

## CHAPTER 9

# Utopianism from Orientation to Agency: What Are We Intellectuals under Post-Fordism to Do? (1997–1998)<sup>1</sup>

To the memory of Bob Elliott, Herbert Marcuse, and Louis Marin  
and to Predrag Matvejević, the utopian of “ex”

Monsieur est Persan? Comment peut-on être Persan?  
[You are a Marxist/ utopian/ activist? How can one be a Marxist/ uto-  
pian/ activist? – PoMo translation]

— MONTESQUIEU, *Lettres Persanes*

“Bring your knowledge of disaster”  
(telegram summoning Charles Beard to Tôkyô after the great  
earthquake)

<sup>1</sup> Since I did my survey on at least the definitional aspect of utopia a quarter of century ago (Chapter 1 in this book), a huge amount of secondary literature has come about dealing both directly and indirectly (methodologically) with utopia – not only in English but also (to mention the richest European traditions) German, Italian, and French. It is well-known to most of us, but I wish today to exercise a creative forgetfulness in regard to it. For, my project is to focus not so much on a “horizontally” self-enclosed tradition (which is in part operative as generic memory and in good part constructed by us critics) as it is, primarily and perhaps right now even exclusively, to concentrate on the “vertical” interplay of utopian horizons, existents, and events with the “thick” experience of endangered living together in Post-Fordism. Nonetheless it ought to be apparent that my thinking is centrally stimulated and modified not only by the “indirect” masters such as Barthes, Hall, Jameson, or Williams, but also by the “direct” critics from (say) Bauman to Zamyatin (I find it interesting that most of the first category have also committed some direct writing on utopia/nism).

### o. “The Dark Now” (free after Bloch)

We literally do not want to be what we are.

— KIERKEGAARD

o.1

What is to be done by an intellectual wedded to utopianism in what Hölderlin, suffering from the breakdown of the great French Revolution, called the *dürftige Zeit* (forgetting the misinterpretation by Heidegger, this can be rendered as penurious, indigent, shabby, needy, mean, paltry, poor times)? How do we find the proper “point of attack” to begin articulating the lay of this wasted land and the ways that might be found out of it? I shall start with a little known lecture by Foucault (discussed in Macherey, “Natural” 181–84), who poses the question: “What then is this present to which I *belong*? [...] and (what is more) [what is the thinker’s] role in this process where he [*sic*] finds himself both an element and an actor.” I interpret this to mean that, as opposed to the individualist Me, there is no subjectivity which does not centrally include belonging to what Sartre would call a situation, out of which her projects are elaborated. Foucault goes on to comment that such questioning no longer asks (or I would say, does not only ask) about “his belonging to a doctrine or to a tradition,” but about “his *belonging to a certain ‘us’*[...].” This “us,” I would further update Foucault, participates in a given cultural as well as politico-economical ensemble of synchronic relationships, “present” in all senses of that term. In the vein of Spinoza, all of us are *pars naturae* rather than simply a disembodied gaze standing over and above it, and we are constantly interpellated by various necessities of our constitutive situation. The thinker’s only alternative is whether to respond by going on to think to some purpose, of finding his freedom (as Engels almost said) in facing the interpellating necessity, or to respond as Dostoevsky’s childishly resentful Underground Man by saying “just because of that, I won’t respond.” In other words, as the good old reactionary Chesterton once remarked, you may be free to

draw a camel without humps, but then you will find out that you have not been free to draw a camel ...

If we decide that a thinker or intellectual is, by definition, the one who responds, who is responsive and responsible, then I shall supplement my point of attack by attempting to build upon a great ancestor who is a much less dubious role-model than Foucault, since he was not desperately reacting against the Communist Party, leftwing phenomenology, and Marxism but maintaining a fruitful critical dialog with them – Walter Benjamin. In the highly endangered *Jetztzeit* of the 1930s he concluded that an intellectual work should be judged not only by what is its attitude toward the relations of production but before all, by what is its position within them. It is in and because of this position, Benjamin held, that an intellectual producer is impelled by his professional or class interest to exercise solidarity with the producing workers (*Gesammelte Schriften* II.2: 683–701). I shall go on to discuss how we must today (building on Marx) add the relations of *consumption* as closing the circle of commodity fetishism and re-enchanting it, but also return to Benjamin's realistic central thrust. How does this hold for the writing, criticizing or indeed actualizing of utopias? Is it pragmatically appropriate or pertinent to the demands of the situation, is it oriented toward its nodal points, is it what Brecht called an intervening or meshing thinking (*eingreifendes Denken* – see also Macherey, “Materialist” 145–46)?

## 0.2

But this general orientation is not enough. One of the major lessons of the “short twentieth Century” has been, I feel, the dethroning of the nuclear, individualist or billiard-ball interior Self (I attempted an orientation in this field in “Polity”). This means raising the Subject into a problem and concomitantly the Body into a (sometimes fetishized) litmus paper for and final line of defence against the alienation of labour, reification of people's mutual relationships, and hegemonically created massification. The Marxian and Nietzschean recognition that agential praxis is the end-all

of understanding also spells the death-knell of the neat scientistic division between looking subject and looked-at object.

What then is this particular Darko Suvin able to contribute as a valid stance under the stars in the not quite Blochian *Dunkles Jetzt*? What is he/ am I supposed to say of note to a gathering of people seriously (and usually joyously) concerned with utopian ideas/ fictions/ colonies? Am I supposed to either further buttress or abandon my (in)famous sundering of the latter two, or my even more professionally transgressive refusal to sunder utopia and SF, both dating back to *MOSF*? I assume I have been punished enough for the latter by the almost unanimous refusal of the SF people to get aboard a discussion of utopianism (with a few precious exceptions such as Tom Moylan) unless written by women after Charlotte Perkins Gilman, and of the utopological people to even take into serious consideration what I wrote about More, Lucian, Swift, Blake, Percy Shelley, never mind the Frenchmen and Italians – in fact anything in the 120 pages between the theory and Wells, since it is in a book that has SF in its title; so that I can simply shrug my shoulders and say “transgressing the slots by which one lives in academe doesn’t pay, *sed salvavi animam meam*.” Or am I to turn to what are, to my mind, essential entries on the agenda of utopology today? – such as:

- the already mentioned *Body*;
- the already mentioned *Subject*, the multiply fragmented and malleable yet holistic Subject so overwhelming on today’s collectivized horizons;
- futures that are not simply exponential take-offs from the past, so that breaks in experience mask continuity in augmentation of profits, but whose point is to think the incorporation and revival for the memory of losses and victims: frame-altering, bifurcating *endangered futures*;

- or finally (which is maybe the same in other words: but then all these entries are aspects of one another) *the Dead*, in Benjamin's sense that even they are not safe if the enemy goes on winning, if the break masquerading as extrapolation swallows our past.<sup>2</sup>

But I have written about the Subject, the Body and its emotions, and death as presupposition of life in a number of other places (e.g., “The Subject,” “On Cognitive,” “Polity,” “The Use-Value of Dying” chapter in *Lessons*, “Emotion,” last not least in my poetry), and connecting it with the utopian hub from which they spring and/or to which they tend demands another book which I may not have time to write. So that I choose rather to incorporate Subject and Collective Bodies in an investigation which I think of as the continuation of the hint I gave in “Locus, Horizon, and Orientation” (now Chapter 5 in this book) namely that a fuller discussion demands providing a focus on the oriented agents able or failing to dynamize any – but most clearly the utopian – locus against certain horizons. This is a discussion which is in our present, no doubt tainted, terms political in both the most pragmatic daily sense and yet only if that is infused with the classical sense within which we humans were rightly defined as *politika zoa*, living beings of the city-state, communal animals. This might also be the most useful way to define my place not only towards but also within the Post-Fordist Deluge, and to ostend it to you as an articulation, a “polemical sketch of the salient activities and claims” (Ross 13), proposed for a debate we cannot live without.

2 A theme I wish I had spacetime to develop here is on intellectuals as the memory bump of society. I find obscene the phrase by Agnes Heller, born out of anti-utopian panic: “The history of the dead is dead history” (*A Philosophy of History in Fragments*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1993, 40). On the contrary, all sense of history is consubstantial with the actuality or fear of death (of the past, but also of the future), the longing in “If I forget thee, O Jerusalem ...!”.

## 1. Living in Fantasyland (Dystopia, also Fake Utopia and Anti-Utopia)

As long as there is still one beggar left, there will still be myth.

— BENJAMIN, *Gesammelte Schriften*

I.I

I shall enter into the thick of the matter by means of two apparently unrelated but I think revealing bits or bytes from the flood of information that so efficiently hides the constellations of extremist reality transformations from us today. One is the estimate of what I take to be the most trustworthy international source that as of the mid-1980s some 40 million people die from hunger each year, which is equal to 300 jumbo jet crashes per day every day with total loss of lives – and the number is steadily rising; or (I do not know which is worse) the UN report that in 1996 “[n]early 800 million people do not get enough food, and about 500 million are chronically malnourished” (Drèze-Sen *Hunger* 35 and *Human* 20; see also the too optimistic World Bank *Poverty*). The second is press reports according to which the ex-Mouseketeer Ms Billie Jean Matay unsuccessfully sued Disneyland not only for a hold-up of her family in the parking lot but also for the emotional trauma her grandchildren, aged five, seven, and eleven, suffered when they were taken backstage and saw Mickey Mouse and the Lion King removing the heads of their costumes (*Gazette* C15 and “Next”; I resist the temptation to linger at the Disney corporation’s emblematic progress from mouse to lion in order to follow the broad picture).

Now, I very much doubt the starving hundreds of millions or the couple of billion people eking out a living, at the periphery of the world system or dosing down in the center of the affluent cities of the North, would have time for the Matay family’s Disneyland trauma. They are absorbed by surviving the fallout from the civil and overt wars waged by the big corporations, and which with poetic justice migrate from their “hot” foci also into the “Third World inside the metropolis,” the creeping war

in all our slums so far best described in hip-hop and in the post-Dischian and post-Dickian dystopian SF of Piercy, Butler (Octavia, not Judith), Gibson, Spinrad or Cadigan. Nonetheless I submit to you there is a deep subterranean bond between, on the one hand, the starving bellies and bacterial epidemics among the masses of the South, and on the other hand, the starving minds and brainwashing epidemics moulding all of us in the North: a bond between misery and drugging, best incarnated by the AIDS pandemic, where the collapse of the bodies' immune system is an almost too pat allegory of PoMo capitalism. For, the ideological Disneyfication (and I shall return to the fact that the Disney corporation is by now one of the biggest "vertical" monopolists in movies, media, and book publishing) is a drug of the brainwashing variety. What is perhaps worst – and we intellectuals should know why – is that this drug functions by channelling the imagination rather than by chemical stimulation or inhibition: it uses the brain's imaginative powers to create empathetic images which are a fake Novum or what Louis Marin called a degenerate utopia. As the old theologians knew, the corruption of the best creates the worst, pre-empting any radical Novum or utopia – the indispensable precondition for altering the lot of Ms Matay's grandchildren as well as the millions upon millions of kids as seen (for example) in *Salaam Bombay*.

## I.2

As all opiates and fake utopianisms, Disneyfication is predicated upon alienated labour so that people crave compensatory satisfaction in "leisure time" consumption (Kracauer, Ewen). And in a further turn of the screw specific of our "society of the spectacle" (Debord), in Disneyfication as a privileged allegory and simultaneously metonymy of our *Lebenswelt* each citizen viewer is not only cut off from creative, satisfying work rather than "useless toil" under the profit system (as has been superbly formulated by William Morris); furthermore, she is cut off from the producing of (or in) the media and positioned within a mass of atomized fellow-viewers, where a dynamic "desire to consume [...] [is] the only permissible participation in the social process" (Bukatman 36–37). Even more clearly than in the

Keynesian papering over, today's permanent structural unemployment, financial speculation run mad, and ungovernable movements of capital are coupled with the image and spectacle society as an ever deeper loss of autonomy by people (see Jameson, "Five" 182).

Showmanship for the masses is, of course, as American as the six-shooter and apple pie. It started rocketing in importance at the same time as in Europe – in the mid-nineteenth century – but untrammelled by non-capitalist values, it developed more vigorously in the US, issuing in Barnum's great discovery of "making consumers feel both good (full) and bad (empty) about what they are buying, even as they are induced to believe that what they are buying determines who they are" (Roach 47). The fullness comes through magnetic induction (a feature of US showmanship as mesmerism, which Poe extrapolated presciently into arresting death) or feedback between a huckstered image that is accepted as the consumer's ideal self-image and tautologically found in the product as image. The emptiness preventing surfeit comes from never fully possessing that product, both because it is offered to a mass and because it will continually be updated as variations within what Benjamin called the always-again-same (*das Immerwiedergleiche*). It focuses on the consumer, explicitly delimited in US PR from Barnays on as "the contrary of the citizen, in a way the antidote to a collective expression of collective needs [...] to the care for a common good" (Gorz 66, and see his whole section 64ff.).

The inner springs of this ploy are that a manipulative class hegemony has to offer a consumer specific compensatory gratifications for his/her passivity. These substitutive gratifications are rechannelled *utopian desires* (Jameson, *Political* 287) for the obverse of what determines the consumer in everyday life (say: safety, beauty, abundance, joy ...). The abiding political, bodily disempowerment is by means of showmanship channelled into a restless rage for addictive consuming as a new anchor for collective unanimity where, paradoxically, the fake utopia is felt as personal. It has eaten into Ms Matay's brain so deeply that she sobbed uncontrollably in court at the loss of "the happy feeling" she had known in Disneyland and on the Mickey Mouse Club TV show in the 1950s. The slogans of this alienation are "comfort, affluence, consumerdom, unlimited scientifico-technical progress, omnipotence and good conscience, [...] values assumed by violence and

exploitation appearing disguised as law and order" (Marin 298).<sup>3</sup> Here we see, as Marin taught us precisely on the example of Disneyland, utopia eaten up by the very ideology which it was its original Morean and Morrisian function to fictionally unveil – in order, I would add, to rob ideology of its absolutizing and indisputable power, by interrupting its omnipresence, which then creates a chance of delivering it to the critique of practical reason. The viscous flow of what Marin calls ideology we might today more usefully call thinking saturated and shaped by capitalist pragmatics, a total immersion into the linear flow of consumption time. It is fuelled by an unacknowledged horror at the consumers' life emptied of meaning: "to be caulked off against Nothingness, *every* sense organ must be 'occupied' (a well-aimed description)" (Anders, *Antiquiertheit* I: 139), and this occupation leads to addictive hunger. To the contrary, recommending reading (and, metaphorically, looking at plays and at life) by leafing and footnotes, as a "complex seeing," Brecht noted: "almost more important than thinking within the flow is thinking above the flow (*das Überdenflussdenken*)" (*Gesammelte Werke* 24: 59).

I shall not follow up here the whole subtle, sometimes perhaps oversubtle, rhetoric of Marin's book about neutralization etc.; it may be of interest if I report that in a discussion we had before his untimely death, he admitted that his basic approach was still too dependent on Engels's by now untenable split between utopia and science (see Chapter 3 above). For our present pressing purposes, I shall focus only on a few generalizable foci of Marin's astute dissection of Disneyland, whose features can be discerned best, I shall argue, if we see it in terms of dystopia masquerading as utopia. This argument comprises two points. First, Marin quite rightly seized on what I would call reproductive empathy, the fact that

3 Cf. also some shrewd observations on the representativity of Disneyland by Baudrillard, Eco, and by the PoMo architect Venturi who however feels much more at home in it. It would be useful to get into an as extended analysis of Walt Disney World in Orlando, which I here, alas, cannot do.

[...] the Disneyland visitor is on the stage, an actor of the play being performed, caught by his role like the rat by the trap, and alienated into the ideological character he plays without knowing it [...]. “Performing” Disney’s utopia, the visitor “realizes” the ideology of the ruling class as the mythic legend of origins for the society in which he lives. (298–99)

Marin thus reactualized the founding insight Benjamin reached looking at movies and advertising, that “the commercial glance into the heart of things [...] demolishes the space for the free play of viewing” by abolishing any critical distance (*Gesammelte Schriften* IV.1: 131–32). Second, Disneyland – here read as a pioneering, topologically accessible, and even mappable, *pars pro toto* of the capitalist and especially US admass brainwash – is a “degenerated utopia” in two reinforcing ways, which I shall label transfer ideologizing and substitution commodifying. The analogy to Freud’s account of dream-work as removal and condensation (*Verdichtung, Verschiebung*) is striking, but the consumer-visitor’s work is imposed on her/his brain from the outside evacuating his/her creativity. It is analogous to a permanent hallucinatory REM-stage without the rest indispensable to prevent the work from turning into Morris’s “useless toil” with alienating upshot.

*Transfer ideologizing*, the first achievement of Disneyland is to perform a “Mickey Mouse” version of ideology: the continually reinforced empathizing immersion, the “thick,” topologically and figurally concrete, and seamless false consciousness, injects the hegemonic bourgeois version of US history into people’s neurons by twisting into a different semantics – thus “naturalizing” and neutralizing – three imaginative fields: *historical time* as the space of alternative choices; *the foreign/ers*; and the *natural world*. Marin does not focus much on historical time, except to suggest that it is turned into ideology, into the myth of technological progress (316 and 320–21), for example a clichetized Wild West in Frontierland (in Disney comics the past appears, if at all, as a space of farcical eccentrics). He does not fully conceptualize either – Marin proceeds rather by a kind of rhetorical mimicry of Disneyland alienation – how the foreign and nature are denied, how that same Social Darwinism turns them into the primitive, the savage, and the monstrous (321), but I think this can be followed by means of a number of his *chemin faisant* analyses. This holds in particular

for the discussion immediately following the spatial and performative “central access” to Disneyland and dealing with the phantasmatic Fantasyland, which is the PR “sign of Disneyland, the trade-mark of the utopia itself [...] the privileged utopian locus of Disneyland” (305–06; I am adapting these pages in the following account).

The very aptly named Fantasyland is constituted by personalized and impersonating images (themselves second-degree empathetic citations of Disney’s comics, cartoons, etc.). Reality becomes the double or twin of the image in Marin’s earlier and better version of Baudrillard’s flashy simulacra. (The great ancestor here was Philip Dick’s SF from the 1960s on.) This doubling is itself double: first, the image is turned into a material reality by figures of stone, plastic, plaster or rubber, but most empathetically and emphatically by human representers disguised into such fantasy characters. The representer (*le figurant*) has imaginatively become an embodied, flesh-and-blood represented (*le figuré*) and signified – the unmasking of which as fake when faced with the no doubt sweaty faces of Disney corporation’s tired employees then quite rightly shocked the Matays. But second and symmetrically inverse, reality is transformed into image: insofar as the visitor is caught up in Disneyland, there is no other reality but that of the figure or representation into which (as Brecht would say) you creep in an act of psychic vampirism. This is also the proceeding of magic, which elevates its images to the ontological status of another, underlying reality (and it is logical that the Disney World NBA basketball team is the Orlando Magics). Any alternative non-narcissistic imaginary, imagination as consciousness of a possible non-drugged radical otherness or indeed simply as fertile possibility of shuttling in and out of myth (Mannoni), is being neutralized here:

[...] while you believe you’re enjoying yourself, you’re absorbing the ideology needed for the reproduction of the relations of production. Historical reality is being concealed from you, it is camouflaged underneath a stylized and fascinating verisimilitude [...]. You’re given a prefabricated dream: [...] a homegrown unconscious (*un inconscient maison*), perfectly ideologized. (Mikel Dufrenne, cited in Guattari 96–97)

As Marin established, Disneyland first neutralizes external reality by means of the car and the dollars that got the spectator into it. But it then

substitutes a transmogrified reality produced by the hallucinatory channelling of desire in Fantasyland, which is itself a terror: “the violence exercised upon the imaginary by the phantasm of that Disneyland district [...].” When “another” reality appears, it is “as the reality of the banalized, routine images of Walt Disney movies, poor signs of an imagination homogenized by the mass media.” This fake Other is a trap for desire, its caricatural collective image. Disneyland’s careful and most efficacious organization of desires installs the imprinted *repetition of the familiar* as the supreme good and demonizes the radically different Other. I find it lamentable that Ms Matay could not hold Disneyland accountable for transgressing this basic ideological contract with the brainwashed, for not policing its parking lot better, not sufficiently occulting that drugging is necessary precisely for life in PoMo capitalism as gangsterism, as the inescapable obverse of Disneyland’s business coin. This allows the too immediate, destabilizing shock of the sordid life-world violence and insecurity – a reality which the unanimous media make visible only for the relatively small or at best medium gangsters, from the hold-up for the next fix to Saddam Hussein, while the arms merchants, the starvers of hundreds of millions, and the druggers of billions of people remain invisible.

The second achievement of Disneyland is, however, a new twist on age-old ideology-mongering and constitution of graven images. The Golden Calf is capillarized in the psychic bloodstream as *commodity*. This pervasive upshot is introduced by “Main Street USA”: “commodities are significations and significations are commodities” (Marin 317). It is confirmed at the centre as “*life is a permanent exchange and perpetual consuming*” (319, Marin’s emphasis). By giving an infantilized connotation of “security blanket” to images, which Debord famously defined as the final form of commodity reification (ch. 1), Disneyland produces constantly repeated demand to match the constantly recycled offer: it commodifies desire, and in particular the desire for signification or meaningfulness (see Attali 259 and *passim*, Eliot, and Schickel). Walt Disney himself stated to *Parade* in 1972 his object was to sell happiness (cited in Dorfman 29). Disneyfication, then, centrally means the pursuit of happiness, twisted from its Jeffersonian origins to a permanent readiness for re-enchanted commodification: “the pursuit of happiness becomes a lifetime of shopping” (Lummis 48). The dynamic

and sanitized empathizing into the pursuit of commodity is allegorically focused on and by anthropomorphic animals who stand for various affects that make up this pursuit. The affects and stances are strictly confined to the petty-bourgeois “positive” range: so that, roughly, Mickey introduces good cheer, the Lion King courage and persistence, etc. “Just try to get [things such as hunger, lack of shelter, cold or disease] past the turnstiles at Disneyland sometime!” (Dorfman 60) – shades of the Matay family!

This Disney infantilization marks and displaces a double rejection. First, of an active intervention into the real world which would make the pursuit of happiness collectively attainable: it is a debilitating daydream which appeals to the same mechanism as empathizing performances and publicity (see Berger et al. 146–49). Second and obversely, it rejects any reality constriction of one’s desire, however shallow: you can never lust for too many commodities (but sex is forbidden in Disneyfication – his females are usually subaltern coquettes, cheery virgins, or villainous witches). While Disneyland is wedded to consumer dynamics, to an ever expanding market (Dorfman 202), it remains deeply inimical to knowledge, which crucially includes an understanding of limits for any endeavour – and in particular of the final personal limit of death. Disneyfication blends out death (see Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* V: 121). Snow White – as so many other cartoon heroes and villains, for example Coyote – must always be magically resuscitated: “*Life is dreamt without death; [...] knowledge is dreamt as consumption and not production*” (Dorfman 170–71, my emphasis; and see 199–204). It is thus a degenerate form of ideology in comparison to religion and other beliefs whose strategic object is to give meaning to death (see Suvin *Lessons*, ch. 5). While Disneyfication is thus a displacement in Freud’s sense, it is also more: and it might be more precisely identified as a shaping of *affectual investment into commodifying*. This is a metonymy of what Jameson has penetratingly discussed as the PoMo “consumption of the very process of consumption” (*Postmodernism* 276), say in TV; or of what some German critics have called “the transformation of commodities into fantasy values,” where leisure-time has to compensate for the discipline and lack of human values during work-time: “The individual must be linked to [the immense collection of] commodities not only through physical contact and the consumption of goods, but also through imaginary consumption,”

and this consumption of goods is also the incorporation into an ideology (Negt and Kluge 172; they take their cue from Haug's *Critique*). However, it is not a discursive ideology, which is rather present in prohibitions and Newspeak terminology, but a channelling of affectual forces of their own brain and body as a whole, in a permanent roller-coaster ride. Appadurai calls such an approach to consumption as the driving force of metropolitan capitalist societies "ersatz nostalgia [...] without memory," that produces "the discipline of learning to link fantasy and nostalgia to the desire for new bundles of commodities" and involves labour to produce "the conditions of consciousness in which buying can occur" (82–83).

### 1.3

How are we to understand the lesson of Disneyfication and its efficient and consistent anti-utopian use of utopia? The best theorizations of consumerism as mind-warping has, until the 1960s, been European. Though there are some ancestral remarks of Marx already in the *Grundrisse* about historically created needs of the worker-consumer, and especially about consumption creating the user for production (e.g., 90–94), I shall in brief mention primarily the developments by Benjamin, Anders, Marcuse, and Debord.

The first and probably still the shrewdest critic of the "pleasure industry," its rise in the world expositions and fairs, its induction of the dream-world of mass culture and affinities to fascism, as well as its connection with the employee class that produces information/entertainment/persuasion, was Benjamin. He understood well, not least through personal experience, the two prongs of such theorization. First, how "With the new production processes, which produce imitations, appearances (*Schein*) are crystallized in the commodities" (*Gesammelte Schriften* I.2: 668). Second, that their effect stems from the superimposition (*Überblendung*, also filmic fade-over) of proletarianized economic existence by bourgeois wishdream images (*Gesammelte Schriften* III: 220). Applied to what he knew of Disney, mainly the Mickey Mouse shorts, he first noted its ambiguous power of a blend of utopian escape from the resigned dismalness with an anarchist

proliferation of metamorphic images (*Gesammelte Schriften* II.1: 218–19), and praised the original disrespectful Mickey (for example in *Steamboat Willie*, drawn with Ub Iwerks) as a “figure of the collective dream” in his much too optimistic first version of “The Work of Art” (*Gesammelte Schriften* 1: 462). However, in the later 1930s he began to meditate about “the usability of Disney’s methods for fascism” (*Gesammelte Schriften* I.3: 1045, and see VI: 144–45, VII.1: 377; see the excellent overview in Buck-Morss, especially 83–99, 253–84, 303–17, and 322–27).<sup>4</sup>

Benjamin’s favourite theme of a “refunctioning of allegory in the commodity economy” led him to pose the problem of how commodity can be personified and evoke affects. Beyond indicating (as Marx too did) the importance of the prostitute as obvious human commodity, Benjamin did not elaborate, but, latching onto a formulation by Brecht, he identified what we can recognize as Disneyfication by contraries to cognitive poetry. Centrally, in this Modernist poetry, as presented in the ancestral Baudelaire, “sensuous refinement [...] remains free of cuteness [*Gemütlichkeit*, coziness, snugness]” (*Gesammelte Schriften* I.2: 671 and 675). Heiner Müller, a dissident Brechtian, made the same contrast when horrified by *Fantasia*’s “reduc[tion of] the symbolic force of images to one meaning,” and at that one of banal allegorizing, as against the early Soviet cinema’s “torrent of metaphors” assimilating a rapidly changing reality in the specific tools of art before it was possible to conceptualize it (277). Obversely, the “mature” Disney Studio production after the mid-1930s, as of the *Donald Duck* comics (1934 on) and the first climax in the *Snow White* movie (1936) – when Disney got scared by an incipient workers’ revolt, including the 1,500 studio employees, and retreated into a fierce conservatism, strike-busting, and collaboration with the FBI – became totally drenched in often unbearable cuteness.

4 On the sentimentalization of Mickey, see Jameson, *Brecht* 8; also Auden’s perceptive characterization of Mickey in “Letter to Lord Byron” (93). Zipes analyzes both Disney’s turn and the significance of the dwarves in *Snow White* as “the composite humours of a single individual” (114–15).

Benjamin learned much in exchanges with Kracauer and Brecht, and was in turn influential both upon Adorno in his and Horkheimer's horror at Donald Duck as "Cultural Industry" in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, which however is much more monophonic, and upon the stringent accusations of Anders about conformist drugging or brainwashing by illusions, covertly or overtly religious, as the vehicle of people's cognitive immersion and dispossession (see *Antiquiertheit* I: 176, II: 145, 169, 380–82, and *passim*, and on cosiness [*Verbiederung*] I: 125–31). Quite parallel to Benjamin and Brecht is Hanns Eisler's sharp critique in *Composing for the Films* of Hollywood's sentimentality mixed with cheer, with the function of buttressing with clichés illusionism and sensationalist plot-tension leading to the obligatory happy ending. These new developments of the post-war US-type conformism were brought to a point in the spirited book by Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man* (and society), who found that oppositional horizons are obliterated by incorporating fake "cultural values" into the established order and displaying them on a massive scale. What he called "institutional desublimation" led to the atrophy of mental faculties for grasping contradictions and alternatives, to a "Happy Consciousness" in the service of a technologized Death Instinct (79 and *passim*, see Anders I: 280). We may wish today to use a less Freudian language, but to my mind it describes Disneyfication precisely.

Debord brought such considerations into a tight focus on the pre-eminence of spectacular images:

Spectacle says simply "what appears is good, what is good appears" [...]. It is the sun that never sets on the empire of modern passivity. (13)

Spectacle is the ceaseless discourse that the present order holds about itself, its laudatory monologue. (17)

From car to TV, all the *goods selected* by the spectacular system are also weapons of constant reinforcement of the conditions of isolation for the "lonely crowds". (20)

Interestingly, this "specialization of apparent living [...] without depths" (42) unites both meanings of "apparent," the fake and the visible or evident. It is thus a powerful inversion of "utopia," whose two meanings

meld the good (*eu*) and the apparently negative (*ou* – non-existent, not visible, not-here-and-now). In utopia, what is good cannot be here-and-now seen, and what appears here-and-now is not good. Obversely, for Debord spectacle is a technological, “material reconstruction of religious illusion” (16) as analyzed by the young Marx, an alienation of humanity by thisworldly means that does not need an immaterial Transcendence. In spectacle, “commodity has become the world, which also means that the world has become commodity” (47).

Thus, we ought to realize with Negt and Kluge – and with global capitalist corporations – that nowadays “intellectual activity [is] the most important raw material,” basic for “the realization of [a whole] new range of products.” The human brain is increasingly recognized as the core of human labour, and yet this labour is alienated by capitalist valorization of the working people’s minds in the interests of profit: “Objective alienation is joined by an alienation from the awareness of this alienation” (183–84). Disneyfication is an important part as well as, to my mind, an emblem or metonymy of the demands and values of commodification being transposed directly into people’s imagination. Disney learned how to use allegories of commodity from early cartoons, which were strongly veined with them. The clearest example from among intrawar cartoons is the figure of Popeye, scrawny little sailor version of the Little Tailor from fairy tale or of Chaplin’s Tramp without Chaplin’s disrespect for established society. Popeye always wins against powerful enemies (the melodramatic villain Pegleg) when he consumes a tiful of spinach – a highly interesting case of the usual fairytale function of magical helper becoming both the *telos* and a metonymy of a commodity to be sold. His mate is another commodity, Olive Oyl, as helpless fluff-head and potential rape victim.

As Featherstone noted, in consumerist practice, and even more so in consumerist ideology, the experience of manual labour, of bodily activity, is backgrounded at the same time as developments in economy favour administrative and supervisory jobs, including huge PR agencies for more consumption, while the greater part of manual jobs is in the more affluent North shuffled off to immigrant workers. The “consumerist body” is a passive one, in a way abstracted and ideologized in tandem with being infantilized and brutalized. Descartes was the first to proclaim that people

are minds who “have” and “possess” a body. In other words, the body is had as a thing, or possessed as a saleable commodity; while the bourgeoisie proclaims each body is a subject, it also remains a manipulable object over which potentially violent power can be exercised. Until the compromise with working classes in dominant countries effected by Keynesian and Fordist capitalism, the “mind” function was restricted to the upper classes. Now it became impossible to disallow its democratization to everybody, *on condition* that it be warped conceptually and emotionally. As has been demonstrated on the example of Disneyland, managed consumerism implies invasive persuasion on or over the border of psychophysical violence.

This is no wonder in an enterprise permanently wedded to underpaid assembly-line labour, for which the artist-workers nicknamed Disney studios Goofenwald and Mousewitz, as well as to the cultural imperialism abroad so well documented by Dorfman (alone and with Mattelart). The Disney comics promote an authoritarian patriarchal system, which effects a retraction of the liberal fairy tale (see Zipes 112–13). The producer and the product fit seamlessly: if the product shows (say in the comics) “wealth without wages, deodorant without sweat,” then “consumption [is] rid of the original sin of production, just as the son is rid of the original sin of sex represented by the father, and just as history is rid of the original sin of class-conflict” (Dorfman and Mattelart 65) – one should add the *absence of mothers*. Disney’s and then his corporation’s iron control over the visitors to his theme parks is truly total(itarian): they are steered from the word go to one-way presentations, enclosed in vehicles, hectored by guidebooks and voiceovers telling you how to feel, given no space or time for reflection or spontaneous exploration, “drained of interpretive autonomy” (Fjellman 13, see also Giroux, Bryman 103 and *passim*). The Disneyland visitor is ceaselessly within the flow, constantly bombarded by subtle and unsubtle solicitations to buy/consume, surfeited by kitschy sensory overloads, not allowed freedom to catch her/his breath even for a moment. Disney’s type of “happy feeling” pleasure was the icebreaker for theme parks stuffed down the throats of infants and infantilized visitors “as a substitute for the democratic public realm” (Sorkin xv) where dialogue and even opposition might happen: no poor, no dirt, no work, not even unregulated Nature are permitted to be shown here, all must be predictably, manageably cosy. The

fact these illusions are produced by unsanitized people *working* opened an epistemological abyss for the Matay kids! The park employees are in the Disney Newspeak not workers: they are hosts, the customers are guests, and lining-up happens in pre-entertainment areas (Bryman 108–09)... A sophisticated analysis of Disney's movies (Blackmore 349) identifies an agential constellation of what I would call a Transcendental Mandator (analogous to Uncle Walt himself – the Blue Fairy, the Sorcerer) who mandates an intermediary sub-creator (Geppetto, Mickey as Apprentice) to animate the silly quasi-human agent (Pinocchio, the Broom). The character most clearly partaking of transcendental powers is the original Mickey Mouse, a disinterested “ethical” character in cahoots with good luck; later, the more biliary and irate Donald Duck characteristically prevails (see Dorfman and Mattelart 91). This rage against self-determination led to the inglorious despotism of his model community Celebration, a shoddy failure (amply documented in Giroux, and Ross's *Celebration*).<sup>5</sup>

#### 1.4

So my *first thesis* submitted to your discussion is (as seems only proper for a Gramscian, see *Selection* 164) double-pronged, epistemological, and political. *1a*: while I have little doubt that collective realities exist (see more in 1.4 below), *it is dubious that empirical entities can be neatly disjoined from imaginary ones*; in other words, it is dubious – though still perhaps not only useful but unavoidable for pedagogical purposes – that empirical or existent societies can be neatly disjoined from imaginary or non-existent ones. I shall argue in a moment that there is no identification of any token or sample existent without an imaginary type which permits the identifier

5 Note January 2008: There is a direct line from this pseudo-magic illusionism and showmanship deeply complicitous with violence to the ethos of the Bush Jr presidency. For example, the 2003 pressroom of the US armed forces in Qatar for General Franks's briefings to the world's press, erected into an ultramodern TV studio at the cost of one million dollars, was realised by an ex-Disney and MGM designer with the help of the TV “magician” David Blaine (see Salmon).

to recognize it as such, say the sample Mickey Mouse as type of “Disney’s comforting being” (*Geborgenheit*). *ib: we live today in dystopia as well as in anti-utopia* – perhaps because the dystopia is an anti-utopia, a deliberate project for subalternity. This was dimly adumbrated in the flash of horror (*Geworfenheit*) the fatherless Matay family had at the backstage divestment.

Is it only professional idiocy to conclude that we desperately need (at least to begin with) some semantic hygiene as to what we are speaking about? Is it only intellectualist expert doodling? Not, I firmly believe, if we are doing this as a link in an ongoing praxis culminating in action. If Rosa Luxemburg, in the midst of World War I, before the admass efficiency, was possibly too optimistic in believing that “to speak the truth is already a revolution,” we must inherit her optimism of knowledge and will, and say that to articulate a category hygiene is the *precondition* for any salvational revolution. I do not therefore see any break in the continuity of my discussion if I immediately segue from politico-economic data and ideological emotions into epistemological discussions of the proper vocabulary and articulation we need in order to see sufficiently steadily the ground upon which we unstably stand, and to see it sufficiently whole – though I shall come back to the complex and indispensable mediations and in particular to ourselves as (potential) intellectuals.

Allow me therefore a very brief and compressed epistemic reminder: All conscious thinking involves imagining what would happen if something were other than the way it is (Ellis 1997). Even for the infant consciousness, identifying an object involves imagining how it could be manipulated: there is no “perceptual consciousness” without imagination and subjunctivity, that is, without an implied counterfactuality (cf. for example Piaget 1928 and 1969). Seeing, as opposed to staring, occurs only when we attend to (look for) the object on which we are to focus, that is, when we ask “Is my imaginative/ry type instantiated by the token in my visual field right now?” Furthermore, a main difference between conscious and non-conscious dealing with perceptions, and *a fortiori* a set of them, is that in the former the imaginative act of arousal and attention precedes the perceptual one (Bruner 1986); Marx even held that this is the species-specific difference between humans and spiders or bees. It originates in desire or interest

which is translated into the formulation of questions (Luria 1973), concepts, and abstractions. Only at this point, when the whole brain knows what it is “looking for” in this sense, does optic stimulation result in an attentive seeing of the object. This means that a conscious registering of a perceptual object leads to much more extensive processing of the data than the non-conscious registering of it could possibly lead to, concludes Ellis. Even inchoate “desire” becomes desire in the conscious sense only when it begins to include the missing elements (as the need-“desire” for cellular sustenance grows to include images of oneself eating and then representations of edible objects). It is this full use of the brain, the imaginative play with counterfactuals and Possible Worlds, which is being precluded by capturing inchoate imaginative desire and channelling it away from full understanding, into infantilism, in Disneyland. And I propose we can make sense of this by seeing it with Marin as a fake utopia, which we according to our interests decipher as a dystopia and therefore also as anti-utopia.

Map-making and naming are after all the founding gestures, the seed or root (*etymon*) of any utopian venture – narrativized in fiction, empirically localized in colonies. Baudrillard’s consciously outrageous claim that the map precedes the territory is quite one-sided, though up to a point salutary as a goad to thinking: for no territory can be constituted as territory (instead of a lot of terrains) unless a drawn and/or verbal map delimits it as such. While obversely (as is neatly proved by contraries in an ironic story by Borges) the map is not the territory, it is both a model of the territory and the territory seen through a grid of epistemic conventions, seen as an overview instead of as a bodily experience or indeed a buzzing confusion of random phenomena.

#### I.5

Thus, what is anti-utopia? And what dystopia? They are incompletely stabilized neologisms, but to use them as efficient cognitive tools we should try to stabilize them for collective manipulation. Some years ago I made such a disambiguating proposal to my student Ron Zajac and it is

briefly sketched in his MA (2).<sup>6</sup> Mr Zajac and I decided to call “dystopia” a community where sociopolitical institutions, norms, and relationships between its individuals are organized in a significantly less perfect way than in the author’s community. Accepting the objection (by Wittgenstein or Brecht) that nothing is seen without being “seen as X” because it is “seen from the stance Y,” I would today add to my original, somewhat formalist or objectivist definition of utopia and dystopia in *MOSF* as significantly more (or less) perfect than the norms of the original readers something like “significantly less perfect, as seen by a representative of a discontented social class or fraction, whose value-system defines ‘perfection.’”

As a secondary recomplication, there is a special case of a sociopolitically different locus which finally also turns out to be a dystopia, but which is explicitly designed to refute a fictional and/or otherwise imagined utopia; and I hope we were following the bent of the English language when we proposed to call it “anti-utopia,” evacuating the uneconomical use of this term as a synonym of dystopia. “Anti-utopia” thus designates a pretended utopia, a community whose hegemonic principles pretend it is more perfectly organized than any thinkable alternative, while our representative “camera eye” and value-monger finds out it is significantly less perfect than an alternative.

Finally, it becomes logically inescapable to invent a name for those dystopias which are not also anti-utopias, but in order not to abet the Babylonian confusion of languages around us, I shall simply call it the “simple” dystopia.

Since we have here a somewhat complex state of affairs, I believe it might be clarified by a minimal amount of formalization in terms of Possible Worlds. Let me call PW<sub>o</sub> the dominant ideas or “encyclopedia” about the describer’s and the evaluator’s empirical world, and PW<sub>u</sub> the imaginative

6 I note with pleasure that our delimitation tallies with Lyman Tower Sargent’s (188), though his definition insists on objectively “non existent societies” and I have mentioned that I reject commonsense objectivism (see Suvin, “Cognitive”). I should in fairness say that I was aware of precursory discussions in North America, usefully summarized in Moylan, *Scraps* 124–30 (from whose two books I have taken much), and later in Germany, e.g., by Seeber and Groeben.

Other (utopian/dystopian) world. In that case, the intertext of “simple” dystopia (that is, of that cluster of dystopias which is not also antiutopia, say Pohl and Kornbluth’s *Space Merchants* or other “new maps of hell”) is  $PW_o$ , and what is “inter” or shared here are some strategically central tendencies of the author’s empirical world. The intertext or referential (Eco would say inferential) foil of anti-utopia, however, is  $PW_u$ : a non-empirical PW intended to be significantly better than  $PW_o$  but failing to be such. In other words, dystopia ( $PW_d$ ) traffics between text and the reader’s encyclopedia about reality, while anti-utopia is almost exclusively ideological polemics:



“SIMPLE” DYSTOPIA:  $PW_d < \xrightarrow{\hspace{2cm}} PW_o$   
 ANTI-UTOPIA:  $PW_{au} < \xrightarrow{\hspace{2cm}} PW_u$

The purpose of  $PW_d$  is an awful warning against things going on as they do in the original empirical world  $PW_{o1}$ , sometimes wedded to a hope that it may be changed – “if others will but see it as I do” (Morris) – into a less dangerous and happier  $PW_{o2}$ . The purpose of  $PW_{au}$  is an awful warning against a new  $PW_u$ , as a rule wedded to a hope that we can get rid of that novel delusion and return to the original  $PW_{o1}$ . Seeing Disneyland – standing in for Post-Fordism – as a fake utopia consubstantial with (deciphered as) anti-utopia is a move analogous to those utopographer opponents of Bellamy who have his hero Julian West waking up to the fact he was being hoodwinked by a future evil empire. Seeing Disneyland then simultaneously as a dystopia prevents us from regressive nostalgia for the good old days of (say) the 1960s or of the antifascist coalition, the lessons of which we must nonetheless sublate if we are to have a chance of getting at any happier  $PW_{o2}$ .

This little mental exercise does not claim to work out a full system of utopian sub-genres or facets. Still, I wish to add a further important warning. I did begin by saying these distinctions are tricky. I have been

arguing that there is strictly speaking no objective “empirical world” out there without its simultaneously and co-constitutively “being seen as” such, and indeed as such-and-such. (This does not at all mean “there’s nothing out there” interacting with anybody’s gaze or action, as the PoMo vulgate, though not its best people, claimed: try jumping off a skyscraper without a parachute ...) But I would defend my operative distinction between empirical and utopian world by saying that there was – and is! – *a strong, ideologically dominant illusion of such an empirical world*, seen at one glance by God or asymptotically by Science or Mankind, in that modern scientism which impinges deeply on and largely determines our experiential world (cf. Suvin, “On the Horizons”). The distinction depends on the bourgeois or capitalist utopianism, which can be seen in fiction as of Jules Verne, denying that it is utopian and instead being “naturalized” as normal and/or scientific. This pragmatic micro-utopianism presents the ideology of progress and Social Darwinism as natural (see *MOSF* ch. 7 and both titles by Barthes) and not needing explicit, ideologically foregrounded figuration. Up to, say, the 1950s–1970s, the Powers-That-Be rightly refused – because *they* did not need it – the stroke of genius with which More endowed his King Utopus: cutting off the ideal topology of Utopia from the experiential continent. Then, it was mainly oppositionists (socialist or anarchists on the Left, reactionaries on the Right, with some technocrats à la Skinner – and indeed much Wells – in between) who carried on with both topologically and conceptually or axiologically explicit, let me call them *ruptural* utopias. I shall argue Disneyland, though topologically separate, is not ruptural but continuous to, intensificatory, and celebratory of capitalist experience. No Disneyland is imaginable before Fordism.

It should be added that the dominant ideological horizon of anti-utopia is in any historical monad determined by opposition to the dominant idea/s of utopia, to the dominant imaginary PW<sub>u</sub>. In the Modernist “short twentieth century” (Hobsbawm dates it ca. 1917–73, thus underlining its crucial but probably not exclusive parallels with Leninism), this dominant idea was either some kind of socialist – usually perverted or pseudo-socialist – imaginative topology, or technocratic etatism with few if any socialist traits. Thus, as a rule, only the “simple dystopian” horizon applied to high capitalism while the anti-utopian one applied to rotting

pseudo-socialism. It seems to me significant for the social class/es of intellectuals which articulated such anti-utopias that at any rate the best examples thereof (for example the Holy Trinity of Zamyatin-Huxley-Orwell) subsumed both capitalist and Stalinist etatism into its foil PW<sub>u</sub>, and yet did not envisage this resulting in a radically better PW<sub>o2</sub>.

However, the unprecedented Post-Fordist mobilization and colonization of people's desires and of all the remaining non-capitalized spaces (making Huxley's Palau in *Island* today possibly more important than *Brave New World*) now requires masked, infantile fantasies. In that light, Asada's playful proposition that our period should not be called mature or late but "infantile capitalism" (631) is quite correct if taken as a kind of infantilized, *gâteuse* senescence which cannot mature further (but may of course grow pragmatically stronger or weaker): the dusk creature on three rather than four legs in the Sphinx's riddle. The capitalist logic of accumulation is purely infantile "since it can tolerate no contradictions or limitations" but only annexation in an additive growth. This reveals a psychic void, a "pursuit of narcissistic identity [inseparable] from the fetishization of commodities," a reified self that "must perforce obsessively proclaim, through the possession of things, a phantom identity [of >feeling good<]." (Davis, "Death's," and see his *Deracination*). Thus it becomes clear why desire, images, "culture" can no longer be disjoined from economics: rather, it is their interpenetration which constitutes the new mode of production's corrupt strength, that is, source of major profits (and a counter-force can only be found in a sane interpenetration). This has been brilliantly argued by Stuart Hall (for example 243), while Jameson has even remarked that "everything in our social life – from economic value and state power to practices and to the very structure of the psyche itself – can be said to have become 'cultural' in some original and as yet untheorized sense" (*Postmodernism* 48) and developed this at length throughout that book.

"Culture" began supplying authoritative frameworks and foci for agency and meaning after "belief became polluted, like the air or the water" (de Certeau 147), so that orthodox religions (including scientism and liberalism) rightly devolved to just another, if more privileged sect – yet a need for religious or analogous values was more in demand than ever amid physical and psychic indigence. Culture co-opted by capitalism is

today no longer a fully distinct sphere of activities but a colonization of the “service” or consumption-focussed society in the twin guise of information and esthetics: information-intensive production in working time (the best example is biotechnology, whose output is information inscribed in living matter, so that the engineering involved is the processing or “reading” of this information), and “esthetic” consumption in leisure time (see Haug *Critique*, and Kamper et al. 55–58 and 64ff.). The new orthodoxy of belief proceeds thus “camouflaged as facts, data and events” (de Certeau 151) which are in fact shamelessly manipulated and indeed openly manufactured by those in power, and increasingly consubstantial with “culture industry” images. An exemplary (bad) case of the latter are the edulcorated fables and fairy-tales of Disneyland.

Disneyland’s first move is homologous to King Utopus’s cutting off Utopia from the everyday continent: a spatial delimitation (splendidly analyzed by Marin’s account of the Disneyland layout). Yet this is not a true, qualitative rupture. It is only a mimicry, insect not twig, which by reason of its pervasive and invading ideological continuity with the everyday hegemony functions as harbinger and accelerator of mega-corporate capitalism. At this point – more or less contemporaneous with the exhaustion of Leninist and Social-Democratic socialism, of the Welfare State – a new monster has appeared that must be understood as topologically opposed to PW<sub>o</sub> but axiologically intensifying it – rather than oppositional as in the More to Morris canon. Thus it not only mimics a ruptural genre (the classical utopia, PW<sub>u</sub>) but it also appropriates a Wellsian dynamic, invasive subversion of empirical reality (PW<sub>o</sub>; see chapters 9 and 10 in *MOSF*). Furthermore, if we take the Disney enterprise as an allegorical *exemplum*, its pervasiveness is not only intended to be intensionally total (in all fields of life) but also extensionally total (global) as none before (see Jameson’s *Political*, but his whole work bears on this point): Disneylands brainwash impartially and without discrimination (non olet) consumers of all social classes and in the whole world, including Europe and Japan. All of us live in a dynamically aggressive fake utopia whose “degeneracy” we nonetheless absolutely have to – upon pain of brain rot and then bodily collapse – decipher as anti-utopia.

This state of affairs was most stimulatingly seen in Philip Dick's ubiquitously invading stigmata of Palmer Eldritch, whose prescient articulation merits a longer consideration (see Suvin, "Philip K. Dick's") – thus to my impenitent mind confirming that it is sterile to cut off "pure utopian lit." texts from SF. I would today go further and argue that confining utopia to fiction only or small colonies only, or worse yet to pure ideas, is equally sterile, channelling it away from *praxis*.<sup>7</sup> More than ever, we need as clear as possible distinctions and delimitations of concepts; but only if their articulation "cuts reality at its joints," that is, performs as good an approximation as possible to the increasingly complex bastardry and impurity of experience. For one example, the Disneyland experience feels all which is not being turned into exchange-value for and by corporations, all use-values not subject to the bottom line of "profit this year" and "as much profit as possible and the devil take the hindmost," as alien and savage: pollution finds the Amazon basin dirty. Let me mention only two further glimpses of invaded mega-fields which happen to be preying on my mind these years: molecular genetics and copyright. 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, no doubt in tandem with atomizing possessive individualism, 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 as well as for using nouns and verbs such as *xerox*.<sup>8</sup> It is inside this world-whale all of us Jonahs, Sindbads, and Nemos today live, cultivating our kale.

7 Is it necessary to say that I find much to interest and delight me in utopological writing, and that I have, of course, no objection to pragmatic delimitation of any field according to the delimiters' interest, but only wish then to reserve the right to judge that interest? Yet in fact nowadays we meet a "pure utopia" as often as an okapi, since to isolate political organization from all other factors has proved self-defeating.

8 See Chomsky 112–13. This hyperbole is likely to be literally true if we specify "healthy" or even "normal life expectancy" children. This whole matter of so called TRIPS (Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights) is an extremely important, threatening, and neglected spearhead of corporate aggression into the most intimate areas

## 2. We Intellectuals in Post-Fordism

You may back off from the world's woes, you're free to do so and it lies in your nature, but perhaps this backing away is precisely the only woe that you might avoid.

— KAFKA, “Reflections on Sin, Woe, Hope, and the Way”

“It's the economy, stupid!”

— ANON., first Clinton campaign

2.0

“Let us go then, you and I / When the evening is spread out against the sky / Like a patient etherized upon a table / [...] like a tedious argument / Of insidious intent / To lead you to an overwhelming question ...” (T.S. Eliot) – the question being first, “Why do we live so badly?”, and second, “What orientation may get us out of it?” To restate at different level the initial question I adapted from Foucault: pragmatically, in the present to which all of us belong, “What is this present?” and “Who are we?”. My working hypotheses for a first delimitation, without the ifs and buts no doubt necessary for further understanding, are: The what is Post-Fordism; the we is intellectuals.

I take the “economy, stupid!” slogan from Clinton's co-opting and obfuscatory Tweedledum campaign; but “thank thee for teaching me the word” (Shakespeare). Its salutary orientation toward action may be supplemented with the *second thesis* I submit to you: as I concluded in Chapter 8, *the barrier between “culture” and citizenship, which today means economically based macro- and micro-politics, has been wiped out in practice by our dystopian capitalist rulers*, and it is time we recognized this in our laggard theory. There is no longer any believable utopian social movement which

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of everybody's life world, which is through extension of patent law logic (for genetically engineered food, seeds, micro organisms, pharmaceuticals, and chemicals) to copyright laws, including trademarks, also sucking in language.

we could entrust with the task of economic politics, in which we then participate as citizens but not as professionals. The comforting economic and psychic roofs or blankets holding us warm against the blasts of a then disputable Destiny have been torn down. If there are to be any movements and roofs, they will have to be painfully remade by ourselves. Therefore, Formalism – an enclave of playful creativity amid the material necessities that create consciousness, or Kantian esthetics within a Hegelo-Marxist politico-economical horizon – can today only be useful as the preliminary to a more comprehensive civic analysis, to politics in the Aristotelian and a critique of political economy in the Marxian sense. It is imperative that we realize epistemology does not function without asking the political question “what for?” or *cui bono*. It is not simply that there is no useful politics without clear perception: much more intimately, interests and values decisively shape all perception. So if we grasp that the barrier between such “cultural” discussions and politics-cum-economics is simply sterile categorization and blindness, our politically and epistemologically corrected theory would then be only following, fifteen if not thirty years late, two generational waves of SF and utopianism, from Russ and Piercy to Stan Robinson. The time for isolated formal poetics is over when the *Geist* has been colonized and our debates can no longer presume movements for the liberation of labour – an “existing community of praxis” – as the ground for their figures (see Ahmad 70, 2, and *passim*); I must respectfully posit as known my theoretical arguments from the first part of *MOSF* and most importantly from chapters 5 and 8 in this book, and pass on.

## 2.1 Post-Fordism

In a long position paper for the Luton University conference on SF, only a bit more than half of which had been printed (“News”) but which is now Chapter 8 in this book, I attempted an overview of Post-Fordism to which I refer for more detailed supporting. I summarize and partly develop it here. The argument is that we should be, economically speaking, at the descending part of the boom-and-bust cycle; this can only be compensated, for a time, by “military Keynesianism.” Its 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 and consumerist PR, Keynesianism through higher taxation neutralized by bourgeois control of the State. They functioned 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. In class terms, Soviet pseudo-Leninism and Rooseveltian Liberalism – as well as some important aspects of Fascism – 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 lowermost classes of selected “Northern” countries as well as a great expansion of fairly comfortable and thus fairly independent middle classes. Wallerstein somewhat optimistically numbers these “[sharers] in the surplus value” – us – as 10–15 percent of the world population, of course disproportionately concentrated in the richer North (*Historical 123*).

However, 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 and then of the corporate credit system, etc.), revealed that our planet Earth, a finite system, cannot expand indefinitely to bear six or ten or twenty billion people up to the immensely wasteful “Northern” standards (see for example Lummis 60–74). This real emergency was seized upon and twisted by the ruling capitalists into revoking both the Keynesian compromise with the metropolitan lower classes and the Wilsonian promise to the peripheral “South.” In a fierce class war from above, through a series of hidden or overt putsches by the right wing all protective barriers and mitigating bumpers are dismantled, so that what Marx called “the extraction of absolute surplus value” may be sharply increased, the security floor is abolished, the permanent Fordist class of chronically poor is now enlarged up to or beyond one third even in the rich North, while the “middle” group of classes is squeezed back into full dependency by abolishing financial security (there is a wealth of uncoordinated data on this, see for example Lash and Urry 160–68). This leads to increased world concentration of capital now dominated by cartels

of “multinationals.”<sup>9</sup> Closest to home, control of the major US media had passed from fifty corporations in 1983 to twenty in 1992, so that four movie studios (including Disney’s Buena Vista Films), five giant book publishers, and seven cable TV companies – all interlocked with major banks – produced more than half of the revenue in their field (Bagdikian ix–xii and 20–26). The dazzling surface array of diversity hides bland uniformity: there are 11,000 magazines but two magazine publishers dominate the field ... The people running these twenty media monopolies and their bankers “constitute a new Private Ministry of Information and Culture” (Bagdikian xxviii). 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 ex-Yugoslavia). The warfare state had a little hiccup after the end of Cold War but it has recovered nicely (the best estimate seems to show that two thirds of US citizens’ taxes go to pay for military technology and wars, see Ross 4). 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-dollar millionaires has from 1980 to 1988 risen from 574,000 to ca. 1,300,000 (Phillips 9–10) and of billionaires 1982–96 from 13 to 149. The “global billionaires’ club” of 450 members had by 1997 a total wealth much larger than that of a group of low income countries comprising 56 percent of the world population (*Forbes Magazine*, cited in Chossudovsky, “Global”): these 450 individuals are richer than 3 billion poor people. Production, the great trump ace of capitalism, has in the core

9 Note January 1998: The newest such case, the IMF “bailout” of South Korea, means in practice a cut in half in wages expressed in US dollars, huge unemployment of employees and bankruptcies of small businesses, the open door to takeover of Korean banks by foreign finance, strong reduction in government spending on social programs, infrastructure, and credits to business, fracturing of the large domestic conglomerates: in brief, a whole thriving “high tech and manufacturing economy up for grabs” (Chossudovsky, “IMF”).

countries been downgraded first for consumption and then for financial speculation. Increasingly, the consumer-goods market dominated by giant corporations supplanted independent small suppliers of products and services (e.g., midwifery) in the lower classes, and indeed even its sociability in participant sports or local social drinking: consumption was unified and totalized (the Ehrenreichs 15–16). Democracy fares poorly in such situations, where elections (if not fraudulent) are bought by the rich, “people [are intentionally kept] structurally illiterate [...] about the forces that are shaping their lives” (Sellars 89), and, ever since the 1930s, censorship has occupied the commanding heights of movies and then TV in the world’s two (whilom) great hopes, the USA and USSR.

Not to forget the Walt Disney corporation, in 2004 it was the second largest among US multimedia conglomerates, with an income of \$27 billion (*Fortune*, 12 April 2004); its CEO Michael Eisner’s salary was \$750,000 plus huge bonuses and stock options, at the time a Haitian worker is paid six cents for one “101 Dalmatians” children’s garment (“Globaldygook”) and a Korean or Chinese girl even less for Christmas toys (“On the Job”) – such as possibly worn by or bought for the happy Matay grandchildren. Whole generations, as well as the planetary environment for centuries into the future, are being mortgaged to an arrogant fraction of 1 percent on the top and a faceless world money market. 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). Lowering “the cost of labour,” the ultimate wisdom of capitalism, means impoverishing everybody who lives from her work and enriching top-level managers and the upper mercenaries (ranking politicians, cops, engineers, lawyers, administrators ...). The dire poverty gap is turning all societies into “two nations,” with good services for the small minority of the rich and shoddy ones or none for the dispensable poor. Compared to Dickens, the upper classes will have more computers, more (or at least more talk about) sex, and more cynicism, while the Indian, Brazilian, Chinese or our own slums will have TV. Human groups divide into resentful islands who do not hear the bell tolling; Marx’s “absolute general law of capitalist accumulation: accumulation

of wealth is at the same time accumulation of misery, agony of toil, slavery, ignorance, brutality" (*Selected* 483), has been confirmed in spades.

What then is the balance sheet of the capitalist social formation (see Wallerstein, *Historical* 99–105 and 117–37)? Let me take the two most undoubted material achievements: production and length of life. As to the first, it is clear that human domination over nature has mightily increased: per unit of labour-time, the output of products is considerably greater. In other words, technological productivity under capitalism has finally created the presuppositions for rendering our globe habitable for all. But the habitability has been hijacked: is the required labour-time for production and reproduction per one person, per one lifetime or in the aggregate smaller? Certainly, in comparison to precapitalist formations the working classes "work much harder in order to merely scrape by; they may eat less, but they surely buy more" (*ibid.* 124). Not only is Paul Lafargue's right to creative laziness nowhere on the horizon, but its reformulation to ecological purposes as the right to slowness (Barthes, "Day" 116) is lost in turbocapitalism. In the last thirty years, at the same time that a fake decolonization redrew political borders outside the metropolitan countries, from Ghana to the Ukraine, "the world proletariat has almost doubled [...] [much of it] working under conditions of gross exploitation and political oppression" (Harvey 423). There is a serious possibility that the classical Marxist thesis of the absolute immiseration of the proletariat as compared to 500 or 200 years ago may after all be correct, if we look at the 85 percent or more of the working people in the world economy rather than only at the industrial workers of the metropolitan countries; and there is no doubt of the huge relative immiseration in comparison to the dominant classes and nations. Obviously, even the latter is politically quite explosive and morally unacceptable: it demoralizes and alienates all classes, if in different ways. Therefore, the rulers need brainwashing.

As to the second, infant mortality has been strongly reduced in peacetime: but have the pollutions of air, water, and food as well as the psychic stresses and unceasing compulsion and insecurity lengthened life for those who survived beyond cared-for infancy? The jury is out on this: but the quality and ease of life has surely fallen sharply within my lifetime, and it is bound to fall exponentially with structural long-term unemployment.

The amount of social waste and cruelty is larger than ever before in the century beginning with the great capitalist world wars (1914). “[C]apitalism cannot deliver world peace” (Wood 265): we will be very lucky if we have no further ABC wars after the Gulf Oil one. Capitalism is positively dependent on ecological devastation, condensing geological change into historical time. True, “really existing socialism” also badly failed at this (not at keeping peace); but ecological vandalism is a measure of capitalism’s success, not failure: the more vandalism the more short-term profit (look at Amazonia). So I asked in “News”: is our overheated society better than the “colder” one of (say) Tang China or the Iroquois Confederation? There is more of us but do we have more space or more trees, per person? Many of us have less back-breaking toil, but all have more mind-destroying aimlessness resulting in person-killing by drug and gun; we have WCs but also cancer and AIDS ... Most probably, even quantitatively – and with greater certainty qualitatively – the achievements of the bourgeoisie celebrated in *The Communist Manifesto* have been overbalanced by what it has suppressed.

One example of the very ambiguous balance sheet would be universalism and science. I discuss the latter in Chapter 8 (and now at length in “On the Horizons”), and can here only telegraphically note that, while I wish to keep its cognitive orientation toward the systematic and testable understanding of material processes, it is also an institution both legitimating and disciplining the world’s cadres, and its subsumption under profit-oriented rationalism has caused a horrified massive reaction into irrationalism. And the destruction of local communities, knowledge, and living species from Columbus on is irreparable. For *Homo sapiens* and the planet, the price of drug, gun, and profits is too high: the price of capitalism is bankrupting us morally and materially.

## 2.2 *Intellectuals*

Post-Fordism is, then, the apparently final moulting of capitalism from individual into corporate. Where Fordism was characterized by “hard” technology (paradigm: personal car), semi-automation, State planning, and

the rise of mass media and advertising, Post-Fordism brings “soft” technology (paradigm: personal computer), automation, mega-corporations, and world market regulated so as to override States, as well as the integration of the media with the computer under total domination of marketing. In both cases, more “software” or “human engineering” people were needed to ensure not only production but also supervision and ideological updating of the hegemony: the population increased. I have argued in Chapter 8 that these “new middle classes,” constituted of managers and “intellectuals,” account for two thirds of the GNP in the societies of the capitalist North now derived from their labour, though their proportion within the population is globally perhaps 10–15 percent. Politically, they (we) may be very roughly divided into servants of the capitalist and/or bureaucratic State, servants of large corporations, self-proclaimed “apolitical” or “esthetic” free-floaters, and radicals taking the plebeian side. It is actually this intermediate class-congeries in the world, the Ehrenreichs’ “professional-managerial class” (a nomination that usefully underlines their two wings), that has beyond doubt been materially better off than their earlier historical counterparts: but the price has been very high.

In the Fordist dispensation, liberal ideology claimed that the world is composed of inner-directed atomic individuals within atomic national States. The new collectivism needs other-directed intellectuals, whose consciousness/conscience is fully subsumed under profit. This is where it might be useful to delve further into the Faustian two souls of us intellectuals. It would require complex adaptations of Marxian class theory (see to begin with Gramsci, the Ehrenreichs, Poulantzas, Resnick-Wolff, Guillory, and Robbins ed.) which would take into account a group’s relation to both economics and to power and cultural positioning; I can only hope to identify the problem. On the one hand, as Marx famously chided, “the bourgeoisie has stripped of its halo every occupation hitherto honoured and looked up to with reverent awe. It has turned the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the scientist, into its paid wage-labourers” (*The Communist Manifesto*). On the other hand, the constitution of the intellectuals into professions is impossible without a measure of autonomy: of corporative self-government and, most important, control over one’s work. We share to an exasperated degree the tug-of-war between wage-labour and self-determination: even

the poorest intellectual participates in privilege through her “educational capital”; even the richest manager may not be able to rid himself of the uncomfortable itch of thinking. The increasingly marginalized and pauperized humanists and teachers are disproportionately constituted by women and non-“Whites,” a sure index of subalternity.

Bourdieu has intriguingly described intellectuals as “a dominated fraction of the dominant class” (“Intellectual” 145 and *Other* 319ff.; see Guillory 118ff.). Such semi-Foucauldian brilliancies are too monolithic and undialectical for my taste, but it is true that the funds for this whole congeries of “cadre” classes – “administrators, technicians, scientists, educators [...] have been drawn from the global surplus” (Wallerstein, *Historical* 83–84): as Sartre would say, none of us has clean hands. (I myself seem to be paid through loans to Québec by German banks, or ultimately by the exploitation of my ex-compatriots in Eastern Europe.) It is also true that the welfare-and-warfare State epoch saw the culmination of the “cut” from the global surplus we “middle” 10–15 percent were getting; and “the shouts of triumph of this ‘middle’ sector over the reduction of their gap with the upper one per cent have masked the realities of the growing gap between them and the other [85–90] per cent” (*ibid.* 104–05). So Bourdieu is getting at our oxymoronic position of a living contradiction: we are essential to the *encadrement* and policing of workers, but we are ourselves workers – a position memorably encapsulated by Brecht’s “Song of the [Tame] Eighth Elephant” helping to subdue his recalcitrant natural brethren in *The Good Person of Setzuan*. Excogitating ever new ways to sell our expertise as “services” in producing and enforcing marketing images of happiness, we decisively contribute to the decline of people’s self-determination and non-professionalized expertise (see the early acid definition by Sorel 162 and 273, also Fox and Lears 9 and *passim*). We are essential to the production of new knowledge and ideology, but we are totally kept out of establishing the framework into which, and mostly kept from directing the uses to which, the production and the producers are put. Our professionalization secured for some of us sufficient income to turn high wage into minuscule capital. We cannot function without a good deal of self-government in our classes or artefacts, but we do not control the strategic decisions about universities or dissemination of artefacts. The list of such variants to Dr

Dolittle's two-headed Pushme-Pullyou beast, between self-management and servitude, could be extended indefinitely.

### 3. The Bifurcations and the Alliances

The starting-point in critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is [...] as a product of the historical process to date, which has deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory. Therefore, it is imperative at the outset to compile an inventory.

— GRAMSCI, *Prison Notebooks*

3.1

The main realization dawning from the preceding subsections is for me, following arguments such as Wallerstein's, that the hope for an eventual bridging of the poverty gap is now over, and it is very improbable the Keynesian class compromise can be dismantled without burying under its fallout capitalism as a whole. 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 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 alternative lies between the models of the oligarchic (that is centrally Fascist) war-camp and an open plebeian-democratic commune.

In this realistically grim perspective, a strong argument could be made that facing a dangerous series of "cascading bifurcations" (Wallerstein, *Historical 155–56*) our liberatory corporate or class interests as intellectuals

are twofold and interlocking. First, they consist in securing a high degree of self-management, to begin with in the workplace. But second, they also consist in working for such strategic alliances with other fractions and classes as would consent us to fight the current toward militarized brow-beating. This may be most visible in “Confucian capitalism” from Japan to Malaya, for example in the concentration-camp fate of the locked-in young women in industries of Mainland China, but it is well represented in all our sweatshops and fortress neighbourhoods (see the US example in Harvey). It can only be counteracted by ceaseless insisting on meaningful democratic participation in the control not only of production but also of distribution of our own work, as well as of our neighbourhoods. Here the boundary between our as it were dissident interests within the intellectual field of production and the overall liberation of labour as their only guarantee becomes permeable. True, history has shown that alliance-building is only more painful than base organizing: any Mannheimian dream about the intelligentsia as utopian arbiter was unrealistic to begin with. But at least we know it can only be done by bringing into the marriage our honest interests and uncertainties, by eschewing like the plague the PoMo certainty and apodictic terrorizing, adapted in a bizarre mimicry of their two rivals, admass and Stalinism, as the newest variant of the intellectuals’ illusion that they do not suffer from illusions (as Bourdieu somewhere said).

Our immediate interests are oppositional because capitalism without a human face is obviously engaged in large scale “structural declassing” of intellectual work, of our “cultural capital” (Bourdieu, and see Guillory 134ff.). There is nothing more humiliating, short of physical injury, than the experience of being pushed to the periphery of social values – measured by the only yardstick capitalism knows, our financing – which all of us have undergone in the last quarter century. Our graduate students are by now predominantly denied Keynesian employment, condemned to part-time piecework without security. As Poulantzas observes, capitalism has now adjoined to the permanent reserve army of industrial labour that of intellectual labour (321–23). The new contract enforced on the “downsized” generation is: “Workers undertake to find new occupations where they can be exploited in the cleverest and most efficient way possible” (Lipietz 77). If the degree of autonomy within the “middle class” is inversely proportional

to a given fraction's domination over workers, so that managers have little autonomy but great powers over workers (including intellectual workers), then university teachers never had any power over productive relations, but now we are bit by bit losing our relatively large autonomy. The difference between intellectuals and managers is analogous to that of monks to territorial priests in the medieval Catholic Church. The best we can today expect from capitalism is the shrinking and proletarianized plastic-tower autonomy of a begging order: the badly supplied but relatively undisturbed monastery of Thomas of Aquinas – certainly not the Abbey of Thélème, beset as it is by an unholy alliance of barbaric businessmen and what Gayatri C. Spivak (in Robbins ed. 167) calls “corporate feminists” (or corporate ethnics). This is not good enough.

### 3.2

In this bind, we can at any rate say to the supposed realists (Haug, *Versuch* 88–89): Look where you have landed us! There's no more realism without utopia! (Your reality itself works toward a negative utopia.) But what does this practically mean? A number of things.

First, I must be the bearer of painful news: the professionalism of which we were up to a point justly proud has been overwhelmingly corrupted – by outright bribery where it matters, by self-willed marginality in the humanities. The ivory of our towers has been largely ground into powder as aphrodisiac for the corporate bosses and enchantment for the elder Matay sibs. Looking at our class position soberly, we shall have to redefine professionalism as including – rather than complementing – self-managing political citizenship or we shall be political by selling our brains to the highest bidder. This follows necessarily from the above discussions of epistemology and our class position, which are now revealed as two ways of envisaging the same thing. On the one hand, in our classes we shall have to redefine, with Nietzsche, philology not simply as the art of reading rightly (what is there) but the art of reading well (what we may get from it). And outside the class it may mean anything from picketing the University Board or the Faculty of Business Management to lying down

on the railway tracks (to use an improbable 1960s parallel). It certainly means striving for activist unionization, at a time when corporations are corrupting academic administrators by making them into well-paid CEOs in exchange for downsizing teachers (see Soley 24–32 and Guillory). Like publishers vs. artistic cognition, universities vs. teaching cognition are now “the swine [...] in charge of the pearls” (Anthony). As Benjamin put it, in the permanent part of an essay which was alas written in a more hopeful situation:

only by transcending the specialization in the process of production that, in the bourgeois view, constitutes its order can one make this production politically useful; and the barriers imposed by specialization must be breached jointly by the productive forces that they were set up to divide. The author as producer discovers – in discovering his solidarity with the proletariat – simultaneously his solidarity with certain other producers who earlier seemed scarcely to concern him. (*Gesammelte Schriften* II.2: 690–4; trans. E. Jephcott)

Only this can, in his wonderful polysemy, unfetter *die Produktion der Intelligenz*: the production of us intellectuals, but also the productivity of intelligence or reason. And if we at the moment do not find many proletarian organizations to meet us in the middle of the tunnel, we can start by doing utopian cross-pollinations of at least the cultural with the philosophic, economic, political, and other history studies. To wax unabashedly autobiographical, this is one of the reasons why I am a member of the Society for Utopian Studies; or why I consider Attali’s remarks on the political economy of music (the age of repetitive evacuation of meaning and big centralized *apparati* determining production and listening as commodified time, best foregrounded in muzak) as one of the most enlightening diagnoses of Post-Fordism; or why one of my books interlarded seven essays and seven sequences of poetry (and the present book does something similar). But I am afraid we will have to relearn the tradition of persecution ranging, say, from Cyrano and Spinoza, through Marx’s and Benjamin’s exile from universities and many countries, to the Pope’s treatment of Liberation Theology: such ecumenical professionalism will entail less reading of papers and much more civic conflictuality.

For, on the citizenship end of the same continuous spectrum it means beginning to fight two even more difficult long revolutions. One is to master what we might call, adapting Said, *critical worldliness*: Brecht called it the art of thinking also in other people's heads. Though we partly become intellectuals in order to get far from the madding crowd, our class and often even personal survival requires us then (now) – without surrendering either our bearings or the clarity of our arguments' articulation! – to get out of the elite ghetto of writing, theatre, etc., into the mass media. The most important politico-cultural position today is obviously the TV station, secondly the radio station, and thirdly the cinema and the video production. This is why they are also, in descending order, the most firmly controlled by millions and laws. Nonetheless, there may be limited chinks in the system, as proved by the stories of the three-kilometre-radius Japanese radio stations in the 1960s and 1970s, or of the movie producing units at the end of "real socialism" in East Central Europe – both successfully used by small self-governing groups. Video production, and in particular computerization and the Internet offer many possibilities, so far used by the Rightwing subversives much more efficiently than by the Left. The second long struggle might be called *global solidarity*: it consists in fighting what would be a Fascist geopolitical involution, turning our privileged Northern continents into an insular *Festung Amerika* and *Festung West-Europa*. The Japanese dissident Muto Ichijo called it perhaps more precisely "transborder participatory democracy," and Douglas Lummis argues on his tracks that it is a necessity of our time when "imperial power is incarnated in three bodies: pseudo-democracy at home, vast military organizations, and the transnational corporations [...]" (Lummis 138). Its furthest utopian horizon, absolutely necessary if we wish to avoid oblivion or caste society, is the long revolution of achieving "democratic forms of 'social control' of financial markets" (Chossudovsky "IMF").

In sum, the Modernist oases for exiles (the Left Bank, Bloomsbury, lower Manhattan, major US campuses) are gone the way of a Tahiti polluted by nuclear fallout and venereal pandemic: some affluent or starving writers à la Pynchon or Joyce may still be possible, but not as a statistically significant option for us. Adapting Tsvetaeva's great line "All poets are Yids" (*Vše poéty zhidy*), we can say that fortunately all intellectuals are partly exiles from the

Disneyland and/or starvation dystopia, but we are an “inner emigration” for whom resistance was always possible and is now growing mandatory. The only resistance to Disneyland brainwashing is “the invention of the desire called Utopia in the first place, along with new rules for the fantasizing or daydreaming of such a thing – a set of narrative protocols with no precedent in our previous literary institutions [...]” (Jameson, *Seeds* 90). This would be *a collective production of meanings* whose efficacy is measured by “[how many] consumers it is able to turn into producers, in brief, how many readers and lookers-on it can turn to collaborators” (Benjamin *Gesammelte Schriften* II.2: 696, and see Attali): that is, to begin with, critical and not empathetic thinkers (see Suvin “Emotion”). And the only chance to do this is “[to keep] in touch with all kinds of streams of protest and dissent so as to know what’s important to say” (Ehrenreich 177–78, and see *passim*). And a final piece of painful news: this means “doing things we’re not used to, like saying things that ‘everybody’ (meaning everybody in one wing of the profession) ‘already knows’” (Bérubé 171, and see the whole section 164–78, esp. 176). The gentle reader will notice I have not quite managed to follow this prescription ...

### 3.3

Mindful of my Marxian roots, I shall not venture into prophecies about the next generation or two. You can find it better in the dystopian SF I have already alluded to. But I wish to report that I find two of the best “conceptual” people, Raymond Williams from the humanities and Immanuel Wallerstein from the social sciences (*Historical* 162–63), quite independently – such is our bourgeois division of labour that even they, on the same political side in the same language, appear not to have read each other! – coming to a practically identical view of alternatives to capitalist commercialism. They are: Platonic Fascism (authoritarianism), the Guardians being maybe half or less of the affluent 10–20 percent in the North of the globe; Neo-feudalism (paternalism), distinguished from the former by a significant breakdown in globalization and division into local satrapies of different kinds; and finally, federated self-governing communes and work-

groups (participatory democracy), a technologized Morrisian Nowhere as the nearest approximation to classless society we may today dream of. And we also have a good yardstick for measuring any change as it occurs: does it increase or reduce the exploitation of labour, of production in the widest sense (that includes art and love, see Suvin, "Brecht"). Again, against the horizon of these blue distances the production of goods and the production of meanings grows indistinguishable.

To conclude: we have no choice but to propose the most daring utopia, which is today, to begin with, not Earthly Paradise but the prevention of Hell on Earth. May the Earth remain our habitable mother, rather than being pushed by greedy classes and imbecilitated masses (as today) the way of ecological catastrophe, and the ensuing great Migration of Peoples, the bitter State and corporation wars, the civil wars of constructed racism and ethnicity! But paradoxically, I am persuaded that finally – which is not at all opposed to other medium-range horizons – only the most radical counterpoise, a flexible system of what Marx called the free association of direct producers, the horizon of a global self-sustaining and self-managing society (which is socialism) has a chance: only mobilizing Paradise or Utopia can Hell or Fascism be defeated. Fuller's slogan "utopia or oblivion" can be interpreted to mean the threatening loss of historical memory for almost all that distinguishes our horizons from a caste society.

Yet, of course, when the status quo collapses, the bifurcations are unforeseeable. Behind the alternative between utopia and disastrous being there lurks utopia vs. non-being. The alternative to a habitable planet is not only the present creeping death of the mind and values but sweeping and totally non-metaphoric death. At any rate, as Brecht wrote in the dark little poem on reading Horace's account of the Great Deluge:

Even the Deluge  
Did not last for ever.  
At some point  
The black waters receded.  
And yet, how few people  
Lasted that long!

(*Gesammelte Werke* 10: 1014)

So: having arrived within hailing distance of the end of our species and perhaps of vertebrate life on Earth, the wonderful but possibly somewhat elite form of the scholarly essay begins at the end to fail me. I shall therefore try to encapsulate what I had to say here in five slogans (aided by Haug, *Versuch* 89 and 498, and Moylan, *Demand*):

No way out of dystopia except as orientation to utopia – and viceversa.

No valid epistemology (perceiving, understanding, culture) without politics – and viceversa.

No social liberation without self-management (in workplace as well as all other places) – and viceversa.

No democracy without (the best from) socialism, ecology, and feminism – and triply viceversa.

“And if you think this is utopian, please think why is it such”. (Brecht)

Utopia as static goal has been dead since the nineteenth century, even if its putrefying cadaver poisoned the twentieth. Marx’s critique of Cabet’s project of emigrating to found a colony as desertion from class struggles (and I find it rather significant that Marx did not focus on criticizing Cabet’s earlier – rather poor – utopian novel), could have taught us that “the place of utopia is not elsewhere, but here and now, as other” (Marin 346). As Italo Calvino’s “city which cannot be founded by us but can found itself within us, can build itself bit by bit in our capacity to imagine it, to think it through” (252), utopia cannot die. But its latent rebirth depends on us. I give you what I have learned in this truncated half century, through hope and terror and finally compassionate solidarity (the *karuna* of Huxley’s Buddhist mynah-birds, the ironic tenderness of Brecht):

Do not expect from utopia more than from yourselves.

Montreal, September 1997<sup>10</sup>

10 My thanks go to Peter Fitting and Lyman Tower Sargent for generously organizing a session devoted to discussing this, and to the latter for help with sources on hunger statistics. Also to Farah Mendlesohn and Tom Moylan for comments on a first draft,

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