comics. The first Korean zombie film, *E-ut-jip Zombie* [*The Neighbor Zombie*], was

made in 2009 and two years later, in 2011, the first Korean TV zombie drama, *Na-nun*

Sal-a-it-da [*I Am Alive*], was aired nationwide. In 2010, *Jim-seung-ui Kkut* [*End of*

Animal], a small-scale post-apocalyptic film was opened. In the realm of literature and

comics, the list is longer and still continues. One reason of this gradual production of

post-apocalyptic narratives in Korea might be that Koreans have just started to reflect

over the dark side of their rapid economic rise since the 1970s onward. Although having

desired to enjoy material comforts gained from thirty years of economic growth, Koreans

are recently beginning to notice the steep inequalities between the rich and the poor,

geopolitical insecurity derived from the ideological division between South and North,

frequent disasters that reveal the incompetence of bureaucracy, and repeated corruption

cases of politicians and the heads of major corporations. Overall, the instability of

everyday life and the mistrust of the authorities, mixed with the weakening influence of

traditional value of loyalty to the state, are partly responsible for Koreans' growing

interest in post-apocalyptic narratives. For example, recent disaster of the sinking of

Sewol ferry that took more than 300 people, many of them young high school students,

made Koreans realize that age-old problems having to do with incompetent bureaucracy,

deregulatory neoliberal policy, and corrupt business practices still plague South Korean

society. Just as 9/11 drove the production of post-apocalyptic narratives in America, the

Sewol ferry accident will definitely give an impetus to the similar tendency.

For a few years during this project, I've also written a few essays for Korean

journals, trying to introduce Anglo-American post-apocalyptic fictions that have not been

sought after in Korea. As a result, in 2011, I published my own book on post-apocalyptic

narratives, *Paguk-ui Ji-hyong-hak* [*Topographies of Catastrophe*], a collection of essays that deal with literary, cultural, and political aspects of post-apocalyptic narratives, which gained not a small amount of interest among intellectuals, artists, and students. In the book, I focused more on the desire of a new beginning that is found in Korean post-apocalyptic narratives than on their deeply realist viewpoint, which is hard to trace. That is to say, there are uniquely Korean characteristics in their own post-apocalyptic narratives that are distinguished from Anglo-American ones. One of them would be their focus on family values. Both in *E-ut-jip Zombie* and *Na-nun Sal-a-it-da*, for example, the point of emphasis is not on the protagonists' harsh choice based upon realist attitude but rather on their unchanging love for their family members (mainly, mothers) who have turned into zombies. It would be an example that shows how a traditional family value, rather than the Westernized individual, can be an essential cultural symbol of Koreanness in the world where other values have been trashed. It is this aspect of unique characteristics in Korean version of post-apocalyptic narratives that I wish to examine further in my next project. In doing so I will also further consider how the genre of post-apocalyptic narratives can or should be a site of comparative cultural and literary studies that will not only provide literary knowledge but also offer insights based on particular culture of a nation undergoing the transformations of a global age.

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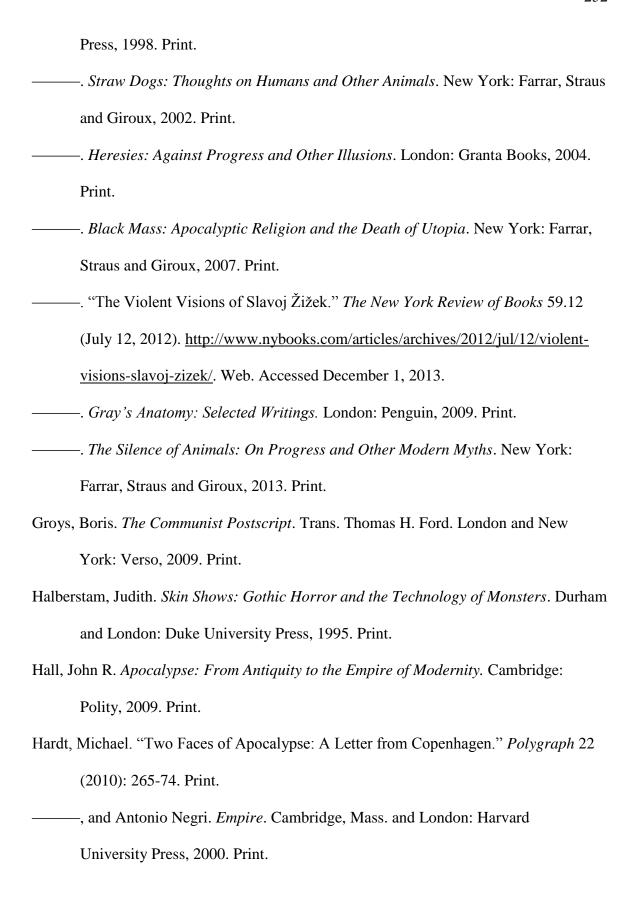
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Seoul National University, Seoul, Korea, 2003-2005
> MA in English, 2005

Chung-Ang University, Seoul, Korea, 1999-2003
> BA in English, 2003 (Minors: German Literature, Sociology)

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SELECTED AWARDS

Presidential Academic Achievement Prize, Chung-Ang University, Seoul, Korea, 2003

Presidential Prize in Humanities (award for the best essays written by undergraduates in humanities at Chung-Ang University), 2001

First Prize, Annual *Sogang Herald* National English Essay Contest, Sogang University, Seoul, Korea, 2000

First Prize, The 1st *Minumsa* National Book Review Contest, Minumsa, Seoul, Korea, 1995

EDITORIAL BOARD

Munhwa/Gwahak: Journal of Cultural Theories. Seoul, Korea, 2013-present