

Where Are We? How Did We Get Here? Is There Any Way Out? Or, News from the Novum (1997–1998)¹

For Fredric Jameson: who keeps the faith
and to the shade of William Morris

Hic est itaque finis, ad quem tendo, talem scilicet naturam acquirere, et, ut multi mecum eam acquirant, conari; hoc est, de mea felicitate etiam est operam dare, ut alii multi idem atque ego intelligant, ut eorum intellectus et cupiditas prorsus cum meo intellectu et cupiditate conveniant; utque hoc fiat, necesse est tantum de Natura intelligere, quantum sufficit, ad talem naturam acquirendam; deinde formare talem societatem, qualis est desideranda, ut quamplurimi quam facillime et secure eo perveniant. [This is therefore the end to which I tend, namely to obtain such a [perfected] state and to strive as best I can so that many people may obtain it together with me; for it is part of my happiness to work at having many others understand what I understand, so that their intellect and desire may accord with my intellect and desire; and in order that this may be, it is necessary to understand nature insofar as is sufficient to reach that [perfected] state, and after that to build such a society which is to be desired so that the greatest possible number of people may reach it in the securest and easiest way.]

— BARUCH SPINOZA, *De Intellectus Emendatione* (*Of Bettering the Intelligence*)

It would be very pretentious of me to think that I am subversive. But I would say that, etymologically speaking, yes, I try to subvert. To come up underneath conformity, underneath an existing way of thinking, in

1 Translations from titles adduced in foreign languages are mine. All unreferenced verse is mine.

order to shift it a little [...]. To unstick matters, to make them a bit more mobile, to let in doubt. I always try to discomfit what is supposedly natural, what goes without saying.

— ROLAND BARTHES, *The Grain of the Voice*

What liberates us is the knowledge of who we were, what we became, where we were, whereunto we have been thrown, whereto we speed, wherefrom we are redeemed, what birth is and what rebirth.

— VALENTINUS THE Gnostic

1. Bombed Back to Gilgamesh: The Politico-Economic (Thence Epistemic) Deluge and Three Axioms

The concept of progress should be anchored in the idea of catastrophe. The fact of “it going on” is the catastrophe: not what is in each case in front of us but what is in each case given.

— WALTER BENJAMIN

L.O

All cultural artefacts, discursive propositions or indeed non-discursive sense-makings are constituted in the reader by continuous, multiplex alluding to her more or less collective imaginary encyclopedia, with its fluctuating entries and presuppositional cross-references. Where SF differs from most (though not all) other modes and genres is by using strategically placed non-existents – for instance spacetimes and psychozoa – to allude if not to point-like existents familiar to the reader/s (that point-to-point allusion would be old-fashioned allegory) but then, in most cases, to *relationships* between familiar existents. Now to allude is to refer.

So my *first axiom* is that *SF makes sense by referring to the readers' here-and-now through not referring to familiar empirical existents*. This is the fundamental device, charm, and perhaps paradox of SF, and all discussions of

it. The salient textual existents are empirically non-existent; the syntagmatic development of the text uses the simulacrum of a paradigm (Angenot), its textual Possible World, in order to reconstitute the paradigm implied in the reader's encyclopedia. It is a detour, a slowed-down understanding or deferred cognitive gratification which, as the Russian Formalists well realized, de-automatizes our reading by forcing us to think what the textual deployment – unfolding and show – may *mean*. Again, it shares this with the story of Agamemnon, Prince Genji, Rastignac or Mother Courage, but only by redoubling the work of reading. Analogously to Freud's dreamwork, SF builds a second tier of displacement and condensation by means of the principal agents' journey through spacetimes unfamiliar to the implied readers. This journey is also the readers' voyage toward making sense, simultaneously, of the story being read and of one's own position under the stars and banks. This means SF is (or at least, is best interpreted as being) a hidden parable about some aspect/s of the times in which it is written and offered for reading.

I.I

Thus might begin a paper, essay or speech I would have made ten or twenty years ago to a gathering of SF critics and readers. But if there is a fundamental presupposition to all I have said up to now, i.e., in the last forty years, about SF, it is that the flow of here-and-nows is what we usually call history, that whatever encyclopedia is being referred to is specific to a sociohistorical class, that whatever very significant constants can be found in SF from Wells or Percy and Mary Shelley or Thomas More on, they are in practice only apprehended in concrete socially determined points of reading. Can the critic, however interested in long duration, be outside history, a simulacrum of the monotheistic God judging if not his then other Creations? Maybe so in slower and more confident times. But not today. If our value-horizon, however battered, does not have to change – I hope mine has not changed overmuch during my lifetime, I do not like convert-renegades – s/he who does not learn in and from history is dead. Our speaking voice is necessarily modified in its registers in a different atmosphere, now thoroughly

intermixed with fumes of pollution. The voices sound tinny and squeak, unless they sound hoarse from ranting against the tinniness: their pitch has to be adjusted. Also their yaw, in the noosphere where bellowing instead of argumentation has become the carefully patented and profitable trademark of Post-Modernism, from born-again Christians and Moslems through the various mutually murderous nationalisms and ethnicisms to the terrorism of atopia, and where I do not know who I am speaking to (though I still know what I am speaking for).

For a new overwhelming global experience has intervened between the early 1970s and today, which demands to be given voice and contours to: we have lived a politico-economical and epistemic earthquake. Or maybe it should be called the Deluge. The trickle-down began so slowly that I for one had not realized any need to face the small rain when finishing my book *Metamorphoses of SF* by writing the essay on the novum for Teresa de Lauretis's panel at a Milwaukee conference in 1977 (Chapter 3 in this book). But it can today be for our profession approached by saying with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: "literary people are still caught within a position where they must say: Life is brute fact and outside art; the aesthetic is free and transcends life [...]. If 'literary studies' is to have any meaning [...], [this] ideology might have to be questioned" (95). In other, my words: The assumption of esthetic transcendence means Formalism in criticism: the artistic artifact has its own immanent laws of shaping, and elucidating them is our professional business. I still believe this is partly true (as autonomy), but a partial truth may turn into the worst lie. This has been happening to people deriding Noah for building the Ark, who then drowned. While Noah always needs shipwrighting criticism, if professionalism means refusing to be citizens, then it is a pernicious ideology serving the crumbling status quo.

Faced with this, one of my two Faustian souls has always envied the ancient Daoist sages or Mitteleuropean rabbis who could devote their life to sitting at the temple's gate and meditating. Alas, as Brecht and Weill noted in a Chorus of *The Threepenny Opera*, "die Verhältnisse, die sind nicht so": the conditions around us are not such. We are rather living the deepest ancient Chinese malediction, "may you live in interesting times" – the times of permanent conflict of each against each for which Hobbes

used the slanderous comparison to wolves. So it is our curse and glory, at any rate necessity, to engage in combat: agon is the only (bitter) remedy in agonizing times.

1.2

One consequence of our politico-epistemic earthquake-cum-deluge is that we need not only new maps of hell but also new conventions of cartography, mapping zigzags through simultaneous and alternative times. For one example: description gets very complicated when the analysis has simultaneously to question its presuppositions, and when the only way to do that is to interweave it with prescription supplying values and opening the presuppositions up to the reader's judgment. Why bother describing just *this* matter from just *that* aspect? "Pure" description (a beast as frequent as the unicorn) is insidiously on the side of the Powers-That-Be, while prescription is overtly and clearly on the side it chooses. I have been quite rightly accused of committing this heinous sin in *Metamorphoses*. I hope it makes that book similar to what every fiction writer does: a narration with a barely concealed system of tropes subtending both description and evaluation (I have been accused of that too, in an ill-placed preface to its Italian translation).

For a second example: with quicker obsolescence and market diversification, a greater number of unfamiliar existents, events, and relationships has to be accommodated into our shifting cognitive paradigm; so while there's no induction at all without an initial (deductive) guesstimate what to induce from and against which, however approximate, horizons, the relative weight of induction will rise. And third, the criteria of choice between hypotheses are, even in strictest natural science with predictive power, finally reducible to a preference for one model over another: the criterion of simplicity underlying all science assumes that nature itself follows a given *model* of unity or coherence (Hesse 101–29). Every theoretical explanation is thus also a "metaphoric redescription of the domain of the explanandum," so that "rationality consists just in the continuous adaptation of our language to our continually expanding world, and metaphor

is one of the chief means by which this is accomplished" (Hesse 157 and 176–77; see Suvin *Positions*, final essay). Indeed, reasoning by analogy, that scorned prerogative of poets and mystics, will be seen to ultimately (though not at all centrally) underlie all the Kuhnian paradigms of how-ever positive a science: most famously, Einstein's God who does not play at crap-shooting. Finally: the scientistic faith, still rampant in our schools of engineering and newspapers, that objects can be seen "objectively," i.e., regardless of the type of subject and other conditions of seeing it, is being replaced by a struggle to understand how valid cognition can arise from openly acknowledged "subject-positions" (competing in the plural, though I have argued elsewhere – as have the best Feminists – that some of them are more equal than others).

So my *second axiom* might run like this: *Conceptual argumentation is absolutely necessary but only if shot through by poetry may it be sufficient.* Formalism is absolutely necessary as the A and B of scholarship, but the alphabet has many more letters: perhaps indeed the atomic binaries of A and –A should be replaced by something akin to the Chinese characters as units of understanding? (If we only understood what Chinese characters were!)

In an age of broad social hopes incarnated in strong sociopolitical movements of working people, including intellectuals – parties, trade unions, liberation movements, co-ops such as the Kibbutzim, and other NGO groupings – the role of scholars in humanities has always seemed to me to be one of a critical support for them. This means support for these movements' horizons and general strategy plus critique of their tactics – in particular, of their frequent blindness to the power and specificity of semiotics and storytelling. Thus, when Lenin's and Trotsky's, or Tito's, or Gramsci's and Togliatti's, or Cabral's, or Ho's, or Castro's communist party was spearheading crucial political battles, cultural scholars not only could but had to be Formalists. (I am here speaking from a Left-wing perspective, but I think my stance might be applicable to Rightwing constellations too, so that we could learn something from the relation of Pound or indeed Jim Blish to Mussolini or of Martin Heidegger to Hitler.) But today, Formalism – or Structuralism, or any heirs to them – can only be a preliminary to a more comprehensive civic analysis, to politics in the Aristotelian sense:

there is no movement to take the onus away from any of us. The comforting economic and psychic roofs (Bellamy's and Bai Ju-yi's collective umbrella or blanket covering an entire city or province) holding us warm against the blasts of a then disputable Destiny have been torn down. *The barrier between so-called "culture" and citizenship, which today means economically based politics, has been wiped out in practice by the Right wing*: it is time all of us recognized this in our laggard theory or we shall be naked unto our enemies, forced to accept them as overwhelming Destiny (i.e.: to shift from SF to horror Fantasy or apocalypse).

Of course, Formalism was deeply enmeshed with epistemology, i.e., with how do we identify anything at all – for example as being such-and-such politics that go with such-and-such homologous economics. I shall hint at this toward the end of the essay. In the meantime, I shall claim that epistemology cannot function without asking the political question "what for?" or *cui bono*. So if we grasp that the barrier between our "cultural" discussions and politics-cum-economics is simply sterile categorization, our politically and epistemologically corrected theory would then be only following, fifteen if not thirty years late, two generational waves of SF: William Gibson or Octavia Butler or Marge Piercy or Stan Robinson, who showed us how Dick's Palmer Eldritch or Debord's and Burroughs's addictive image-virus is reproducing within all of us, manipulating our takes on reality: "The scanning program we accept as 'reality' has been imposed by the controlling power on this planet, a power primarily oriented towards total control," said William – not Edgar R. – Burroughs (*Nova* 51, and see for political-economic grounding Haug). The time for isolated formal poetics is over when the *Geist* has been colonized (see for a golden oldie the argument of Arnheim); I must respectfully posit as known my theoretical arguments from the first part of *Metamorphoses* and most importantly from the concluding chapter on chronotope and parable of *Positions*, and move to wider waters.

And so, to round off my axiomatics into a trinity, I would like to offer you what you may call the "*Suvin axiom for cultural studies*": *Every man her own Gramsci*: each of us makes sense only as a prefigurative component of the allegorical collective intellectual this unique unifier of cultural theory and political practice, argument and passion, demanded.

2. You and Me in the Deluge

[...] today we need [to run the risk of] simple-mindedness in order to be able to say anything at all.

— ERNEST BECKER, *The Denial of Death*

2.1

And therefore: What can you expect me to give you in this potlatch / symposium, what can I be expected to offer you in this end of the age of the so-called White race, this dark moment of a planet under the far-off stars almost cabalistically invoked as the new, evil millennium?

In the dark times, will there be poetry written?
There will be poetry written about the dark times. (Brecht)

Faced with almost (but never quite) total and ever-growing desolation, as a young man asked at the beginning of our wasteland century, what is to be done, *chto delat'*? Well, at least bear witness:

Reading books won't save you from death.
Writing books won't save you from poverty.
But if you leave off and never speak out:
How will the young know to tell their stories?

So the verse-smith forges you these words,
Words commodity-worshippers won't believe.
Sugar is addictive; birds are charmed into the snake's maw;
Yet wholesome food, wisely chosen, furthers life ...
(“Metacommentaries,” 1981)

Or consider the following fragment of a love poem:

Having seen this, what do you and I do, love? Much must be done
By us as citizens banding together, much again as lovers,
But as writers one thing, our stock in trade and secret weapon –
To slice up the world by *nomination*. Master Kung Fu,
Our forebear, changed “killed” to “murdered”, thus branding for all
the ages
The unjust deeds of a king; “to right the names”, he called
Such revisionist calligraphy. Plebeian scribes,
Minions of creative truth, we unveil and tattle out the taboo names
Of dragons and men, profanely unfold them in the public eye
Like holy fools, indiscreet lovers, irrepressible drunks:
General Motors, Hitachi, Nestle, Siemens, Boeing,
Con Edison, Canon, General Electric, all are involved
With the generals’ Beast of Abomination that poisons our loves ...

And so Darko will offer you a view from the belly of the Beast, 666, Leviathan, the great super-global worm Ouroboros biting his own tail and strangling us in his Laokoon coils, the politico-economical whale out of which we Jonahs attempt to spout our prophecies about the fall of Nineveh or Babylon the great scarlet whore, to assemble a toolkit or set of lenses for neo-Galilean starry messages. So, first of all, always first of all, a name-giving and description: What is this rough Beast slouching toward Bethlehem or Armageddon? In the more adequate Buddhist terms, what Law decayed in this evil-yet-propitious age and world-system? Or finally, what Atlantis collapsed in the Deluge and why? I shall treat of What in terms of politics and of Why in terms of economics, ineluctably intertwined. We have all been trained to dislike such terms: but we have to disintoxicate ourselves, or perish.

I give you two warnings at the outset: First, I certainly have no more than a first approximation to an answer; but if all of us do not start to debate it right now, there are very good chances we shall in the twenty-first century – amid scores of dirty wars, a changed climate, and serious food and energy starvations – have to look back at Hitler and Stalin as we are now looking back on Nixon, Johnson, and Khrushchev: the good old times, when there was hope. Second, my focus on what is not only

logically prior to all texts but also informing and strongly co-determining them means I shall not discuss any in detail, only plead for a grid and horizon of future discussions.

In a book-length study, place would have to be found for macro-events of the post-1973 era. On the one hand, there is the invasion of the minimax-strategy SF-snatchers by the corporate conglomerization of Hollywood, TV, and the mega-middlemen of the book trade – publishing houses, distributors, bookstore chains. US SF in Fordism was rendered possible and shaped by the double market in competing genre pulps and paperbacks, which lay a strong stress on the story's horizon's (ideology) – i.e., on what was being produced, and not simply on financial profit. The Post-Fordist “tight money” for culture resulted from the end of Cold War competition with what was perceived as the Left. This delivered the field to a totalizing “bottom line” orientation where the Powers-That-Be are not simply trying to make a profit, but as much profit as possible, this year, now. This Post-Fordist mode is dominated by circulation (sales, marketing, advertising), tied into the movie and TV arms of the same “vertically integrated” corporation, and it leads to increased government as well as middlemen censorship, an oligopoly disempowering thoughtful editors and forcing upon us both Fantasy and sequels-cum-series as well as the low standards of bestsellerdom and SF movies or comics.² On the other hand, opposing the suppression of thoughtfulness, there are the bright spots of most SF by and about women and of other brave new names. None of this can be dealt with here. I have also restricted a look backward at my *Metamorphoses* book to a single matter, doubts about the novum.

- 2 See Sedgwick, Stableford, Broderick 90, Greenland 44, and Pfeil 83. Yet “[the worst publisher] is still a nun in the whorehouse alongside the major players in the music industry and the art market or, to take a comparable industry elsewhere in the economy, some of the ethical drug companies” (Solotaroff 80).

2.2 *The Politics and Economics of the Deluge*

In touching democratic unison, the New Disorder commonsense has concluded that it was the evil empire of Leninism which collapsed under the onslaught of the valiant white-clad forces of Princess Leia – as allegory for legitimate property – and Luke and Han Solo – as allegory for the ideological-cum-technical supremacy of US individualism. In fact, the Star Wars company outspent its rivals: but that does not make a good media story ... No doubt, 1989 saw the end of a Leninism that had degenerated into a bureaucratic State despotism and resulted in a Soviet power-grab around its borders and world rivalry with the West. Yet not only! It also marked the end of US hegemony over the world, the paradoxical *Pax Americana et Atomica* of the Cold War. What collapsed in 1989 had a twofold beginning in 1917: not only Lenin's revolution but also Woodrow Wilson's entry into the age of World Wars (started twice by German industries and ruling classes in the misguided belief that *they* will be the successor empire to Britain). This had led already in 1919 to US troops fighting the young Red Army. The enemy brothers – perspicaciously allegorized already in an early 1920s poem by Mayakovsky – had in common key presuppositions:

that humanity could rationally and consciously construct the good society [...], that the State was a key instrument of this construction [...], [that] nations were all to be "equal" [..., and finally, the eschatological] view that history was moving inevitably and ever more rapidly in the direction of their universalizing ideals which, in the end [...] would exclude no one. (Wallerstein 5; see also Derrida, *Spectres*)

Though diametrically opposed, Leninism became what Liberalism had always been, a Statist ideology of constructing an interclass wealthy future that would embrace the whole population on the basis of continual expansion of production. I am persuaded by Wallerstein's lengthy analyses that the triple-headed hell-gates' dog of Keynesianism, Fordism, and Wilsonism has also been collapsing after its pseudo-Leninist Siamese twin was excised from him, only in slower motion, a domino-principle not dreamed of by General Westmoreland!

As to economics: the real capitalists have always known, but reproached the Marxists for tattling out, that the "bottom line" of all politics is glorified

pork-barrelling: insuring such economic profits for the capitalists that the rest of the nation could also be bought off. In the boom-and-bust cycle, the ascending part that began in the 1930s found in Fordism and Keynesianism the remedies to the dangerous 1920s bust. These strategies effected a limited but real redistribution of wealth: Fordism through higher wages rendered possible by mass production of goods but neutralized by total production alienation (Taylorism, conveyor belt) and consumer brainwashing (see Hirsch and Lipietz, though the earliest and in many ways still most stimulating analyses are in Gramsci's "Americanism and Fordism" and in Brecht's *St Joan of the Stockyards*), Keynesianism through higher taxation neutralized by bourgeois control of the State. They functioned, and could only function, in feedback with the rise of production and consumption 1938–73, itself inextricably enmeshed with imperial extraction of surplus-value, armament production, and the warfare State. The ideology adequate to this greatest economic expansion in history, to a continuous change of form but augmentation of substance in market circulation, was State-inflected Liberalism. The dominance of Liberalism did not mean it was not fiercely contested from the conservative or Fascist Right and the Socialist Left: it meant that any contestation had to address itself precisely to New Deal Liberalism. It had to show that their "new deal" would give a greater share in affluence and other perks to given groups (for example the German or Japanese or Russian peoples) than the Liberal one: but no contestation ever questioned the need for a car industry, conveyor belts, and a contained labour force. And yet "the private car, together with the dismantling of public transport, carves up towns no less effectively than saturation bombing, and creates distances that can no longer be crossed without a car" (Haug 54; see Noble 6 and *passim*).

In class terms, both Soviet pseudo-Leninism and Rooseveltian Liberalism were compromises with and co-optations of the pressures and revolts by plebeian or labouring classes. In economic terms they meant the institution of a modest but real "security floor" to the working classes of selected "Northern" countries (what was in Mao's China called "the iron rice-bowl") as well as a great expansion of middle classes, including all those hearing or reading this, with a fairly comfortable financial status and an appreciable margin of manoeuvre for ideologico-political independence.

Now such compromises are revoked by the capitalists as unnecessary. In a fierce class war from above, through a series of hidden or overt putsches by the Right wing (hidden in the “North,” from Britain to the USSR, overt in the “South” – China being the pivot between the two), what Marx called “the extraction of absolute surplus value” is sharply increased: the security floor is abolished (in the US, one half or more of all working people have no full or permanent employment), a large class of chronically poor is created, while the middle class is squeezed back into full dependency by abolishing financial security, and split into a minority of “organic” mercenaries – the engineers of material and human resources, including the new bishops and cardinals of the media clerisy (see Debray) – and a majority of increasingly marginalized and pauperized humanists and teachers, disproportionately constituted by women and non-“Whites.” Some new elites, say Japanese or Brazilian, may still join the affluent, everybody else – the South and the middle and lower classes of the North – will be kicked back, by threat of starvation and bullets, into the pre-Keynesian state: we may be doubling back to a Dickensian “two nations” society, with more computers, more (or at least more talk about) sex, and more cynicism for the upper classes. In world politics, just as after 1873 there came about a hegemony shift from the UK to the rival successors, US and Germany, so the post-1973 dispensation, after the end of national liberation wars, shifts to a tripartite tension between the mega-spheres of decaying North America, Western Europe and Japan (in the future perhaps East Asia?) – a classical precursor-constellation of the last two World Wars.

In this Wallersteinian scheme, 1917 meant the irruption of the periphery or South into the world-system’s core, a bid of the objects to become subject-players themselves. Wilson and Lenin were taken after 1917 to announce – and both the Soviet and US post-1945 ideologies certainly trumpeted – that everybody could live as well as the affluent North, glamorized and rendered present to the whole world by Hollywood and then TV. But the shock of 1973, when we entered upon the “bust” part of the cycle that began with the 1930s–1940s boom (the oil crisis, debt crisis, global domination of the World Bank, etc.), revealed what should have been evident to anybody with a smattering of geography and demographics: that the planet just did not have sufficient resources for that. It is a

finite system that cannot expand indefinitely to bear six or ten or twenty billion people up to the immensely wasteful “Northern” standards: raping nature will not beget a child upon her (see Kapp). The South as a whole cannot be co-opted, only repressed: Wallerstein has argued that the demise of Leninism is simply the harbinger of the demise of all “developmentalist ideologies” (97).

Furthermore, Keynesianism has brought about huge masses of exploitable people, but exploiting such numbers is in the age of automation etc. not profitable any longer. Not needed as producers, these masses may still be useful as consumers as long as the welfare safety-net gives them some means: but these means are being retracted by the capitalists in favour of direct enrichment of the rich. Since the by now unnecessary people are still voters and potential rebels, the liquidation of unnecessary stocks of human lives goes on cautiously, but it can be accelerated in civil or national wars which go merrily on, profiting the armament and drug industries. Thence on the one hand the revocation by the Northern ruling classes of both the Keynesian compromise with the lower classes and the Wilsonian promise to the peripheric “South”; and on the other hand the increased world concentration of capital now dominated by cartels of “multinationals,” the shuffling off of lower-profit branches like textile, metallurgy, and even electronics to the lower paid periphery while the richer core concentrates on biotechnology and microprocessors as well as on the “acute politicized competition [...] for the tighter world market” (Wallerstein 124).

2.3

There is no doubt we are today seeing the rolling back of Keynesianism. Some data: the US capitalist class comprises 5 per mille of the population, but even if we take the top 1 percent of the US population, the 834,000 households constituting it had at end of the 1980s a net “worth” of ca. \$5,700 billion, which was “worth” more than the bottom 90 percent of the US population, 84 million households with ca. \$4,800 billion net worth (Phillips; see also for this whole paragraph Chomsky). In the relatively moderate Canada, according to a report by Morrisette and Bérubé of

Statistics Canada, in the last twenty years the chasm between upper and lower classes has grown rapidly, with middle incomes disappearing into part-time work or overtime of a multitude of badly paid jobs. This means that ca. 40 percent of the workforce is by now unemployed or on insecure part-time or “self-employed” work (Wood 285–86), while CEO pay packages rose by one third in the last three years only (Zacharias). According to the very tame ILO, worldwide unemployment affects in one form or another one billion people or nearly one third of the global workforce (*Second*). In the European Union, two thirds of workers under the age of twenty-five work on a temporary or “self-employed” basis (Andrews).

Obversely, in the US, the top tax on CEO wages fell from 94 percent in 1945 to 28 percent in 1991, so that the average pay in that class grew to be 85 times the income of the average industrial worker (Miyoshi 738). The not too startling conclusion for anybody who has studied the reasons for a State apparatus is that the welfare-state transfer of wealth from one class to another goes on in spades but *for the rich*. The latest report to have percolated into public domain tells of the US Congress and FCC handing \$70,000,000.000 – yes, seventy billion dollars – to the TV conglomerates in free space on public airwaves (“Bandwidth”). No wonder the number of US millionaires from 1980 to 1988 rose from 574,000 to ca. 1,300,000, while the official 1991 statistics count one seventh of the population as poor, which given their obfuscations probably means one fifth or ca. 50 million (Phillips 9–10 and Miyoshi 739). And so whole generations, as well as the planetary environment for centuries into the future, are being warped by an arrogant 0.5 percent on the top and a faceless world money market.

Coddling the poor is a barefaced lie: another report by Mimoto of Statistics Canada (who got into trouble for his pains) shows that only 1 percent of debt growth is due to unemployment insurance, 8 percent to increased spending on police, military, and prisons, and 44 percent to interest payments (Sprung). The new contract enforced on the “downsized” is: “Workers undertake to find new occupations where they can be exploited in the cleverest and most efficient way possible” (Lipietz 77). Rocketing indigence and aimlessness provide the ideal breeding ground not only for petty and organized criminality – business by other means – but also for its legitimization in discrimination and ethnic hatred (for example in India

or Yugoslavia). Internationally, the gap between the rich “North” and the poor “South” of the world system has doubled from 1960 to 1992, with the poor “transferring more than \$21 billion a year into the coffers of the rich” (*The Economist*, see Chomsky 62). This dire poverty gap between classes and nations can be suggested by the fact that the most trustworthy international source estimated in the mid-1980s some 40 million people die from hunger each year and (I do not know which is worse) the UN reported that in 1996 “[n]early 800 million people do not get enough food, and about 500 million are chronically malnourished” (Drèze-Sen *Hunger* 35; *Human* 20). This means that only a small minority in the North will have enough food, energy, and medical attention or adequate education and transport, so that all societies are being turned into two-tier edifices, with good services for the rich and shoddy ones or none for the dispensable poor. Human groups divide into resentful islands who do not hear the bell tolling; the “absolute general law of capitalist accumulation: accumulation of wealth is at the same time accumulation of misery, agony of toil, slavery, ignorance, brutality” (Marx, *Selected* 483), has been confirmed in spades. No wonder SF is getting contaminated by sorcery and horror: we live in a world of capitalist fetishism run wild, against which the Cthulhu entities are naive amateurs.

The only question is then:

What if we cannot dismiss the rantings of the [R]ight and it really is true [...] that workers’ rights, social citizenship, democratic power and even a decent quality of life for the mass of the population are indeed incompatible with profit, and that capitalism in its most developed forms can no longer deliver both profit or “growth” and improving conditions of labor and life, never mind social justice? (Wood 287)

In brief, can the Keynesian class compromise be dismantled without burying under its fallout capitalism as a whole? If one doubts this, as I do, then two further questions come up. First, will this happen explosively, for example in a quite possible Third World War, or by a slow “crumbling away” which would generate massive breakdowns of civil and civilized relations, on the model of the present “cold civil war” smouldering in the US, which are (as Disch’s forgotten masterpiece 334 rightly saw) only comparable to daily life in the late Roman Empire? And second, what kind of successor formation

will then be coming about? The age of individualism and free market is over, the present is already highly collectivized, and demographics as well as insecurity will make the future even more so: the only alternative is between the models of the oligarchic (i.e. centrally Fascist) war-camp and open plebeian-democratic commune.

I have always held that SF was a “neo-medieval” genre in its collectivist procedures of shared generic presuppositions and indeed worlds (see the brilliant Russ 3–14). While I earlier thought of this, optimistically, as proto-socialist, a richer explanation is – alas – Eco’s “new Middle Ages,” where “a period of economic crisis and weak authority” is blended with “incredible intellectual vitality” (491), “an immense operation of bricolage, balanced above nostalgia, hope, and despair” (504). I cannot pursue here his witty, detailed, and very early parallels between the collapse of the international Great Peace of Roman *virtus* and that of market individualism (both limited to a part of Europe and some adjacent areas), resulting in what I have called the creeping “cold civil war” returning the Third World with poetic justice to the metropolitan cores; Eco accurately noted that the major insecurity and unlivableness of our new “Middle Ages” is based on excess of population. However, some of the parallels, such as the proliferation of cutthroats, sects, and mystics where divine grace is often another drug, were being signalled by much SF from Dick on. Other voices have focused on the collapse of State authority resulting in “a lasting, semistabilized disorder, which feeds on itself” and “grey zones” where the only authority is that of the drug barons (Alain Minc and N. Stone, BBC 1994, cited in Morley 352–53). In particular, you will recognize here the scenarios of much among the best SF of the last thirty years, say from William Gibson, Pat Cadigan, Norman Spinrad, and Marge Piercy through Octavia E. Butler and Carolyn J. Cherryh to Gwyneth Jones and Stan Robinson. You will also recognize what Broderick rightly called “hymn[s] to corporate fascism”: his example is Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle (79) but let me at least add two whole new sub-genres. First, the misnamed “libertarian” (a better name would be US-Fascist) SF which comprises, for example, John Norman’s *Gor* novels and the militia-oriented works published outside commercial SF circuits by people like Phil Bolger and “Jill von Konen” (see the important essay by Orth), and which should be taken seriously

because they are very seductive. Second, the “mercenary” SF extolling killing (for example by Robert Adams, who once expressed to me a heartfelt desire to kill my unworthy Commie self). Within depictions of “thick” Possible Worlds (usually called fiction), SF is to my knowledge the only genre engaged in this public debate, and to its further great credit it must be said that all good SF sees the answer to the crucial second question as depending on social actions by all of us.

3. On SF and SF Criticism: Responses at the Cusp

There are [...] ways of thinking with the seeds of life in them, and there are others, perhaps deep in our minds, with the seeds of a general death. Our measure of success in recognising these kinds, and in naming them making possible their common recognition, may be literally the measure of our future.

— RAYMOND WILLIAMS

3.0

Tom Shippey once noted, in a phrase that echoes deservedly from Patrick Parrinder through Adrian Mellor to Broderick, that SF has at some points been a “machine for thinking,” and he accurately added, for people outside recognized official support (108) – i.e., for thinking in unorthodox ways, often cuckoo but probably not more often wrong than the hegemonic, academically blessed and megabuck-anointed, machines. Surely the narrative ploy and metaphor of superluminal speed is less crazy than the bitter earnest and yet metaphor of supply-side economics? But for thinking to illuminate there is a precondition: that it choose a mature or urgently relevant stance, rather than an irresponsible one: “A denial of authorial responsibility, a willed unconsciousness, is elitist, and it does impoverish much of our fiction in every genre” (Le Guin 5). One could talk about such a bearing with a preferential option for the humiliated and exploited in

many ways, but let me talk first about binarism and the thematic foci, and come back at the end to the place SF plants its klieg-light in.

3.1

Binaries are an Aristotelian, undialectical simplification, granted. Still, there are two fatal reasons we must go for them: first, “I gotta use words when I talk to you” (T.S. Eliot): collapse or upwards curve, bright or black; second, all major decisions finally do come down to binary choices. The choice is, I argued above, between oligarchic or direct-democracy collectivities and subject-positions. And it is the intelligentsia that will formulate (is already formulating) the tools for thinking either. Intellectuals are the name-givers of categories and alternatives. At the beginning of my *Positions* I argued that mass literature has in the twentieth century been largely co-opted so that it is, even to its name, complicitous in the creation of “the masses,” an alienated consumer-blob out there analogous to the dispossessed producers, only in relation to which can there be cultural and financial elites (see also de Certeau 119ff. and Williams, *Long* 379, or indeed in all of his works). And looking backwards, many 1968ers can be seen as claiming the mantle of court poets for the New Despotism (see Debray, Klein, and Angenot-Suvin). Clearly the appeal of Frank Herbert, and possibly of Gene Wolfe, derives from this *frisson*, though I suspect that at his best Wolfe may be more complex. Still “popular literature” (Gramsci) is the only directly important one, supplying images to comics, movies, and TV, and thence to the everyday imagination. The Formalists were right that great literature has always arisen from a reworking of that populist side.

What then can we not yet quite proletarianized intellectuals do in the next, say, quarter century, yoked under this maleficent constellation, disaster? As my poem said, in good part we can decide whether to *transmit the memory* and what is more the lessons of 1917 to 1968 or 1989 to the coming generations or not. “[The] historical amnesia characteristic of American culture [is] the tyranny of the New,” for example in Post-Modernism (Hall 133). Memory could help rearguard actions to defend the worthiest yet weakest among us:

The four whales who hold up the corners of heaven:
 Women, workers, the learners, the loving.
 (*The Long March*, 1984)

And we have to wager it would even facilitate the cusp decisions of 2015 or whenever in favour of radical democracy and survival. The central decision is one – the hippies were right! – between war and love: the arms race and narcotics peddling that has ruined both the USSR and US (look at Germany and Japan!) vs. a use-value production that conserves the planet and heals people (see Lipietz’s “Postscript”). We are nearing a Prigoginian bifurcation region, at which, you will remember, “an individual, an idea, or a new behavior can upset the global state,” or in other words, where small causes lead to great results: “Even in those regions, amplification obviously does not occur with just any individual, idea, or behavior, but only with those that are ‘dangerous’” (Prigogine and Stengers 206). At the cusp begin our distributively Gramscian responsibilities.

3.2

Yet, alas, there is no reason for me to alter a constant quality judgment, only to ask how come that 98 percent of a machine for thinking is at best ephemeral schlock and at worst cocaine for the intellectuals, William Burroughs’s “junk” as “the mold of monopoly and possession [...] the ultimate merchandise” (*Naked* xxxviii–ix) or Brecht’s “branch of the bourgeois drug trade.” I can approach this through one of SF’s many articulate writer-critics, who has however the advantage of being simultaneously one of its few grand masters and an unrecognized prophet in his land, Tom Disch. In a 1975 London lecture called “The Embarrassments of SF,” Disch concluded that SF writers and readers have “characteristically preferred” adolescent imaginary worlds with little articulation of “sex and love, [...] the nature of the class system and the exercise of power within it” (144). Two converging, more acerbic ways of putting it are: “technotwit satisfactions [...] of] great dollops of masculinist [...] adventure and [...] technogadgetry for sexually terrified twelve- and thirteen-year-old boys of all ages”

(Pfeil 85), and an empathy-machine for the adolescent male reader with “some libidinal equation between military power fantasies, war games, and the sublimated sexual dynamic” (Spinrad 185). Sex, duly uncoupled from Disch’s other three foci, has been let in after Farmer and Heinlein in the *aggiornamento* of capitalist mores that was going on even as Disch spoke; yet I still remember the impact two books of 1969, *Bug Jack Barron* and *The Left Hand of Darkness*, had on me by at least beginning to relate sex to love, class, and/or power (see Suvin “Science” – nobody, so far as I can remember, not even Ursula Le Guin, has added a consideration of economic strictures to SF thematics). After many telling and highly disenchanted arguments, for example about lower-class resentment rampant in SF, Disch’s unique vantage point of oscillation between the very centre and the margins of the genre led him to the equable conclusion that SF as we know it “dealt with the largest themes and most powerful emotional materials – but in ways that are often irresponsible and trivializing” (155).

But at this point, gentle hearer, two of my souls (I have many) – the epistemological one of dark subterranean perceptions and the Formalist one of surveying Possible Worlds – are having a new attack of doubting.

3.3 *Epistemology*

Not that any of the above is wrong, it’s just insufficient. Do I want to get into a scolding of all SF (or all US-style SF) à la Stanislaw Lem? For there’s the great SF writer of *Solaris*, *The Invincible*, *His Master’s Voice*, *The Mask* and rewriter in the SF-vein of fables and non-fictional discourses (essays, speeches, diaries) – and then there is the European elitist, lover of the Hansa patrician Thomas Mann and of Count Jan Potocki. And I remember many other anathemas, for example Samuel Delany’s ludicrous essay on *The Dispossessed* in which he goes systematically through all the major points (heterosexual love, anarchist utopianism, discursive clarity, etc.)

that make Le Guin fortunately be Le Guin and not Delany, and therefore judges as failed that ultimate Kanchenjunga of the 1960s Himalayas. Thus, while critique began with our great ancestor Lucifer as a cosmic principle of bringing light into the darkness of the rulers, perhaps critics should not be activist prosecutors? Could there not be a defensive critique which sees (say) Delany's own writings not simply as only partly successful if richly suggestive dazzle, info overload mystifyingly foregrounded as cognition – but more generously as very good approximations to an impossible ideal? If we note with Broderick that some of Delany's lines are “increasingly embarrassing” (126, on *The Einstein Intersection*) or that the “evelmi” in *Stars in My Pocket* come across as Donald Duck's nephews, a sleight-of-hand to present “too lovable a blend of large lolloping dogs, sweet-natured children, natural wonders, and all-round nice, wise folks,” and that at least one sentence, “The door deliquesced,” is “decorative special effects” though in some ways absurd (144–45) – should we then not proceed with Broderick to drown it in the billows of our admiration for Delany's immensely erudite and energetic blends of Black discourse à la Wright and Ellison, gay discourse, and bohemian discourse à la the Beats?

This would be the proceeding, to use Scholastic language, of a triumphant rather than a militant Church, a Franciscan *poverello* rather than a Dominican inquisitor. You may see here a huge paradox: how can I day-dream of being a triumphant Churchman at the moment of Antichrist's triumph? And if I were a real Churchman I might answer that the Antichrist is the necessary prelude to the Messiah's Millennium; but since I am not one, and my creed of shintoist cybermarxism is not a religion (see Suvin “Travels”), and yet I need to go gentle into the good night, I shall present you with the only possible triumph today: a zero-triumph. I speak of the failed but absolutely necessary triumph of social justice and Homo sapiens survival that yet remains to judge us, summing up prosecution and defense – a long-duration horizon. What is a century to such a stance but a brief moment under the witness stars? And it behooves me to champion such a critique at what might be, given Time's wingèd chariot, my last major pronouncement on SF. (But do not bet on not having me to kick around, as Nixon might have said!) From this stance, looking backward from 2015 or 2050 to the 1996 Decline of the Law (to imagine Bellamy modifying

Gautama the Enlightened), militancy is not denied: that would be desertion under fire. But its enforced strategic retreat is to be blended with and shot through with Hope the Principle, which does not forsake us even in the worst times. Against a stifflingly looming dead future, we have to mobilize all our living pasts, of how the best people coped with the descent *ad inferos*. And traditionally we did so by an active male hero encountering an ancestor figure to guide him with its superior insight: Dante the exile taken in hand by Virgil the mage. We have forgotten most of this today, for already Milton attenuated these figures with a human face into the Holy Light as his internalized ethereal Muse dazzling into the blindness. And worst of all we have forgotten that supernal wisdom is female, Beatrice.

But let me here mobilize only our most adjacent analog and ancestor, the nearest dark time and night of the soul from which even the dawn, though firmly believed in as coming, was invisible: the 1930s, that time when two enemy brothers fed each other from Germany to Muscovy. At that time, most favoured by their position at the heart of all European and world contradictions, Brecht and Benjamin and Bloch diagnosed the ineradicable Principle of Hope even under the Gestapo, the imperial bureaucracy of Hwang Ti or Djugashvili, and the US Federal Communications Commission and FBI. And if you think this Iron Heel has little to do with SF, I will not speak to you of names unknown, swallowed by cruel Father Time, whom Leonardo da Vinci, in at the birth of capitalism, defined as “swift predator of all created things” – such as Savinien Cyrano or Karin Boye or Katherine Burdekin or Yan Larry – but only of those who, equally oppositional in their preferential option for the downtrodden, have evaded Lethe through the odd misreading as useful political PR for the rich: Orwell formulated the position of artists like Henry Miller to be inside the whale, Zamyatin moved from internal exile in the State he had fought for as a socialist to external exile in Paris, only to be refused by pro-Stalin and anti-Soviet circles alike and die writing a piece on the Eastern nomad Attila ending the evil Empire of the West ... Let us, not unreasonably, substitute Disch for Orwell, Delany for Miller, and Johanna and Günther Braun or Gottfried Meinhold or Angela and Karlheinz Steinmüller (whose State, the GDR, evaporated from under them) for Zamyatin, and what this has to do with SF will become apparent.

The difference is largely that excising and curing the cancers of the body politic without including the psychophysical cancers of the body personal has little liberating power under the heel of the new, much more pervasive and invasive Oligarchy. What lessons can we learn from the exasperated defenders of the personal body (say Orwell to Disch) and the ambiguous defenders of the collective body, of Bakhtin's utopian people (say Zamyatin to Le Guin)? The first lesson is, as the Odonians would say, not to believe false categories: body personal is intimately moulded by body politic and vice versa. And whoever falls for the false categories lives falsely: to withdraw to the individual body, in a dream of Rousseauist enjoyable Arcadia, is impossible in today's admass pollution where the labouring body is downgraded in favour of the consumerist body, colonized by fashion, by the billion-dollar cosmetics, sports, exercise, etc. industries (see Featherstone); and teeth-gritting loves are channelled into Harlequin romances or the adolescent technodream of teledildonics.

O hopes desires
 a little tenderness
 bodies
 melt in a twinkling
 ("Last Light," 1988)

At any rate, faced with the two holy commodities – the discourse of fiction and esthetics and the discourse of the body and erotics – I have here to focus on the first one, even if both are not only indispensable for our lives but also for understanding each other, and their product – politics. Alice Sheldon once complained about our world "where the raising of children yields no profit (except to television salesmen)" (45): this has been superseded by the politically shaped technology of Post-Fordism. For it is politics that enables molecular genetics businesses to patent DNA units and companies to copyright trademarks, so that one day we might have to pay royalties for having children (see Chomsky 112–13) as well as for using nouns and verbs such as xerox.

3.4

So, to particularize my querulous query under the gaze of my Formalist soul: can you expect me to give you, can I be expected to offer you a State of the Art report on either SF criticism or (preferably, for wider interest) of SF itself, our focus and *Schmerzenskind*? If so, the expectations will be disappointed: I have no time to read all that is necessary, write it, and regurgitate it to you in fifty minutes ... And if I had, surely you could not be expected to sit through it. So let me instead offer you an unashamed impression only about SF criticism, which has by now advanced and diversified beyond all the dreams and nightmares we pioneers had in the 1960s. We have by now theoreticians for all constituencies and streams: ruling out my own generation from Bruce Franklin, Stanislaw Lem, Joanna Russ, and Fredric Jameson on, if you want the PoMo menu, we can serve you Csicsery-Ronay and the terminal Bukatman, with some Fekete vituperation for sour cream. You prefer the Feminist version of PoMo, here is Donna Haraway as a patron saint of merry cyborgs and primates watched by women researchers, and Sarah LeFanu or Constance Penley as operative spearheads – not to speak of punning feminist humanists such as Marleen Barr. You want a kind of reach-me-down Neo-Historicist, we can come up with Gary Westfahl, who has applied the insight that power is everything into a constant “in your face, buster” style insuring that nobody’ll tangle with *him*! You want academics, well of course there’s the whole pretentiously theoretical *S-F Studies* crowd carping from the edges of the Empire or the more commonsensical US academic mainstream of *Extrapolation*, blessedly untainted by the fading pinkish colours of their rival and believing with Pangloss that everything that is is right; and on the other NATO lakeshore the eminently British empiricist mixture of writers and academics, sometimes in eminent personal union à la Brian Aldiss and Ian Watson, the professional gentlemen finally talking at each other in *Foundation*, fortunately not quite US-style professionals watching with eagle eye the idiot multitude’s beer money ... Beyond parody, I have learned much from all of them, even some from Westfahl – just as they learned much from SF. In fact I would assert that you can gauge the limit-qualities of each critic by noting which SF texts they induce from: Haraway from the best case

of Butler, Penley from the K/S fanzines, Fekete and Broderick from the later Delany, Aldiss from Shelley (alas the finally upper-class recuperated Mary without Percy), Parrinder not only from Wells but also from Bernal, Haldane, and co.

While this is great fun and I could go on all evening and leave at least those of you who like academic wit rolling in the aisles, it might be more profitable to focus – not on the State of New SF, but at least on some cool date-palm oases in what I used to perceive as the rapidly encroaching desertification of the genre, strip-mined by Hollywood, TV, and fast-buck publishers pressuring luckless writers into Procrustean trilogies and as much Fantasy with as many vampires as possible in congress each with more and more housewives (notoriously the largest reading public after the teens stopped reading). But Formalism not being on the menu tonight, I cannot serve you exemplary analyses. I can only say that, having read mo' better SF in the last few years, I think this hypothetical model is too simple. Binary oppositions of the desert-oasis kind have a hard time surviving today. We are at a confluence of an ideology and a market acceleration: the maxim “if Socialism is dead, everything is permitted”³ (which would have made Dostoevsky smile acidly) has grown into a horrendous hegemony punishing recalcitrants by lack of income, career, and fame; and beyond that, the diversification of micro-events within the really existing capitalism is increasing faster than our abilities to hypothesize them into yes and no. So I shall end with a reconsideration of a general epistemic category as cognitive tool, which may also be a self-criticism: for I am talking about (not Jerusalem but) the novum.

3 “In the words of the Master Assassin, Hassan-i-Sabbah (used as the epigraph to David Cronenberg’s adaptation of *Naked Lunch* [1991]) ‘*Nothing is true. Everything is permitted*’” (cited in Bukatman 91).

4. “Droppin’ Science”: The Dream of Reason Begets Monsters, and the Novum

When economic necessity is replaced by the necessity for boundless economic development, the satisfaction of primary human needs is replaced by an uninterrupted fabrication of pseudo-needs which are reduced to the single pseudo-need of maintaining the reign of the autonomous economy.

— GUY DEBORD, *Society of the Spectacle*

Quid novi rabidus struis? [What novelty do you furious plot?]

— SENECA, *Thyestes*

“What’s new?” is an interesting and broadening eternal question, but one which, if pursued exclusively, results only in an endless parade of trivia and fashion, the silt of tomorrow. I would like, instead, to be concerned with the question “What is best?,” a question which cuts deeply rather than broadly, a question whose answers tend to move the silt downstream.

— R.M. PIRSIG, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*

Lenin did not want to speak in an old or in a new way. He spoke in a pertinent way.

— BERTOLT BRECHT, “The Debate on Expressionism”

4.1

I have always maintained SF is not “about” science but only correlative to a mature scientific method. Yet let us take a closer look at this method, and principally at who uses it how in whose interest and with what results. It is used by *intellectuals*, as a rule in the service of capitalist collectivities (States or corporations); in the guise of “technology,” it has become a directly intervening and decisive force of production; the fruits thereof are contradictory: potentially liberating, today at best mixed, and at worst catastrophic: a good chance at destroying vertebrate life on this planet through profiteering and militarism (see Mumford).

In this century, as capital has been completing its moulting from individual into corporate, Fordism was characterized by “hard” technology (crucially all those associated with mass car transport), semi-automation, State planning, and the rise of mass media and advertising; and Post-Fordism by “soft” technology (crucially computer technology and biotechnology, where gene-splicing techniques invented in 1973 provide a possibly more weighty watershed than the oil-shock), automation, mega-corporations and world market regulation, and the integration of the media with the computer under total domination of marketing. An exemplary case may be the technology of mobility: under Fordism these were telephone via wire cable, cars and roads winning over the older railroad, and postal services; under Post-Fordism, mass use of air transport, fibre-optic cable, and satellite communications leading to fax and e-mail. In both cases, as mentioned in 2.2, more “software” or “human engineering” people were needed than before. One of the century’s earmarks is therefore the enormous multiplication and enormous institutionalization or collectivization of the earlier independent artisan and small entrepreneur. This ensured not only higher production but also its supervision and the general ideological updating, i.e., it was “not all justified by the social necessities of production [but] by the political necessities of the dominant [class]” (Gramsci 13). (Writers of books, as opposed to people in “media entertainment,” are perhaps the last word-smiths or craftsmen still for the moment not fully dependent – whence for example the praise of the artisan in the clairvoyant Dick.)

These “new middle classes” comprised roughly everybody who works sitting down but does not employ other people: it is in fact a congerie of social classes including teachers, office workers, salespeople, the so-called “free” professions, etc. Often classified as part of a “service” sector, they could be properly called “the salaried classes.” Their core is constituted by “intellectuals,” largely university graduates (but see more precisely the classical Wright Mills book, *Noble*, and the *Ehrenreichs*), people who work mainly with images and/or concepts and, among other functions, “produce, distribute and preserve distinct forms of consciousness” (Mills 142): Hobsbawm calculates that two thirds of the GNP in the societies of the capitalist North are now derived from their labour (so that Bourdieu’s metaphor of human “cultural capital” accompanied a literal state of affairs),

though their proportion within the population is much inferior. Politically, they (we) may be very roughly divided into servants of the capitalist and/or bureaucratic state, of large corporations, self-proclaimed “apolitical” or “esthetic” free-floaters, and radicals taking the plebeian side; the alliance of the first and fourth group with some non-“intellectual” classes determined both the original Leninism and New Deal. What the Japanese call “salarymen” (though as often as not they are women, in US already since 1940) are “the assistants of authority” (Mills 74), but no authority can abide without their assistance. The socialist tradition from Marx through Lenin to Bukharin, Gramsci, and Brecht has therefore always oscillated between praising the intelligentsia – for example the students – as the conscious interpreter of social contradictions and chastising it with scorpions as the producer of fake consciousness; the Marxists rightly (if as a rule rather schematically) saw in this a homology to the intellectuals’ ambiguous status of salaried dependents (see for one example Lenin’s polemic with Bernstein, 208–09). Is there perhaps a crucial distinction between the creative intelligentsia proper (to which all of the above names belonged), as opposed to reproductive or distributive intellectuals, for example teachers and engineers (Debray 95 and *passim*)?

In the Fordist dispensation, liberal ideology claimed that the world is composed of inner-directed atomic individuals within atomic national States, all of which can and will achieve infinite progress in riches by means of technology in a competitive market. The new collectivism, while mouthing Liberal slogans stripped of the State worship, needs other-directed intellectuals. Post-Fordism has had quite some success in making intellectual “services” more marketable, a simulacrum of profit-making. This was always the case in sciences and engineering: industrial production since ca. the 1880s is the story of how “the capitalist, having expropriated the worker’s property, gradually expropriated his technical knowledge as well” (Lasch xi, and see Noble). In the age of World Wars this sucks in law, medicine, and “soft-science” consulting in the swarms of “professional expertise” mercenaries. Now, in the polarized and non-Keynesian situation, those who buck the market better get themselves to a nunnery. The class aggressions by big corporations against the immediate producers, corporeal and intellectual (the Belly against the Hands and the Brain, to reuse the fable of Menenius

Agrippa), means that Jack London's dystopian division of workers under the Iron Heel into a minority of indispensable Mercenaries and a mass of downtrodden proletarians (updated, say, by Piercy in *He, She and It*) has a good chance of being realized. The PoMo variant, where the proles buy in the local supermarket the hand-me-down Guccis they have seen on the idiot box model-parades while the mercenaries live in Aspen or Provence and commute through cyberspace, does not invalidate this early Modernist diagnosis ("labour aristocracy" in Lenin's language), rather it incorporates all the talk about status.

We are not quite there yet: in the meantime, most intellectuals share the split orientation of all middle classes, pulled between wage-labour and the desire to control their work: "its individuals live or attempt to live an elite life, evading through 'culture,' while their knowledge serves capitalism [...] They live a double life [...], inside the 'system' but with alibis, [...] in a *jouissance* half real and half illusory." (Lefebvre 32–33). What Debray calls the reproductive or distributive intellectuals (95 and *passim*) – the engineers of material and human resources, the admen and "design" professionals, the new bishops and cardinals of the media clerisy, most lawyers and engineers, as well as the teeming swarms of supervisors (we teachers are increasingly adjunct policemen keeping the kids off the streets), etc. – are the Post-Fordist mercenaries, whom PoMo cynicism has dispensed from alibis.

But beyond the cynicism of the fast buck, the horizon of these crucial swing classes, who profited most from "really existing science," has been scientism (including orthodox Marxism). If scientism in the West meant, as Le Guin says, "technological edge mistaken for moral [and political] superiority" (4), then the so-called Post-Modernism is its symmetrical obverse, carried by the mobile fraction of the elite humanist intelligentsia that was rendered homeless by the hurricane that tore down both the Rooseveltian New Deal and "really existing socialism" (see Wolfe 587) and adopted with a vengeance the obfuscating PR techniques of "commodity scientism," plucking a perverse exultation out of despair, "[getting a bang] from the big bang" (Hall 131).

Commodity scientism – a notion exemplified by Michael L. Smith in his essay on the marketing of the NASA Moon venture but applicable as

well, for example, to the nuclear bombs and industry – means a systematic fusion of a select technology and image-creation in the service of a politico-ideological project, so that

[...] the products of a market-aimed technology are mistaken for the scientific process, and those products, like science, become invested with the inexorable, magical qualities of an unseen social force. For the consumer, the rise of commodity scientism has meant the eclipse of technological literacy by an endless procession of miracle-promising experts and products. For advertisers and governments, it has meant the capacity to recontextualize technology, to assign to its products social attributes that are largely independent of the products' technical design or function [i.e., of their use-value]. (179)

In this key operation of consumer capitalism, “progress” is identified with science, science with technology, and technology with new products supposedly enriching life but in fact enriching the financiers while brainwashing the taxpayers (Smith 182). SF writers of the Asimov-to-Bova “integrated” wing have made it a (lucrative) point of honor to spearhead the touting of commodity scientism. Yet SF writers have also, like all intellectuals, split “into those who perceived their interests to be aligned with the military-industrial complex and those who did not” (Smith 233). For one example of the “critical” wing, Vonnegut noted how the Earth in the pretty NASA pictures “looks so clean. You can’t see all the hungry, angry earthlings down there – and the smoke and the sewage and trash and sophisticated weaponry” (cited in Smith 207).

4.2

With this I come to my introduction of the novum as the distinguishing hallmark of SF. *The novum* is obviously predicated on the importance, and potentially the beneficence, of novelty and change, linked to science and progress. Perhaps because both socialists and liberals were comfortable with this, I have the impression no other part of my theoretical toolbox has been received with so little demur. I’ll now proceed to doubt it.

It's not only that the critical consensus makes me, an inveterate Ibsenian enemy of the solid majority, suspicious: what have I done wrong if I am praised in those quarters? It is also that living under Post-Fordism brings new insights: we are in a whirl of change that has co-opted science, but where has it got us? First, is our overheated society better than the "colder" one of (say) Tang China? There's more of us but do we have more space or more trees, per person? We have less back-breaking toil, but more mind-destroying aimlessness resulting in person-killing by drug and gun; we have WCs but also cancer and AIDS ... (If you read Delany you will see that public toilets is where you get AIDS.) So it suddenly comes into sharper focus that change within one lifetime grew to be normal and mandatory only with industrial capitalism and bourgeois revolutions, and that applied scientific mass production, characteristically, first came about in the Napoleonic Wars. Two hundred years later, we live in an ever faster circulation of what Benjamin called *das Immerwiedergleiche*, the recurring whirligig of fads that do not better human relationships but allow oppression and exploitation to continue with a new lease on life: "The perpetual rush to novelty that characterizes the modern marketplace, with its escalating promise of technological transcendence, is matched by the persistence of pre-formed patterns of life [...]: a remarkably dynamic society that goes nowhere" (Noble xvii, see Suvin "Two"; also Jameson *Late*, on Adorno and the parallels between technological and esthetic novum, especially 162–64 and 189–93). Indeed, in its systematic dependence on foreign and civil wars, i.e., weapons production, as well as on strip-mining human ecology for centuries into the future, this society is based on "a productive system efficient in details but supremely wasteful and irrational in its general tendency" (Lasch xiii, and see Wood 265 and *passim*).

As to science, I do not want at all to lose its central cognitive impetus and orientation toward the systematic and testable understanding of material processes. I am in favour of its deep reformation *in capite et membris* rather than of its (anyway impossible) evacuation – of Haraway rather than Heidegger. But its reduction to absolute, subjectless, objectivist analysis meant opposing science to art as reason to emotion and male to female. Score one against fiction using it. Science meant incorporating novelty after novelty into a more and more simple explanation of the world that

culminated in the fortunately unsuccessful quest for the Unified Field theory in physics. In brief, everything is explainable by generalizations, which can ultimately all be stated in terms of universal laws in Newton's "absolute" spacetime. Score two against fiction, a "thick" description of concrete spacetimes, using it. Science as institution became a cultural pressure system simultaneously legitimating and disciplining the world's cadres or elite, in unholy tandem with the converging pressure-systems disciplining and exploiting the less skilled workforce usually called sexism and racism (this has been exhaustively rehearsed from Weber through the better Frankfurters such as Horkheimer and Marcuse to Mumford, and see Wallerstein 107–22). In the scientists' professional lives – not to speak of the engineers – it enforced narrow specialization that wiped out civic responsibility for knowledge and its insertion into production in favour of almost total identification with the capitalist hegemony (see Kevles and Noble, so far as I remember applied to SF only by the perspicacious Berger), and it got commodified into a series of Minimum Publishable Units. Symmetrically, we have watched the "elite" enthusiasm for bureaucratized and profit-oriented rationalism causing the understandable (if wrong) mass reaction into mistrust and horror, engendering all possible irrationalisms. Score three, and knockout, against fiction using science-as-we-know-it (as well as irrationalism-as-we-know-it). And I take it I do not have to speak about so-called "hard SF" except to say it is interesting in proportion to its failing to carry out its program (for example in David Brin).

So the only sane way to see science, the world's leading cognitive structure but also (as I argued in 1.2) macro-metaphor and, most important, a historically constituted collective practice fulfilling clear and strongly enforced interests of social groups in power, is not as the Messiah but as Goethe's two-souled Faust. Science as we know it in the last 200 years is a battlefield of "*the productive forces of labour and the alienating and destructive forces of commodity and capital*" – of cognition and exploitation (Mandel 216; and see Feenberg 195 and passim). The productive capacity of labour to wax cognitive may be seen in this – to my mind beautiful and astounding – dialogue:

MARK DERY: What does the hip-hop catchphrase “droppin’ science” mean?

TRICIA ROSE: It means sharing knowledge, knowledge that is generally inaccessible to people, together with a fearlessness about stating what you believe to be the truth. There’s also the implication that the information you’re imparting is going to revolutionize things because this is the truth that has been deliberately and systematically denied. Science, here, stands in for incontrovertible evidence. Science is understood as that space where the future takes place.

(Dery ed. 214–15)

Obversely, the stance of mastery over nature is inextricably intertwined with that over people; let us ponder Lincoln’s conclusion, “As I would not be a slave, so I would not be a master” (which was also Brecht’s, see the poem “Kicked Out for a Good Reason”). In Marx’s words, “modern industry [...] makes science a productive force distinct from labour and presses it into service of capital” (*Capital* 397). Revealingly, the language spoken by and in turn, as Wittgenstein would say, speaking commodified science is permeated by that selfsame warfare which in fact funded and stimulated its exponential growth: “the war on cancer and poverty, the battle against HIV, the struggle against old age and death itself” (Babich, “Hermeneutics” 26). In sum, science and technology’s promise of easing life is in capitalism tightly coupled with and as a rule subsumed into its being “a mode of organizing [...] social relationships, a manifestation of prevalent thought and behavior patterns, an instrument for control and domination” (Marcuse 414). As to machines, they have become “means for producing surplus value”; “the central machine from which the motion comes [in the factory is] not only an automaton but an autocrat” (Marx, *Capital* 492 and 549): “technologies clearly have their purposes built into them” (Lummis 83). As to overt ideology, technocratic futurology (the nightmarish Laplace ideal of knowing the paths of each atom and therefore foreseeing every event from now to Doomsday, repeated by Asimov’s Hari Seldon), based on the invalid premise of extrapolation (from market research), added “a new knowledge commodity: the opportunity to ‘explore’ alternative futures within the confines of the existing system,” and thus combine corporate profit with the worst aspect of deterministic pseudo-Marxism (Ross 176–77, and see his whole section on 173–92 which includes

“futures trading”). This kind of science cannot indicate the way to Hercules at the crossroads: we must indicate the way to it.

I was trying to get at that with my early distinction between true and fake novums: but is this enough? What follows from the strict commodifying parallels of ever shorter cycles: reduction of production and circulation time (including planned use-value obsolescence), reduction of attention-span of the sound-bite generation, reduction of stocks in magazines, quicker turnover of books and of fashions in attention-grabbing ideas, constraint to accelerated though exclusively profit-oriented technological innovation and R-and-D mentality – one intermittent SF theoretician, reputed to be a CIA expert, defined SF as the fiction of R-and-D! – and the fictional or esthetic stress on unceasing circulation of innovations (see Haug 39–44 and Mandel 182 and *passim*)? What happens when “[t]he key innovation is not to be found in chemistry, electronics, automatic machinery [...], but rather in the transformation of science itself into capital” (Braverman 166)? What if, in such “hotter” capitalism, Einstein’s competing time-measurements translate into a choice among spacetimes of capital investments (Kwangtung China vs. Canton Ohio), and “the avant-garde strategy of innovation at any price becomes the paradigm of dominant economic practice” (Goux 218)? “Now everything is new; but by the same token, the very category of the new then loses its meaning [...]” (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 311). What if the great majority of scientific findings are today, axiologically speaking, fake novums? Predetermined by the mega-fake novum of science transubstantiated into capital, our contemporary version of Destiny, in an age when science and technology is “the racing heart of corporate capitalism” (Noble xxv), they produce changes and innovations that make for increased market circulation and profit rather than for a more pleasurable, light, easy life – brandy tinted brown by caramel rather than aging slowly in oak casks. This is masked behind obfuscating PR; and what if much art is in the same race, incorporating PR into text-immanent sensationalism, curlicues, and kitsch (see in Benjamin’s essays the tension between Baudelaire and Brecht)? What happens to “making it new,” the battle-cry of great anti-bourgeois Modernism from Baudelaire and Rimbaud on, when the horrors of world-wide wars become the leading, oft-employed, and never-failing

labs for technoscientific and hierarchical “modernization” of society under increasing repressive control and conditioning?

A pithy way of putting this is Brecht’s note from 1948 about “calls for novelty” from Germany which seemed extremely suspect: “For what these voices really call for is a new repression, a new exploitation, a new barbarism. The real novelty is NO REPRESSION, NO EXPLOITATION, NO BARBARISM ANY MORE” (BBA 154/29–31).

In sum: innovation in art has often precious little to do with new relationships between people, however estranged – including the self-proclaimed orthodox SF task of reflecting upon the social relations shaping technology (see Huntington 179 and *passim*). “Whoever says ‘new,’ however, [...] also fatally raises the spectre of Revolution itself, in the sense in which its concept once embodied the ultimate vision of the *Novum* [...]” (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 311). This was certainly my (anachronistic) perspective in 1977. But in this quintessentially counterrevolutionary age, innovation has deliquesced into a stream of sensationalist effects largely put into service of outdating and replacing existing commodities for faster circulation and profit. Harvey has even suggested that spectacles, with their practically instant turnover time, i.e., “the production of events” rather than of goods, provide the ideal Post-Fordist model (156–57); just as oil, steel or electricity companies can only look with envy at the model monopolization in book publishing (in the US already ten years ago 2 percent of the publishers controlled 75 percent of the books published; three distributors handled 95 percent of all SF and Fantasy – Harvey 160 and Chalker 28). But profitable consumption (the one measured by GNP) is not carried out only by means of spectacles: finally, the *novum* has in the new hegemony become wedded to war as the most cruel fakery and opposite of any revolution radically bettering human relationships. Competing with Leninist revolution and finally overcoming it, destructive innovations have become THE genuinely formative experience of the post-1914 age.

The function of possibly the nearest cultural analog of SF, pop music, has been characterized as: “The young see in it the expression of their revolts, the mouthpiece of their dreams and lacks, while it is in fact a channelling of imagination, a pedagogy of general enclosure of societal relations into the commodity” (Attali 219). This may be overly monolithic. But for the

emblematic example of the US SF films of the 1980s Sobchack has persuasively shown that their new depthlessness, ahistoricism, and changed emotional tone “no longer figure the alienation generated by a ‘whole new economic system,’ but rather our *incorporation* of that new system and our *absorption* by it” (252). And clearly, most of the unspeakable SF series, the “endless succession of 1500-page Tolkienesque or military trilogies and worse” (Broderick 52), as well as the final works by Heinlein and Asimov subordinate use-value (cognition and estrangement) to the brand-name “event.” As Aldiss noted, “The awful victories of *The Lord of the Rings*, *Star Wars*, and *Star Trek* have brought – well, not actually respectability, but Instant Whip formulas to sf. The product is blander. It has to be immediately acceptable to many palates, most of them prepubertal” (108–09). I would only dissent when he blames this simply on “mass taste”: it is a taste manipulated and brainwashed through decades of censorship, aggressive PR, and addictive fixes in all available media and forms.

Overall, the meteoric breakthrough of US SF after the 1930s is part of the High Fordist sea-change of commercialized culture from repeating the familiar commonsense for generations on end to wrapping a more deeply buried commonsense into surface, co-optable novelties (for example, illicitly extrapolating 1776 or the Cold War into galaxies). The exasperatedly unsatisfied needs and desires of most people have to be reorganized more quickly and sensationally. This is certainly not the whole story of SF, but it is its institutional framework, which broke down to a significant extent only in the “one-eighth revolutions” (Brecht) of the antifascist years and the 1960s. The simulation of quality, equally in everyday life and in formal culture (an excellent example are almost all SF movies and TV serials) may be the rational basis of Dick’s and Baudrillard’s differing simulacra.

In brief, while expecting a revolution leading to a qualitatively better mode of people living together, it was reasonable or maybe mandatory to bank on the novum. But when getting ever deeper into the belly of the whale, the novum of wandering through its entrails has to be met by much suspicion. So, perhaps a labour-saving and nature-saving society would also need novums, but just how many? Might we not rather wish, as William Morris did, for the true novum of “an epoch of rest”? Philosophically speaking, should we not take another look at the despised Aristotelian “final

cause”? Religiously speaking, why do the great Asian creeds such as Daoism and Buddhism suddenly look more enlightening than the “hotter” and more frantic monotheistic ones which cleared the ground for capitalism? Politically speaking, what if science is the whore of capitalism helping it to infect the planet, or (if you so desire) a more and more powerful engine in the irrational perpetually automobilized system of cars and highways with capitalism in the driving seat heading for a crash with all of us unwilling passengers – how does one then relate to the novums in car power and design? How does one focus on anti-gravity, or at least rolling roads, or at the very least electrical cars (which could have existed before Ford if the patents had not been bought up and suppressed by the automotive industry)? And what about similar crashes in computer networks, arrived or arriving? Should the life of people without computers, cellular phones, www, and so on, be described as not worth living: as the Nazis called the inferior races’ *lebensunwertes Leben*?

I have no full solution to this dilemma (I have myself opted to have a computer and no car), except to say that my quite conscious founding decision in *Metamorphoses*, dating from a silent debate with Brecht in the 1950s, to use the nomination of “cognition” instead of “science” has been fully justified, and should be articulated further. The way out does not seem to me to lie in the direction of Arthur Clarke’s equation of science and magic, which is seriously misleading precisely insofar as it stresses the mythical and elitist side of scientism, complicitous with “commodity scientism” (see Smith in 4.1 and Williams *Problems*), and in fact much debased in comparison to (for example) shamanism. I am afraid many feminists fall into the same, if symmetrically obverse, kind of trap if and when they stress magic against science rather than the empowering role-models to be found in either. With Gautama the Buddha and Diderot, I am in favour of enlightenment. And, as Adorno noted, the New is irresistible in modern art (36–37). But at a minimum the incantatory use of the novum category as explanation rather than formulation of a problem has to be firmly rejected. Novum is as novum does: it does not supply justification, it demands justification. This may be formulated as: *we need radically liberating novums only*. By “radically liberating” I mean, as Marx did, a quality opposed to simple marketing difference: a novelty that is in critical opposition to

degrading relationships between people – and, I strongly suspect, in fertile relation to memories of a humanized past (Bloch's *Antiquum*). Where is the progress progressing to?

4.3

And yet, let me mark toward the end some unease with, or better contradictions within, the frequent apocalyptic tone of the last twenty years, from which my positions are not so far that they could not profit from some delimitation. To schematize with help of the unavoidable binaries: there is a big difference between the lamentation of a tired emperor in flight, or of a money-changer ejected from the temple, and that of Yeremiyahu (whom the Gentiles call Jeremiah); between the apocalypse as seen by a Parisian intellectual cynic and by the political exile John at Patmos in a kind of Dischian "Camp Concentration"; between profitably elegant snivelling and pessimism of the intellect uncompromisingly seeking lucidity (which, as Sorel and Gramsci taught us, is quite compatible with optimism of the will). The latter refuses the discursive and revelatory monopoly of the rulers. To the former, but I would say only to the former, Derrida's 1980 pastiche ironizing a newly fashionable "apocalyptic tone" applies:

Verily I tell you, it is not only the end of this here but also and first of that there, the end of history, the end of the class struggle, the end of philosophy, the death of God, the end of religions, [...] the end of the subject, the end of man, the end of Oedipus, the end of the earth, *Apocalypse Now*, I tell you, in the deluge, the fire, the blood, the fundamental earthquake, the napalm that falls from heavens by helicopters [...]. ("On a Newly" 145, tr. modified; see also Jay)

True, any apocalyptic proposition will say that the end is near or here: but the end of what, and what comes after the end? Is the proper position of a (provisional) survivor of the Deluge the one I mentioned above, "if there's no dry land left [no absolutes], everything is permitted," or is it rather, "how many arks of what kind do we need, and in which direction may the dove look for shores?" Do we have to regret the fallen stone monuments of princes, should we not rather say good riddance and take

as our example dolphins frolicking in the agitated waves, the dying generations in one another's arms? The very act of penning and disseminating an apocalypse (admitting for the moment but not conceding that that's what I am doing) means that its hyperboles include the tiny but momentous gate of salvation, Benjamin's "weak messianic power" that is given unto each and all of us. Apocalypse is problem and not solution, to invert Stokely Carmichael: a real, most pressing problem that has to be worked through. The plagues traditionally accompanying the apocalypse will not be dealt with by old antibiotics: progress, expanding GNP, onwards and upwards (excelsior), reason identified with the bottom line. We are in between two major bifurcations: one ended the "short twentieth century" 1917–89 (Hobsbawm); the other, economists whom I think well of speculate, may be expected somewhere around 2015 give or take a decade, when the raw materials of the automobile age run out. Our focus, our fears and hopes, should be on the future and not on the past bifurcation. The old, including the old New, is dead, the new has not yet managed to see the light of the day and we are not sure whether it will in our lifetimes (surely not in mine): and in the meanwhile, a too long while, the old masquerades as the newest; as Gramsci and Brecht concluded, "in the half-light monsters rise up" (Lipietz 59).

Only too often, the apocalyptic panic is one at the loss of privilege; and yet the original sense is still that of a disclosure, uncovering (*kaluptein*, to cover), or what Swift properly called, "The Revelation or rather the Apocalypse of all State-arcana" (*Tale of the Tub*, see *OED* s.v. "apocalypse"). If we today find it useless to call it a revelation of The Truth, we might say: the constitution of operative truths. These guides to actions are not to be found through a consensus of the brainwashed but only through a cooperation of Ibsenian Enemies of the People. But they have in common with the old Truth an orientation toward the whole, toward "the *universalia* of history, within which people take up their [...] proper place" (Böhme 383). This kind of apocalypse, as Hartmut Böhme notes, is not the Elysian Fields of the sated upper class but raw and plebeian, sprung from distress, favouring poetic images not subject to the conceptual discipline of the hegemonic discourse, dealing with hate and loss, passionate sacrifice and cruelty, tender love and acceptable death. There is a commanding "transcendental

signifier" (and signified), but by Jamesonian contraries, as an awful warning in the subjunctive: "if we don't find ..." (as in Brecht-Weill's Alabama Song) a way out from the genosuicidal mastery that rules us, then "I tell you, I tell you, I tell you we must die." No apocalypse (especially one at the end of huge empires amid huge global wars) can be without blood: in Schiller's phrase "Die Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht" (World history is the Judgment Day). Yet secularizing it against the vampiric fundamentalisms of bank and religion, we should today not call for streams of blood but meditate how to minimize them.

4.4

And finally, from this follows for us as students of SF and utopianism: the way out is not the placeless atopia of the playful signifier and absent signified, this unbearably simplifying binary at some point much touted by its best writer, Delany. The static utopia was cognitively dead in the nineteenth century, though its putrefying cadaver poisoned most of the twentieth. Our problem is its successor: atopia is today as dead as utopia was in the nineteenth century and as pernicious as static utopia was in the twentieth (see on atopia's theoretical incarnations Meaghan Morris, especially 25, and Suvin "Polity"). To quote the theoretician of atopia: "Instead of informing as it claims, instead of giving form and structure, information neutralizes even further the 'social field'; more and more it creates an inert mass impermeable to the classical institutions of the social, and to the very contents of information" (Baudrillard 25). He also, quite rightly, identifies meaningless discourse with terrorism (the real, psychic one). The powerful talent of Delany is always tempted by the narcissism of gazing at his own textuality and writing about an incomplete subject-production, while the Ballardian "inner spaces" are a refuge from traumatic post-imperial history but also a Jungian black hole (see Bukatman 7 and *passim*). Beyond utopia and atopia, we need a space of dynamic alternatives – let me appropriate for it (as in essay 5) the term of heterotopia. Beyond our pernicious polarities of personal vs. public, male vs. female or inner vs. outer (and so on *ad nauseam*), we have to forsake the fake "reason" that "is

in fact [...] a standardization of the world imposed fully as much by the economic system as by ‘Western science’” (Jameson, *Late 15*), that is at best contaminated by capitalist exploitation and at worst of a piece with it. As was, again, noted by the less apocalyptic among the Frankfurt School, scientific rationalization tends “to destroy precisely that substance of reason in whose name it invokes progress” (Horkheimer 14). But then we need a new reasonableness: a rationality that incorporates much refurbished science but also permanent self-estrangement and self-criticism under the eyes of plebeian apocalypse, most importantly by practices not reducible to clear-cut concepts yet articulated in topological propositions – for example, those usually called emotions and approached in pioneering ways by some Feminist theoreticians (see Suvin, “Cognitive”). Already Nietzsche had surmised that we have to “look at science in the light of art, but at art in the light of life” (19; see also Babich, *Nietzsche’s*).

As can be seen in the best works of today’s SF: Butler or Cadigan or Piercy or Stan Robinson.⁴

- 4 My thanks go to my friend Ziva Ben-Porat, who invited me to give a first sketch of this at a Tel Aviv University symposium on SF in 1995; for clarifying my thoughts about Wallerstein, Hobsbawm, and similar, to the study circle with Andrea Levy, Eugenio Bolongaro, and Qussai Samak; to Babette Babich, Marleen Barr, Wolf Haug, R.D. Mullen, and Erik Simon; and to McGill University for a sabbatical leave in 1995. The final shape was stimulated by the kind invitation of John Moore to give a keynote speech at the Luton University 1996 conference on Alternative Futures. The chapter is inscribed to a friend and maître à penser, Fred Jameson: without his work and our discussions, even those where I disagreed, I doubt this text would be here.

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