THE SPATIAL UNCONSCIOUS OF GLOBAL AMERICA:

A CARTOGRAPHY OF CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL SPACE AND CULTURAL FORMS

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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

This dissertation examines space as a privileged yet *repressed* site of cultural production in a global America, in response to ongoing attempts to reconfigure American literary and cultural studies through the lens of globalization, postnationality, worlding, and planetarity, and to build conversations between literature, the arts, and space. Drawing its inspiration from Henri Lefebvre's work on the production of social space and Fredric Jameson's theory of postmodern global culture, this project studies globalization with a particular emphasis on its unique spatial apparatus, which through geographical expansion and contraction and worldwide connection and disconnection produces hitherto unprecedented social spaces, including most notably the global city, virtual space, transnational diasporas, postmodern architecture, and the "non-places" of shopping malls, airports, and highways. I discuss how these global social spaces radically alter our experience of the lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*) and transform our representational practices, by analyzing innovative contemporary cultural forms such as literary theory (Jameson, Derrida, Adorno, and Deleuze), deconstructive architecture (Peter Eisenman), video art (Nam June Paik), diasporic writing (Theresa Hak Kyung Cha), postmodern detective fiction (Paul Auster), the cyberpunk novel (William Gibson).

While I thus mediate global spatial production and cultural production, I argue that the predominant focus on deterritorialization, disjuncture, and postspatiality in much of contemporary discourse on globalization oftentimes diverts our attention from the

complex mechanism whereby the spatial world system of globalization brings the entire

globe into its all-encompassing and totalizing force field. I formulate the concept of a

spatial unconscious in order to address the salient, though repressed, presence of the

totalizing spatial logic of global capitalism that underlies contemporary cultural

production. In so doing, I demonstrate that diverse contemporary literary and cultural

forms have their conditions of possibility the newly emergent global spatial network of

cultural flows and exchanges; and that those literary and cultural forms function as

symbolic acts or registering apparatuses that reflect, remap, and reimagine the

multifaceted and even contradictory spatial configurations of the world today. By

bringing a transnational and interdisciplinary perspective to American literary studies,

this study seeks to shift our critical attention from a putatively unitary and homogeneous

national literature towards manifold cultural loci crisscrossed by dynamic interplays and

fluid interchanges amongst multiple axes and nodal points on the globe.

Acknowledgements

Leibniz's remark, "I thought I'd reached port, but found myself thrown back onto the open sea," often reverberates in my mind these days as I complete this dissertation and approach a small port. Knowing that after this momentary euphoria-cum-lethargy evaporates into the air, I should embark on another journey, I would like to take this moment to acknowledge the wondrous seafarers I have met during my intellectual peregrinations at Duke and whose maps and guidance have helped me to better see the world and, more importantly, myself.

My very special thanks go to my dissertation chair and advisor, Professor Fredric Jameson. Whether I was inspired or stumbled, he has always stood by me, showing more faith in my work and me than I could ask of him. I have been beyond fortunate to have him as my mentor for all these years. I will always remain grateful that he has shown me the prismatic world of literature, critical theory, and many other cultural forms: "Là, tout n'est qu'ordre et beauté, Luxe, calme et volupté." I am also greatly indebted to Michael Hardt. His astute comments and practical advice on my project have always kept me sharp, while his unflagging commitment and caring encouragement have helped me through what could have been a solitary and "monadic" process of writing. Professor Susan Willis' engaging guidance and exemplary scholarship have been a refreshing source of inspiration for me. With her insightful and keen perspectives on things, she has opened my eyes to how to read supermarkets, shopping malls, and other cultural and textual spaces. Other committee members, Priscilla Wald and Maurice Wallace, have also

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PROLEGOMENON

PLANETARY IMAGINATION AND
THE SPACE OF CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN CULTURE

Globalizing the *Heim* of American Culture and Its Repressed Other

The last two decades or so have witnessed a spate of studies that reconsider the

meaning of the nation in the wake of globalization. Many have sought to chart the ways

in which globalization and the ensuing transnational cultural exchange and global

interconnections reshape and contest what we understand the nation to be. To be sure, the

nation does not become problematic only *after* the so-called global turn. As Benedict

Anderson's now classic study, *Imagined Communities*, suggests, the nation is ideological

from the very moment of its inception.[1] One may pursue this line of enquiry still further

and argue in a deconstructive manner that the "presence," "identity," or

"monolingualism" of the nation is *always already* in crisis. For the "imagining" of the

nation as an autonomous and homogeneous entity is rendered possible by means of the

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[1] In this seminal study Anderson investigates the origin and spread of nationalism and famously claims that the nation is "an imagined political community" (6). On his account, the nation is *imagined*: even if its members cannot possibly meet or know the majority of their fellow citizens, they nonetheless develop and retain a stable sense of their mutual communion and belonging. In addition, the nation is imagined as a *community* in the sense that notwithstanding the prevailing inequality and exploitation, the nation is invariably conceived as a "deep, horizontal comradeship" (6-7). My position here is that such a proposition can be transcoded through Althusser's appropriation of Lacan's theory of the Imaginary; and that the "imagining" of the nation is ideological through and through since it is a "representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" (Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus" 109)

intricate processes of suppressing internal heterogeneity and difference within its

geographical and historical boundaries and repressing its relationality and differentiality

vis-à-vis its Other. For instance, while Jacques Derrida propounds his concept (*sous

rapture*) of the "*non-contemporaneity with itself of the living present*" (xix) in *Specters of

Marx*, he brings to relief the disjointedness of the nation and writes, "All national

rootedness…is rooted first of all in the memory or the anxiety of a displaced—or

displaceable—population" (83).[2] This characteristically Derridean strategy that

deconstructs the seemingly self-same presence is also employed when he points out that a

national language is "not at one with itself" and is instead freighted with *différance* and

alterity (*Monolingualism of the Other* 65). Such an approach to the nation is not

incompatible with, and therefore can be supplemented by, a historicizing perspective

insofar as the structurally always already precarious notion of the nation becomes even

more problematic with the advent of the contemporary global world system. Delineating

how globalization and its denationalizing forces rupture the traditional ideas of the nation,

Saskia Sassen writes:

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[2] Taking as his point of departure Hamlet's well-known line, "the time is out of joint," Derrida in this book argues for the difference, or rather *différance*, of the temporality of the present. He also extends such a characteristically deconstructive approach to the question of space and remarks that "It is not only time that is 'out of joint,' but space, space in time, spacing" (83). I take Derrida's theorization of the *always already* disjointed temporality and spatiality of the present as a way to critique the ideological *ontology* and metaphysics of the nation that often imagines the nation as a temporally and spatially coherent and stable entity. For my discussion of Derrida's temporal and spatial disjuncture in the context of globalization, see Chapter 1, below. See also the first part of Chapter 2 in which I interroagate Derrida's deconstruction in juxtaposition with Adorno's negative dialectics.

> National state authority has long been represented as territorially exclusive and absolute. When global actors, whether firms or markets, overlap and interact with the national, they produce a frontier zone in the territory of the nation. Not merely a dividing line between the national and the global, this is a zone of politico-economic interaction where new institutional forms take shape and old forms are altered. ("Spatialities and Temporalities of the Global" 227)[3]

Globalization thus throws out of joint the national border, whether it be geographical, cultural, or imaginary, all the while creating a zone of interference and interfusion in which the nation is constantly contested, negotiated, and reimagined.

If the notion of the nation is both structurally and historically problematic, then national literature as well needs to be called into question along the same line. For not only is national literature produced by the nation, but it also contributes to the imagining and production of the nation. As Priscilla Wald claims in her study *Constituting Americans*, in the face of a "crisis in the national 'we,'" national narratives function in such a way as to call into being the fictive entity called a nation (298). In view of such an ideological role played by national literature in the process of nation-building, one of the principal functions of national literature can be said to be to offer an imaginary and imagined "resolution" to the contradictions and fissures inherent in the constitution of the

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[3] Propounding his complex view on the impact of globalization for the nation-state, Stuart Hall opines, "One of the things which happens when the nation-state begins to weaken, becoming less convincing and less powerful, is that the response seems to go in two ways simultaneously. It goes above the nation-state and it goes below it. It goes global and local in the same moment. Global and local are the two faces of the same movement from one epoch of globalization, the one which has been dominated by the nation-state, the national economies, the national cultural identities, to something new" (27). Hall's formulation of the dynamic of the global and the local has the merit of grasping the way in which global capital holds such apparently contradictory features in tension with each other; or the way that, as he succinctly puts it, "capitalism only advances, as it were, on contradictory terrain" (29). I theorize some of the contradictory terrains of global capitalism throughout this dissertation, most notably in the first two chapters.

nation, while producing the nation as a more or less unitary collective community. Since national literature, like the nation, is not defined in and of itself, however, some careful consideration must be given to the very internal and external differences it suppresses. Naoki Sakai accordingly theorizes the "co-figuration" of the nation and its other, and argues that "the construction of national 'literature' has always already been haunted by that of 'comparative literature': national literature has inherently been comparative literature" ("Distinguishing Literature" 22). In one sense it is none other than this structural indissociability between national literature and its alterity, as much as the inextricability between the nation and its Other, that the emergence of contemporary transnational or global culture keeps in view in a more intensive and extensive manner.

Globalization and its sweeping impact on the nation and national literature alike have altered the outlook of American literary and cultural studies. For the past couple of decades there has been a series of attempts to interrogate the ways in which globalization radically transforms both what American culture produces and how American culture is produced. As Fredric Jameson appositely points out, American literature has never been a national literature in the strict sense of the word, since the questions of the nation-state and national culture have always been even more complicated and problematic for the U.S. than for its European peers (*Jameson on Jameson* 114). In his essay about Walt Whitman, Gilles Deleuze also speculates that even in the foundational moment of American national literature, the nation figures as something disjunctive and fragmented or as "a Nation swarming with nations," as he puts it ("Whitman" 56-57). However, the

global or transnational turn in American literary studies more urgently demands that the idea of a putatively unitary and homogeneous American literature and culture should be radically reinvestigated in conjunction with other national literatures and cultures. Such a global and comparativist approach has brought with it a heightened sense of the structural and historical entwinement between American culture and its exterior—a critical awareness superbly captured in Trinh Minh-Ha's exquisite phrase, "No history (of any single nation) without (the) histories (of other nations)" ("White Spring" 38).

One exemplary move to globalize or de-nationalize American literary and cultural studies is observed in Carolyn Porter's "What We Know That We Don't Know: Remapping American Literary Studies." In this essay published in *American Literary History* in 1994 Porter points to the unconscious field imaginary of American literary studies that turns on the idea that the nation is "the basic unit of, and frame for, analysis" (470). She proposes to reconstruct the discipline through a thorough and rigorous reconsideration of American literature and culture within the larger historical and geographical frames of the Americas. As a way to relativize and decenter American culture, she urges Americanists to shift the critical focus from the nation to what she terms "a quadruple set of relations," that is, the four-fold relations between North America and Latin America, North America and Europe, Latin America and Europe, and the Americas and Africa (510). Since followed a flood of works that delved into transnational and postnational dimensions of American cultural production. While Donald E. Pease's *National Identities and Post-American Narratives* (1994) and John

Carlos Rowe's *Post-National American Studies* (2000) represent such postnational

approaches to American studies, particularly worth mentioning is Janice Radway's 1998

presidential address to the American Studies Association. Entitled "What's in a Name?"

Radway's address is a call to rethink American studies in a historical situation in which

the global world system challenges the conventional ideas of the autonomy of nations and

cultures with its accelerated and expanded circulation of capital, people, and commodity

(25, n.2). She insists that America be reconceptualized and reformulated "as always

relationally defined and therefore as intricately dependent upon 'others' that are used

both materially and conceptually to mark its boundaries" (17). In so underscoring the

"intricate interdependencies" between American culture and its others, she calls for a

"relational thinking" as a way to study a globalized American culture (10).

A homologous, yet more influential, stance on the imperative to draw national

literature and culture into dialogue with those of other global spaces is set forth in Gayatri

Chakravorty Spivak's *Death of a Discipline*. A collection of lectures delivered two years

after Radway's presidential address, this text places the notion of "planetarity" on the

agenda of literary and cultural studies in the age of globalization. Spivak takes issue with

the way the institutionalization of various literatury and cultural studies in postwar U.S.A.

was underwritten by the Cold War ideologies predicated upon the provincial binarism

between self and other, between friends and enemies. Arguing that such ideological

residues still permeate through contemporary literary and cultural studies, Spivak

foregrounds planetarity as a concept that takes the planet as the common ground of all

human existence and turns critical attention away from the parochial and sectarian

parameters of the nation toward the interconnected nature of planetary cultural

production. Such a "planet-thought," she emphatically adds, is bound to remap and

reimagine the meaning of the world in such a way that subverts the imposition of the

identical system upon the entire globe by the all-penetrating logic of global capitalism

(72-73).

Notable here is that Spivak insists that planetarity should transform beyond

recognition our established notion of "home" and render our home *unheimlich* or

uncanny (74). What Spivak draws on is Freud's analysis of the *unheimlich* in "The

Uncanny," an oft-cited essay in which he expounds on the mechanism of repression in

terms of the process of estrangement or the defamiliarization of the familiar. In his

masterful analysis of the return of the familiar (in the form of the unfamiliar) as the

essential structure of the trauma of Nathaniel, the main character in E.T.A Hoffmann's

short story "The Sandman," Freud elaborates what Schelling observes apropos of the

uncanny: "'*Unheimlich*' is the name for everything that ought to have remained…secret

and hidden but has come to light." Freud shows that the German word, *unheimlich*,

(literally "unhomelike") shares a meaning with its antonym, *heimlich*, because the latter

can also mean "concealed, secret" in addition to "familiar, homey, and open" (219-226).

As he thus discloses the unlikely correlation between the *heimlich* and the *unheimlich*, he

argues that "[the] uncanny is in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is

familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only

through the process of repression" (241). If Freud's theory of the *unheimlich* illustrates the mechanism of repression, Spivak's insistence upon planetarity as the uncanny can be rereadable in a way that reveals how traditional nation-based literary and cultural studies have repressed the planetarity of their production and how planetarity can deconceal the *unconscious* of national literature and culture. Although Spivak's discussion centers upon comparative literature, area studies, and cultural studies, her comparativist and relational vision of planetarity serves to underline what Radway dubs the "intricate interdependencies" of national cultures. No less important, Spivak's discourse on the uncanny of a "planetary Comparative Literature" (84) can bring to light the heretofore under-explored and even *repressed* interconnection between American culture and cultures of the rest of the world. In other words, by bringing home to us what Homi K. Bhabha describes as the "*uncanny* structure of cultural difference," planetarity aspires to dismantle "the *Heim* of the national culture and its unisonant discourse" (*The Location of Culture* 164) and to illuminate what Pease in a somewhat different context refers to as the "political unconscious" of American studies ("New Americanists" 31).

Such a global or planetary approach has since galvanized and reconfigured contemporary literary and cultural studies. Paul Gilroy, for one, redefines the planet as a new horizon in cultural studies with his conceptualization of "planetary humanism" (*Postcolonial Melancholia* 79-80; *Against Race* 2, 17) and "planetary mentality" (*After Empire* 69), while Jonathan Arac similarly sounds an urgent call for "planetaritude" and "planetary American literature" ("Global and Babel" 25, 26). Squarely in line with such

planetary revisions are Wai Chee Dimock's series of interventions ranging from
"Literature for the Planet" (2001) and "Deep Time: American Literature and World
History" (2001) to "Scales of Aggregation: Prenational, Subnational, Transnational"
(2006), to *Through Other Continents: American Literature through Deep Time* (2006). In
these works, Dimock endeavors to rewrite the history of American literature in
accordance with planetary spatio-temporal scales. One of the central tenets in such
planetary approaches to American studies is cogently summed up by Dimock and
Lawrence Buell when they demand alternate scales for reforming nation-based literary
studies in their co-edited book, *Shades of the Planet* (2007):

> They require alternate geographies, alternate histories. At their most
> capacious, they take their measure from the durations and extensions of
> the human species itself, folding in American literature as one fold among
> others, to be unfolded and refolded into our collective fabric. (5)

This planetary imagination that aims to remap and redraw the traditional topography of
American literary studies from global and transnational perspectives is what runs through
and underpins other numerous related studies.[4] Taken together, the latest approaches in
American studies, for all of their insurmountable differences and divergences, strive to
decenter and de-nationalize the supposed self-sameness of American culture by situating

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[4] The corpus includes, but is not limited to, Anna Brickhouse's *Transamerican Literary Relations* (2004),
the special issues of *Comparative American Studies* on "Worlding American Studies" (2004) and on
"Critical Perspectives and Emerging Models of Inter-American Studies" (2005), Rob Wilson et al.'s *The
Worlding Project* (2007), Caroline F. Levander and Robert S. Levine's *Hemispheric American Studies*
(2007), and Justin Read's *Modern Poetics and Hemispheric American Cultural Studies* (2009). Similarly,
Yunte Huang's *Transpacific Imaginations* (2008) shifts the site of American literary production beyond its
national boundary, toward the transpacific axis of cultural exchange, while Carmen Cáliz-Montoro's
Writing from the Borderlands (2000) and Howard Pease's *Borderland Studies* (2009) implement what is
called "border thinking" and explores an interstitial space of cultural differentiation and hybridization.

it within the hitherto forgotten and repressed planetary or pre- or post-national histories and geographies. Placing a special stress on such inexorable "co-figuration" or entwinement of America and its cultural Others, these new perspectives disclose the unconscious of American culture through recourse to the uncanny of globalization by means of which the unfamiliar Other is familiarized at the same as the *Heim* of America is made unfamiliar and unhomely.

Lost in Transnational

The global, transnational, or planetary turn in American literary studies thus urges us to dismantle the metaphysical *architectonics* of the American *Heim* and to break open its ideological closure—a social and cultural space that is "sealed-off, timeless, self-contained, self-referring," to borrow the compelling phrase Don DeLillo uses in *White Noise* to depict postmodern American culture (51). Accordingly, the new approaches have ushered in a host of enlarged and expanded frameworks that interrogate the ramifications of globalization for the American nation and deconstruct the solipsistic and isomorphic temporal and spatial imaginary of American cultural production by rethinking America as part of the vaster histories and geographies of the planet.

Yet it is peculiar, one may think, that those innovative approaches are often oblivious to the specific history and geography of what underlies and even enables such a global or planetary turn in the first place. Their fairly enlarged and even totalizing

horizons and frameworks notwithstanding, the ongoing attempts to reframe or

"globalize" American literary studies are not primarily concerned with the expansive and

extensive dynamic of global capitalism and its planetary and totalizing scope and scale.

The reluctance on the part of many Americanists to address global capital in its entirety

may be ascribable in large part to their deep-rooted antipathy toward totality. At the very

moment when global capitalism is writing the most grandiose of all grand narratives in

human history and propagating the most planetary vision of the market ever known to the

world, some of those new Americanists appear to be still mired in the kind of "incredulity

toward metanarratives" that Jean-François Lyotard claims defines the historical condition

of knowledge production in the postmodern world (*The Postmodern Condition* xxiv).[5] In

consequence, despite their consistent and concerted efforts to deconceal the unconscious

of American culture through a thorough re-examination of the structural and historical

interdependencies between America and the rest of the world, their accounts more often

than not wind up *repressing* the planetary and totalizing history and geography of global

capitalism.

One wonders whether it is not this repression of the concept of globalization as a

totality that constitutes the deeper political unconscious of contemporary American

culture (as well as that of postmodern global culture in general). Insofar as the global

stage of capitalism tendentially penetrates the entire globe and the entire realm of our

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[5] For more on Lyotard's diagnosis as an index of the postmodern political unconscious, see Chapter 1, below.

everyday life, it is an intellectual as well as political imperative that we grasp global

capital both in its totality as well as in its complexity. The tacit argument running through

the present study will therefore be that the concept of totality should be placed on the

agenda of American literary and cultural studies in the era of globalization or planetarity.

With that said, it should also be made clear that such an effort to grasp the totalizing logic

of globalization must go in tandem with the unflagging search for a non-reductive and

non-regulative notion of totality. Although totality has recently come under attack from

virtually all ends of the philosophical and theoretical spectrum, the concept is not

necessarily onto-theological or teleological as some postmodernists and poststructuralists

are fond of saying. On the contrary, the emphasis on the validity of totality should be

seen as an insistence that we critically connect and mediate, rather than homogenize and

standardize, the seemingly isolated and disconnected social, cultural, and historical

phenomena of the world today so that a simultaneously comprehensive and

differentiating view of the current historical conjuncture emerges.[6] The apparent

reluctance, widely spread in much of contemporary discourse on global culture, to

reformulate totality as a critical concept that tackles the totalizing logic of global capital

without necessarily obliterating the latter's contradictions, heterogeneities, and

differences should be taken as another historical symptom of the present in its own right.

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[6] As a way to reassess the validity of totality for a critically-informed analysis of the globalizing world, Chapters 1 and 2, below, bring Jameson's and Adorno's vindication of totality in conversation with poststructuralists' indiscriminate attacks on totality.

In this respect Shu-mei Shih's recent essay "Comparative Racialization" stands out by virtue of her perceptive insights into the non-dogmatic use to which the notion of totality can be put. While she underlines the importance of "[thinking] of the world as a totality, albeit one containing fractures, uneven terrains, and incommensurabilities," she asserts that "to think the world in its totality is more to insist on the ineluctable consequences of Western colonialism and capitalism the world over [*sic*] than to call for homogenizing or teleologizing world history" (1349). Even though Shih's main concern is with comparative studies of racial issues, her observation is of much relevance to our present discussion in that she reaffirms the validity of totality as a non-reductive and non-teleological concept that can cast a fresh light on the multifaceted and contradictory configurations of the globalizing world.

The proposition that we should conceptualize globalization as a totality—albeit one that is crisscrossed by multiple and diffuse contradictions, fissures, disjunctures—also means that we should grasp the *historical* processes whereby the contemporary globalized world *has become* what it is now. By the same token, to reintroduce the notion of totality as a means to investigate globalization is less a totalitarian gesture than an endeavor to comphrehend the specific history and geography of global capitalism with a great sensitivity to its commonality with, and difference from, its precedents. What this implies is, if anything, that the global or planetary turn in American literary and cultural studies leaves rather unexplored the fact that globality or planetarity is not simply an *a priori* structural condition that governs all cultural production, but a *historical*

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problematic through and through that has as its condition of possibility the more or less

complete infiltration of the planet by what Deleuze and Guattari call "universal

capitalism" (*What Is Philosophy?* 12) and "*integrated (or rather integrating) world

capitalism*" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 492)" or that which Adorno glosses as "the capitalist

system's increasingly integrative trend" (*Negative Dialectics* 166). Put differently,

planetarity or globality, as we invoke it nowadays, comes into existence and attains much

of its explanatory power as a concept *only after* different parts of the globe and their

social realities are interconnected, standardized, and thereby globalized and planetarized.

Yet while many critics in American literary and cultural studies enthusiastically endorse

globality or planetarity in order to inspect the ideological baggage of national literature

and culture, they do not necessarily reckon into their consideration the very historicity of

such concepts and of the historical situation in which their own enquiries are made.

Dimock's laudable remodeling of American literary studies is one such example

that comes short of explaining the historicity of the planetary vision it champions.

Drawing on Spivak's notion of planetarity, Dimock proposes to denationalize and

deterritorialize American literary history by way of a "broadened and deepened

landscape" and a "scale enlargement" (760). She designates such a denationalizing scale

and scope as "deep time" and explicates like so:

> Rather than taking [a chronology coinciding with a territory] for granted—
> rather than taking our measure of time from the stipulated beginning of a
> territorial entity—I propose a more extended duration for American
> literary studies, planetary in scope. I call this *deep time*. This produces a
> map that, thanks to its receding horizons, its backward extension into far-

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flung temporal and spatial coordinates, must depart significantly from a map predicated on the short life of the US. For the force of historical depth is such as to suggest a world that predates the adjective *American*. If we go far enough back in time, and it is not very far, there was no such thing as the US. This nation was not yet on the map, but the world was already fully in existence. The cumulative history of that existence, serving as a time frame both antecedent and ongoing, takes American literature easily outside the nation's borders. A diachronic axis has geographical consequences. Deep time is denationalized space. ("Deep Time" 759-760)

Dimock's discerning perspective and methodology are devised to deconstruct the ostensibly self-contained topos of the American national and cultural imaginary through the deep time of the planet. However, in spite of the virtue of relativizing U.S. history as only one small part of human history or as "one fold among others" as Dimock and Buell put it (5), such a project might risk blinding us to the unsurpassed power of the U.S. over the planet in the past century.[7] Equally important, such recourse to the planetary *longue durée* somehow idealizes the chronotope of the world as witness her description of deep time as a "sequence that begins at an earlier point in history, that goes back to other parts of the globe" ("Deep Time" 761). Elsewhere, she grasps planetarity as "the history and

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[7] While the idea of planetarity is useful when it comes to rethinking America and its culture in conjunction with the planet and thereby deconstructing the "presence" or "identity" of American culture, it seems to run the risk of overlooking the position of the U.S. as the most domineering superpower which is irreducible merely to one member of the planetary collective. Rigorously pursued, a properly planetary approach to American literary and cultural studies should examine America not only as one part of the planet but, even more importantly, as the foremost superpower that exercises its power all over the planet. As Rey Chow recently suggests on a different occasion, a critical comparative work in the era of globalization needs to understand America as "the successor to and advancer of Europe and European imperialist intentions and tendencies over the course of modern history" as well as "the land of Disney and McDonald's" (*The Age of the World Target* 14). For a sample of representative works that touches on the absence of U.S. imperialism in American studies, see, among others, Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease, eds. *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (Durham: Duke University, 1993) and Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005).

habitat of the human species…as described by two scientific disciplines, geology and astronomy" (*Through Other Continents* 6) or in terms of a "species-wide platform" and a "baseline humanity" ("Scales of Aggression" 225). A generalized theoretical scaffolding such as this is at risk of flattening out the spatial and temporal disjunctures, heterogeneities, and discrepancies of disparate parts of the planet, not to mention the structural *coupure* that sets our own historical moment apart from its predecessors.[8] In order to do justice to the idea of planetary literary history Dimock puts forward here, we need a more complex, stereoscopic framework which, while attending to both continuity and discontinuity, both identity and difference, and both synchrony and diachrony at work in the unfolding of the diverse histories and geographies of the planet, keeps aware of the very *historicity* of planetarity and probes into the contemporary historical conjuncture at which the idea of planetarity emerges and attains its widespread critical currency.

In this light, Dimock's methodology, though it brilliantly *re*historicizes American literary history by means of planetarity, *under*historicizes "deep time" as it were. For she is not primarily concerned with addressing whether such a notion takes on the same valence in different parts of the world or across different historical periods; and how the very idea of "deep time" has undergone drastic changes in contemporary society in the aftermath of what many thinkers theorize as the "leveling" process of globalization and

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[8] I analyze postmodernity as distinguished from modernity at some length in Chapters 1 and 2, below.

the resultant twin phenomena of the eclipse of historical sensibility and the rise of space as a cultural dominant.[9]

In historicizing Dimock's "deep time," Anthony Giddens' discussion of the transformation of time and space in globalization can be instructive. In *The Consequences of Modernity* Giddens demonstrates that the degree of "time-space distanciation" intensifies in the modern era as an increased number of disparate social forms and regional cultures get connected to one another via modern technology and transportation. Such a "stretching process" or the worldwide process of interlinking and networking takes a quantum leap in the age of globalization, transforming the earlier conception of time and space (64). We can place Giddens' diagnosis in perspective by supplementing it with Jameson's take on the time-space nexus in modernity and postmodernity. In "The End of Temporality" Jameson avails himself of the notion of (un)even development in theorizing the transmutation of time and space that accompanies the transition from the modern to the postmodern. On his account, modernity is defined as a consequence of *incomplete* modernization. The modernizing processes that accelerate and intensify industrialization, technologization, urbanization, and the like are not yet completed worldwide in modern times, and this gives rise to the modern condition of uneven development. It is the resulting coexistence of different social temporalities

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[9] The remainder of this dissertation deals with the historical transformation of time and space in the contemporary globalizing world. In so doing, I build on many thinkers, including most notably Theodor Adorno, Guy Debord, Henri Lefebvre, Edward Soja, Fredric Jameson, Marc Augé, and Gilles Deleuze, whose theories turn on the increased significance of space in the world today.

that makes time and history experienced intensely and conspicuously and produces a

keen sense of time and temporality in the modern. By contrast, when the process of

modernization or that which Giddens terms a "stretching process" is more or less

complete in postmodern globalization, it takes a heavy toll on the modernist sense of time

and history. To cite Jameson's own words,

> The sensitivity to deep time in the moderns then registers this comparatist
> perception of the two socioeconomic temporalities, which the first
> modernists had to negotiate in their own lived experience. By the same
> token, when the premodern vanishes, when the villages and modernity
> reigns triumphant and homogeneous over all space, then the very sense of
> an alternate temporality disappears as well, and postmodern generations
> are dispossessed (without even knowing it) of any differential sense of that
> deep time the first moderns sought to inscribe in their writing. (699)

In comparison with Jameson's historicization of deep time, Dimock's concept seems to

posit some vast, *unchanging* time. However, as crucial and pressing as it is to rewrite

world literary history through the lens of planetary deep time and thereby relativize and

denationalize national (literary) histories, I argue, it is imperative to reinterrogate the very

notion of deep time within the vast history of the world. Her all too generalized idea of

deep time, in other words, needs to be recast in such a way that scrutinizes the specific

history of the emergence and evolution of the concept as well as its validity in our own

historical moment.

Something similar can be said of the "worlding project," as undertaken by Rob

Wilson and others. Derived from Heidegger's phenomenology, the project of "worlding"

American studies is proposed as an alternative form of global imagination: to borrow the

words of the participating members of the project, it is designed to contest "the US-led

Empire of neo-liberal globalization and its huge security-state apparatus-cum-liberalist

complacency" (Wilson, "Afterword: *Worlding* as Future Tactic" 211) and to generate

"'different modes of thinking and writing, studying, and teaching the world against and

(from) inside' the beast of the US globalization apparatus (Watson xi)."[10] The

practitioners of the worlding project by no means uncritically resort to the conception of

"worlding"; to the contrary, they struggle to wrest the concept from strictly Heideggerian

uses from postcolonial and transnational points of view (Wilson 219). Nevertheless, they

do not fully probe into the specific *historicity* of Heidegger's "worlding" as a protypical

modernist problematic or into the effectiveness of such a concept in the present historical

condition in which their own critical inquiries are implicated. In "The Origin of the Work

of Art," to take one *locus classicus* of Heideggerian thought, the "worlding" is couched in

the following terms: "The world worlds, and is more fully in being than the tangible and

perceptible realm in which we believe ourselves to be at home. World is never an object

that stands before us and can be seen. World is the ever-nonobjective to which we are

subject as long as the paths of birth and death, blessing and curse keep us transported into

Being" (43). From Heidegger's phenomenological vantage point, the worlding of the

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[10] Wilson elaborates further on the objective of the worlding project when he writes: "This fluid embrace of theo-poetics and an autopoesis of the imagination (inside various social movements) can help break the spell of our dead-time globalization and help the world to re-presence itself via an active, critical, and imaginative process of 'worlding'…*Worlding* as a post-colonial critical practice will be posited against the reign of these available categories and reified modes of everyday media recognition called 'the global' as such" (210).

world is a more authentic realm of Being than tangible and perceptible beings, a view

reiterated in his proposition that "The world presences by worlding" ("The Thing" 177).

If construed strictly, such a formulation of "worlding" is predicated upon the

quintessentially modernist attempt to construct a monadic enclosure in which the outside

world is bracketed for the sake of the phenomenological presencing or the deconcealment

of the essence of Being. The practitioners of the worlding project do not always heed the

degree to which Heidegger's worlding dovetails with his aversion to the sweeping forces

of modernization in general and technological modernity more specifically. In that sense

Adorno's critique of Heidegger is quite suggestive. "The suspended character of

thought," he says in his magnum opus, *Negative Dialectics*,

> is thus raised to the very inexpressibility which the thought seeks to
> express. The nonobjective is enhanced into the outlined object of its own
> essence—and thereby violated. Under the weight of tradition, which
> Heidegger wants to shake off, the inexpressible becomes explicit and
> compact in the word "Being," while the protest against reification
> becomes a reified, divorced from thinking, and irrational. By treating the
> inexpressible side of philosophy as his immediate theme, Heidegger dams
> up philosophy all the way back to a revocation of consciousness. By way
> of punishment, the well he wants to excavate dries up. It is a buried well,
> in his conception, oozing a scantier trickle then [*sic*] ever came from the
> insights of the allegedly destroyed philosophy attributes to the poverty of
> our time is the poverty of a thought that fancies itself beyond time. (110)

Nor does the worlding project group address to what extent such a phenomenological

plunge into the "Being of beings" and "the presencing of the world" can become a

powerful political strategy in the era of postmodern globalization, in which such a

phenomenological *epoché* (or even an Adornian "windowless monad"[11]) is increasingly

called into doubt and correspondingly becomes unviable. Not dissimilar to Dimock's

deep time, the worlding project has yet to spell out in a more methodical manner both

convergences and differences between Heidegger's modernist concept and their own

contemporary adaptation and, more importantly, the historical continuity and

discontinuity between the contemporary globalizing world and its forerunners.

In brief, for all their insightful perspectives and cutting-edge methodologies, the

ongoing efforts to redraw the maps of American literary and cultural studies,

paradoxically enough, oftentimes divert our attention from the historically distinctive

dimensions of contemporary globalization. To put it differently, many recent attempts to

rewrite American literary and cultural history through planetarity, deep time, worlding,

and other related concepts have yet to cope with how and to what extent global capitalism

underlies and underpins the specifically postnational, hemispheric, transnational, and

planetary nature of contemporary cultural production. In suggesting this, my point is not

that all cultural production is invariably determined solely by the dictates of capitalism.

Instead, it is only that our understanding of culture, no matter what else it does, should

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[11] In *Aesthetic Theory* Adorno propounds his theory of artworks as "windowless monads." His theorization of a "windowless monad" is not identical in spirit to the phenomenological *epoché* under consideration here. As is unambiguous in his trenchant critique of Heidegger in *Negative Dialectics*, especially "Part One: Relation to Ontology," from which the above long passage is taken, his philosophy is in many ways in diametric opposition to Heidegger's. Nonetheless, I draw together Heidegger's immersion into the essence of Being and Adorno's theory of monadism in such a way as to underscore some commonality these modernist problematics have and the inadequacy of such different modernist "solutions" for our own postmodern global world.

also address, in one way or another, the overdetermined and often contradictory

relationships culture has with the mode of production. Most current approaches in global

or planetary American literary and cultural studies, though, do not seem to be attentive

enough to the complex relationships between contemporary cultural production and

global capitalism. In some sense, much of postwar American culture could be discussed

in terms of just this inattention. Susan Willis hints at this blind spot or the political

unconscious of American culture when she pointedly remarks:

> That culture enacts people's desire to solve the way capitalism shapes
> their lives is a concept that has been largely lost to cultural studies in this
> country, replaced by a facile, celebratory criticism guaranteed to score
> high on the undergraduate satisfaction index…The problem with culture—
> and cultural studies—in the United States is the tendency to see culture as
> autonomous, inflected or influenced by capitalism, but not its dialectical
> articulation capable of revealing the contradictions and relationships
> fundamental to capitalism. ("Hardcore: Subculture American Style" 381-
> 382)

Pushing this line of reasoning a little further, I would like to suggest that much of the

corpus in transnational American literary and cultural studies does not take immense

interest in interrogating the contradictions of global capitalism as well as the latter's

convoluted relationships with culture. In that respect it is imperative to recast new

American studies in such a manner that takes into account how these globalizing

approaches (as much as contemporary American culture in general) are historically

situated in, and structurally bound up with, the postnational and planetary logic of

capitalism and how culture in its turn articulates and contests the internal structures and

contradictions of global capitalism.

Totality, Space, and the Political Unconscious of Global America

For this reason, while drawing its inspiration from global or transnational American literary and cultural studies, this project seeks to reconfigure these discourses by exploring further what is *already* implied but remains under-explored in their expansive cartographies of planetarity and worlding, namely, the *totality* of global capitalism on the one hand, and the significance of *space* for global cultural production on the other. Both totality and space are brought to the focal point in this dissertation so as to offer an historical account of the world today. As I shall seek to theorize and demonstrate in more detail in the chapters that follow, to *historicize* globalization in its totality also means paying close attention to its distinctive *spatial* configurations. (In some sense "space" as I invoke it throughout this study is just a code word for "totality.") As the market reaches every corner of the world and aspires to a global totality, space attains some privileged position as the new *modus operandi* of capital.[12] Michel Foucault is right in this regard to remark, "I believe that the anxiety of our era has to do fundamentally with space, no doubt a great deal more than with time. Time probably appears to us only as one of the various distributive operations that are possible for the elements that are spread out in space" ("Of Other Space" 23). Even if Foucault's theory

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[12] It may be objected that non-space, rather than space, has become a predominant feature of global spatial production. While I fully concur with such a position and understand the importance of post-geographical and post-spatial dimensions of globalization, I suggest, in Chapter 1 in particular, that those features be contextualized as part of the *spatial* logic of global capital. Furthermore, I argue that the seemingly conflicting dimensions of spatiality and post-spatiality needs to be taken as part and parcel of the antinomies of globalization; and that too much focus on the post-spatial should not prevent us from grappling with the totalizing spatial logic of global capitalism.

tends to locate social formation and the constitution of "power" outside of the mechanism

of capital, his observation on space is pertinent insofar as what distinguishes the

contemporary stage of capitalism widely from its antecedents is its global spatial network,

which through geographical expansion/contraction and worldwide

connection/disconnection produces hitherto unprecedented social spaces and reshapes the

entire realm of everyday life. In view of the emergence of space as a new cultural

dominant, the historical specificity of the totalizing logic of contemporary global capital

needs to be found in its spatial production. By the same token, I argue, any historical and

historicizing approach to contemporary global culture should also recast transnational,

postnational, planetary, and other related theoretical frameworks in *spatial* terms.

In proposing to reformulate the ongoing efforts to globalize and "world"

American literary and cultural studies, this dissertation takes the related pair, totality-

space, as something that has been *repressed* in contemporary American culture in general

and American studies in particular.[13] As is unambiguously put forward in the title of this

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[13] Matthew Sparke's work is notable for its reexamination of the meaning of space and geography in globalization. In *In the Space of Theory* he claims that despite their postfoundational and anti-essentialist approaches, some of the most influential theoretical discourses about deterritorialization often esssentialize and ontologize the idea of space and geography. As he thus calls to task what he terms "a metaphysics of geopresence" (xxix) and "the essentialism of deterritorialization" (xxxvii) in those theories, he insists that we should deconstruct space and geography *via* "writing" and "map persistently without totalization or finalization *the fundamentally heterogeneous* graphing of the geo" (xvi). His project is similar to mine in that both of us call for a critical reevaluation of disjuncture and deterritorialization in global spatial production. Yet whereas he gestures toward challenging "the ontologies of a historical materialism" (xxxi) *via* deconstruction, I simultaneously adopt and critique such a deconstructive stance as I seek to bring into a historical and historicizing perspective the insistence upon *différance* and heterogeneity in deconstruction on the one hand, and the "identity" and "ontology" of global capitalism on the other. In doing so, I argue for a stereoscopic perspective that, though anti-metaphysical and de-ontologizing in its spirit, nonetheless

study, "The Spatial Unconscious of Global America," my inquiry into the *political unconscious* of contemporary American culture draws extensively from Jameson's theoretical discourse. As regards my deployment of a Jamesonian framework, it should be mentioned at the outset that his work not only theoretically informs this study but also is examined as part of American cultural production. To start off a dissertation on American culture with a chapter on Jameson might seem to some readers at least to be a rather unusual decision and perhaps calls for some justification. This has to do, in the long run, with the way this study approaches theory as a new contemporary (American) cultural form. More than two decades has passed since Walter Benn Michaels and Steven Knapp's diatribe against theory, but there is still some lingering concern with theory within English departments or in the humanities in general. It is an interesting phenomenon, from both historical and institutional points of view, that "too much emphasis on theory" raises some eyebrows while being too literature-oriented is not necessarily a deplorable vice as such. Such reservations about the place of theory in contemporary literary and cultural studies might stand as a barometer of the historical shift Jonathan Culler details, that is, a dramatic reversal in which the history of theory and criticism, having long been part of the history of literature, now seems to have come to include the latter (*Framing the Sign* 40). To those still casting a wary look at theory, one might point out, as Terry Eagleton does, that "Hostility to theory usually means an

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grapples with the ontologies of the present. For my theoretical framework, see the first two chapters of this dissertation. I thank Priscilla Wald for bringing Sparke's work to my attention.

opposition to other people's theories and an oblivion of one's own" (*Literary Theory* x).

As far as I am concerned, I would rather suggest that since literary theory does not come

into being in a historical vacuum, it needs to be historicized and regarded as a cipher of

the historical conditions in which it emerges. Therefore, rather than look upon theory

simply as a host of conceptual tools with which to analyze particular historical and

cultural phenomena, we do well to grasp theory and its ascendancy in contemporary

literary and cultural studies as part and parcel of the very phenomena we scrutinize.

Having said that, I propose to see theory as a typically American, if now

globalized, cultural form and historical phenomenon that has emerged from the ruins of

the monadism of the New Criticism in postwar American culture. Once European

philosophies, mainly Gallic and sometimes German variants, were imported to this

country, they have often been turned into many compartmentalized modes of queries that

help to institutionalize varied disciplines including, not least of all, Cultural Studies, New

Historicism, Race and Ethnicity Studies, and Gender and Sexuality Studies. In some

sense, particularly in light of the shaping role of theory in contemporary literary and

cultural studies all over the world, critical theory should be seen as itself a foremost

global cultural form which is deeply inscribed in the transnational chains of intellectual

flows and exchanges in which not just North America and Europe but also Asia, Africa

and South America are intricately implicated. If we thus see theory as a historically

original cultural form grounded in global cultural production and circulation in which the

U.S. takes an unequaled position, then it is less fruitful to pass a moralizing judgment on

theory than to see it as a historical symptom that enables us to diagnose the present

historical conjuncture. If theory can thus be seen as a symptomatic manifestation of

transnational American cultural production then it would not be entirely ludicrous to

suggest that global or planetary American studies should interrogate the role of theory in

the reshaping of literary and cultural studies as well as the role of America in the making

and circulation of theory.

When we thus consider Jameson's theoretical discourse in the context of global

American culture, we come to realize that he is perhaps more widely read outside of the

U.S. than any other contemporary American authors, and that his work is truly

transnational in its formation, scope, and influence. Thus, it looks natural to me to assign

one chapter to Jameson's writings in my study of transnational American culture.

Apropos of Jameson's positionality in American cultural production, Steven Helmling

once made an interesting commentary in his remarkable study of Jameson's oeuvre. He

writes, "The American cultural system affords its intellectuals no eminence of prestige

and controversy comparable to that of Derrida in France, or Habermas in Germany; but if

it did, one of the few Americans who could plausibly be put in their league is Fredric

Jameson" (1). I would like to read such a tribute from a slightly different angle and point

toward the *tensional* relationship between Jameson and the American cultural system. For

he has constantly sought to break open the social, cultural, and historical closure of

postwar American as much as the ideological "prison-house" of global capitalism in

general. If, according to Deleuze, deterritorialization ultimately comes down to becoming

a foreigner *within* one's own language (*Kafka* 26; *Dialogues II* 4), then we may say something similar about Jameson inasmuch as his theoretical discourse seeks to deterritorialize contemporary American culture and the study thereof by inscribing "foreign languages" into the social and cultural monoligualism of America.

Insofar as Jameson creates a "foreign language" within the *Heim* of American culture and cultural studies, it makes sense to bring his theoretical discourse into dialogue with recent planetary and global approaches to American culture. Is it not Spivak after all who stresses the imperative of becoming foreign speakers (*Fremdsprächig*) in her call for planetarity (*Death of a Discipline* 22)? While Jameson does not use the term planetarity, he consistently aims to render American culture *unhomely* by placing it in conversation with its global Other. In his reflections on the global network of cultural exchange, for instance, he demands that the self-contained monadic structure of America be deconstructed through the lens of world literature:

> We're in a position, in the United States, of incredible parochialism: this is certainly one of the countries in the world the least interested in anything outside of itself, the least informed of what's going on, and with the least curiosity about the way other people live and the problems they face, as though we have all of that solved, and we're the final stage, the United States, in some Hegelian movement of world history towards its final apotheosis of freedom. So anything that is able to shake the American public out of this provincialism and parochialism and to give it some sense that other people have other priorities and other experiences and other needs and dilemmas and contradictions, that they face things that we don't even dream of here; this is, it seems to me, a very valuable aim for world literature. (*Jameson on Jameson* 237)

In a similar spirit he also insists on "the need for a *relational* way of thinking global

culture (such that we cannot henceforth think 'first-world' literature in isolation from that

of other global spaces)" ("A Brief Response" 27).[14] Prefiguring Radway's "relational

thinking" that factors in what she dubs "intricate interdependences" of the world, he

constantly strives to mediate between American culture and cultures of the rest of the

world with a view to rupturing the parochial provincialism of America and laying bare

the latter's political unconscious.

In spite of such commonalities between Jameson's theory and the planetary turn

in American literary studies, there is a dearth of efforts to bring them together as a means

to study global American culture. Such a fact might be taken as itself an index of the

repression of Marxian, dialectical, and totalizing modes of thinking in the cultural milieu

of a global America. In this respect, bringing Jameson's theoretical framework (as well as

other "non-American" theories) into my study of a global America is part of my

strategies to think about the repressed of postwar American culture and to reassess the

renewed values of totality and space in our understanding of global cultural production.

More specifically, I bring together his theorization of the political unconscious and of

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[14] A related view is also presented in his Holdberg International Memorial Prize speech, entitled "Does 'World Literature' Have a Foreign Office?" He touches on cultural exchange among different "national situations," and proposes to replace the age-old two-term model of reader and text by a fourfold model in which "the reader of one national situation achieves such contact with the text of another by way of the mediation of a relationship between two national situations" (unpublished manuscript). In "Americans Abroad: Exogamy and Letters in Late Capitalism," to take another example, he also underlines the intertwining of a national literature and its alterity by noting that "at its very best and most intense the literature of late capitalism needs to borrow from its Others" (36).

postmodern global culture and thereby conceptualize what I call the *spatial unconscious*

of globalization,[15] in hopes of casting a new light on the way totality and space have been

repressed in contemporary cultural production. Furthermore, in analyzing diverse cultural

texts, I also build on his theory of "the content of form": as he brings to relief the

importance of cultural form as a symbolic act, he argues that "the production of aesthetic

or narrative form is to be seen as a ideological act in its own right, with the function of

inventing imaginary or formal 'solutions' to unresolvable social contradictions" (*The

Political Unconscious* 79).[16] As long as socially unresolved contradictions thus return as

formal contradictions and individual cultural artifacts register and "resolve" those

contradictions on formal levels, form is content in its own right and the formal is at one

with the social and historical. Throughout this dissertation, I transcode Jameson's theory

of the contemporary world and cultural forms in *spatial* terms and discuss the complex

ways in which various *spatialized* contemporary cultural forms simultaneously come to

terms with and work out the structural contradictions inherent in the newly emergent

spatial world system of globalization.

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[15] For a more elaborate theorization of this concept, see my reading of Jameson's oeuvre in Chapter 1, below.

[16] When he formulates this concept, Jameson conflates Lévi-Strauss' analysis of the social meanings of the Caduveo tribe's graphic art (*Tristes Tropiques* 178-197) and Althusser's theorization of ideology as "the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" ("Ideology and the Ideological State Apparatus" 109-115), as well as Kenneth Burke's concept of symbolic act. For Jameson's elaborate theorization, see *The Political Unconscious*, pp. 76-83.

Chapter Outline

Bringing to the forefront the increased importance of space in global/American cultural production, this dissertation studies diverse cultural forms in conjunction with contemporary social spaces, including most notably the global city, transnational diasporas, virtual space, postmodern architecture, and the "non-place" of shopping malls. I interrogate the radical ways in which these *sui generis* social spaces engendered by the spatial apparatus of the global world system reshape our experience of the lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*) and transform our representational practices in innovative contemporary cultural forms such as literary theory, deconstructive architecture, spatial music, video art, diasporic writing, and postmodern detective fiction. The premise that guides my symptomal analysis of these cultural forms is that contemporary cultural production is anchored in the newly emergent global spatial network of cultural flows and exchanges; and that United States transnational cultural exchange with the rest of the world has played a pivotal role in the gestation and mutation of the historically new literary and cultural forms. By thus bringing transnational and interdisciplinary perspectives to American literary studies, this study seeks to shift our critical attention from a putatively unitary and homogeneous national literature towards manifold cultural loci crisscrossed by dynamic interplays and fluid interchanges among multiple axes and nodal points on the globe. In addition, while interlinking the spatial production of globalization and the (trans)formation of cultural forms, I show that the predominant focus on deterritorialization, disjuncture, and postspatiality in contemporary discourse on

globalization often diverts our attention from the way the spatial world system of globalization brings the entire globe into its all-encompassing and totalizing force field. I formulate the concept of a *spatial unconscious* in order to address this salient, though oftentimes repressed, presence of the totalizing spatial logic of global capitalism underlying contemporary cultural production. In so doing, I analyze how diverse cultural forms bring representation to the spatial unconscious of globalization while they register, remap, and reimagine the multifaceted and even contradictory spatial contours of the world today.

The first chapter, entitled "The Spatial Unconscious of Globalization: Fredric Jameson, Jacques Derrida, and Peter Eisenman," serves as a theoretical introduction to this dissertation all the while it conducts an in-depth study of Jameson's oeuvre and of global cultural production. Here I delve into the contradictory configurations of globalization by reading Jameson's theoretical discourse alongside Derrida's deconstruction and American deconstructive architect Peter Eisenman's architectural theory and practice. I compare 1) Derrida's avowedly anti-Hegelian, de-totalizing deconstruction and Jameson's Hegelian and totalizing Marxism; 2) Derrida's formulation of *différance* and Jameson's contextualization of difference within the leveling and homogenizing processes of globalization; and 3) Derrida's "spacing" and "nonlocus" and Jameson's insistence on space and spatiality in the global turn. As I bring Jameson's theory into dialogue with Derrida's, I examine how Jameson's spatial dialectic maps the overdetermined topography of the contemporary antinomies of totality and non-totality,

of identity and difference, and of spatiality and post-spatiality; and how his dialectical thinking illuminates the way in which totality, identity, and spatialization have been repressed in the global cultural imaginary. As a way to bring into perspective Jameson's cartography of the spatial unconscious of contemporary culture, I analyze representative architectural forms designed by Eisenman, who models his buildings upon Derridean notions of *différance* and spacing. I show that Eisenman's apparently disjunctive and differing/deferring built forms are deeply grounded in the integrative spatial logic of global capital. I argue that any critical intervention into globalization and its spatial production should address these conflictual dimensions, rather than hastily propagating the celebratory catchphrases of difference, disjuncture, and heterogeneity.

The second chapter, "Global/American Culture as (Non)Identity; Or, the Dialectic of Adorno's Monadology and Deleuze's Nomadology," supplements my cartography of contemporary cultural production in Chapter 1 by drawing together Adorno's and Deleuze's philosophies of nonidentity. Unbridgeable differences notwithstanding, Adorno and Deleuze take as their foremost philosophical imperative a dismantlement of a Hegelian metaphysical and identitarian mode of thinking. While bringing Adorno's negative dialectic and Deleuze's rhizomatics of deterritorialization into conversation in terms of their common anti-Hegelianism, I illuminate the ways in which Adorno and Deleuze develop their non-metaphysical forms of thinking by building upon Schoenberg's twelve-tone music and Boulez's theory of musical smooth space, respectively. As I thus seek to establish a correspondence between "content" and "form"

in Adorno's and Deleuze's thought, I historicize their philosophies of nonidentity within the social, cultural, and historical conditions of the globalizing world. I also examine another important facet of their philosophy of nonidentity, namely their engagement with postwar American culture. In so doing, I propose to dialectically read their diverging stances on America—Adorno's critique of America as culmination of the "Culture Industry" and Deleuze's praise of American culture as a superlative form of deterritorialization—as a way both to critique the historical, social, and cultural terrains of "identity" in American culture and to call for a new utopian space of nonidentity.

Chapter 3, "'Simulated Pasts Resurrected in Memoriam': The New Media(tion) of History in Nam June Paik and Theresa Hak Kyung Cha," studies two Korean-American artists' multimedia art against the backdrop of the formation of transnational diasporas in such a way that brings into new light the hitherto repressed historicity of the "ahistorical" postmodern art forms. Although Paik's and Cha's works have generally been regarded as exemplary postmodern experiments, I show that their multi-genre works inscribes in the form itself not merely an anti-modernist impulse germane to postmodernity but also their postcolonial desire to appropriate both modern postmodern cultural forms in the West. To that end, I explore Paik's and Cha's relatively unexamined careers and take into account the ways in which Paik's engagement with Schoenberg's twelve-tone music and Cha's interest in Saussurean language and film theory conflict with the transnational diasporic subjects' endeavors to represent the colonial and postcolonial history of Korea. While I demonstrate that these tensions and even incompatibilities between form and content,

between (post)modern art media and (post)colonial history, constitute the crux of Paik's and Cha's original art forms, I argue that these artists' postcolonial translation of diverse postmodern art media is entwined with the history of their global and transcultural displacement and dislocation; and that the seemingly disparate phenomena of postmodernity and postcoloniality need to be related as constitutive, if contradictory, cultural symptoms of globalization.

Chapter 4, "A Poetics of the Labyrinth: The Global Urban System and Contemporary Literature Production in Paul Auster's *The New York Trilogy*," investigates the implications of the emergence of global urban space for contemporary literary production through a formal study of Auster's original detective stories. If the formation and flourishing of detective fiction as a literary genre had as its conditions of possibility the rise of modern cities and the ensuing maelstrom of social disintegration and *anomie*, how does the advent of contemporary global cities affect the mutation of the genre? Taking this question as a starting point, I inquire the way that Auster's postmodern narratives deviate from prototypical detective stories, such as Edgar Allan Poe's, by taking as their object of narration neither a crime nor an investigation, but the global urban system itself. While thus placing the labyrinthine cityscape of New York City at the forefront of his narrative, Auster accentuates the detective figure's incapacity to map out the global city and turns the detective's conundrum into an allegory about the intricate structure of contemporary social space. I maintain that Auster's postmodern detective stories offer not so much an ahistorical articulation of undecidability,

indeterminacy, and contingency, as they have often been understood, but rather a superb cartography of the socio-economic contradictions at the heart of the disjointed network of the global spatial system in which numerous global cities such as New York City are intimately entangled.

The concluding epilogue, "The Dialectic of Non-place and No-place: Toward a New Social Sapce to Come," ruminates on one of the most interesting sites of transnational consumption—IKEA stores. I draw from Susan Willis' discussion of the logo and "theming" and Marc Augé's theory of "non-places," in order to highlight the abstract and self-enclosed characteristics of contemporary social space. I suggest that such a non-place embodies and represents contemporary cultural production in general. Then, I note how global or transnational culture, as exemplified in IKEA's Disneyfied site of the spectacle, does not decenter and contest American culture but rather replicates it. I argue that any planetary and global approach to American culture should be recast in a way that, while drawing attention to the rhetoric of the uncanny of the global Other, grasps both the totalizing process of globalization (in which the very alterity we invoke is rapidly disappearing) and the prominent role of the U.S. in that process. I conclude by insisting that the cartography of the social, cultural, and historical *non-places* of contemporary American culture I outline in my study is a call to envision Utopia (*no-place*) as the absolute negation of the present historical conjuncture.

CHAPTER ONE

THE SPATIAL UNCONSCIOUS OF GLOBALIZATION
Fredric Jameson, Jacques Derrida, and Peter Eisenman

Architecture as a Philosophical Model

In *In'yu to shite no kenchiku* (Architecture as Metaphor) Japanese literary critic

Karatani Kōjin characterizes a metaphysical and foundationalist impulse latent in

Western philosophy as a "will to architecture" (24). Explaining that the word

architectonicé (architecture) in ancient Greek is etymologically associated with

architectón, a compound of *arché* (origin, principle, primacy) and *tectón* (craftsman),

Karatani holds that the quest for architectonicity is what has undergirded Western

metaphysics from Plato to Hegel and beyond (24-33). The affinity between metaphysical

thinking and architecture is such that architectural theorist Mark Wigley also comments,

"The questions of metaphysics has always been that of the ground on which things

stand…Metaphysics is no more than the attempt to locate the ground. Its history is that of

a succession of different names (*logos*, *ratio*, *arche*, and so on) for the ground"

(*Derrida's Haunt* 7). If architecture has thus been a figure of metaphysics *par excellence*,

it is no surprise that a plethora of modern and postmodern critiques of metaphysical

thinking has sought to dismantle such an archi-tectonic structure of philosophy.

Heidegger's *Destruktion* (destruction) and *Abbau* (de-building) and Derrida's

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déconstruction readily come to mind,[1] while Deleuze's deterritorialized smooth space

and Adorno's negative dialectics can also be taken to be original attempts to come up

with a new mode of thinking (and writing) when philosophical system-building—that

which Deleuze and Adorno dub, respectively, "the cult of the *Grund*" and "identitarian

thinking"—is condemned to disrepute and obsolescence.[2]

Amidst such an avowedly anti-systemic and anti-metaphysical sentiment in

contemporary thought, Fredric Jameson, too, inveighs against the desire for *architectón*

in philosophy and distinguishes the latter from theory or what he prefers to call

"theoretical discourse."[3] In his most recent published work to date, *Valences of the*

Dialectic, for example, he claims that philosophy is constantly haunted by the "the dream

of some foolproof self-sufficient autonomous system," whereas theoretical discourse

distances itself from such a philosophical will to architectonicity:

> Theory, on the other hand, has no vested interest inasmuch as it never lays
> claim to an absolute system, a non-ideological formulation of itself and its
> "truth"; indeed, always itself complicit in the being of current language, it
> has only the never-ending, never finished task and vocation of
> undermining philosophy as such, of unraveling affirmative statements and
> propositions of all kinds (59).

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[1] In "Letter to a Japanese Friend" Derrida defines his deconstruction as his "translation" and "adaption" of Heidegger's *Destruktion* and *Abbau* (270-271).

[2] Deleuze uses the phrase "the cult of the *Grund*" when he takes issue with "the primacy of being" and "the nostalgia for being" in the German language as opposed to the deterritorializing tendency of Anglo-American culture ("On the Superiority of Anglo-American Literature" 59). Insofar as his critique of Germanness is in line with his attack on metaphysical systems of thought, often termed "representational thought" in his oeuvre, the "cult of the *Grund*" may be used to characterize the "will to architecture" in philosophical systems. Adorno's acerbic reproach of systematic or identitarian thinking appears in, among others, *Negative Dialectics* (3-31). For my discussion of Adorno's and Deleuze's anti-systemic philosophies of nonidentity, see Chapter 2, below.

[3] For Jameson's concise explication of his position on theoretical discourse, see *Jameson on Jameson*, pp. 145-146.

For a similar reason he elsewhere defines theory as a "displacement of traditional

philosophy and a replacement of or substitute for it" (*The Seeds of Time* 189). Such

injunction against philosophical systematicity and positivity is laid out as early as in his

Marxism and Form: while he argues for the validity of Marxism as theory as opposed to

philosophy,[4] he maintains that if a philosophical system and its metaphysical content

spring from "a hypostasis of the mental processes, an attempt to hold something aside

from the concrete operation of the mind upon its determinate object, something which

can then be treated in absolute fashion, as the universally valid," Marxism in its very

nature refuses system and marks the "end" of philosophy as such (361-362).[5]

Jameson's insistence upon anti-architectonicity in theory in general and Marxism

in particular might seem paradoxical given that customary (and, dare I say, hasty)

criticisms mounted at Jameson's theory turn on his "Hegelian hunt for the master-code"

(Eagleton, "Fredric Jameson" 15), his "sophisticated version of Lukácsean Marxism"

(West 182), his "unreconstructed Lukácsianism" (Stephanson 51), his unwavering belief

in Marxism as the "untranscendable horizon," and his totalizing theory of postmodernism

and globalization. Perhaps nowhere else is this seeming paradox so starkly presented as

in *The Political Unconscious*, in which he calls for an "immanent or antitranscendent

hermeneutic model" (23) in the same breath with which he insists that "In the spirit of a

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[4] It is to be remembered that Jameson, keeping faith with Marx's eleventh thesis on Feuerbach, underscores that the peculiarity of Marxism (as well as psychoanalysis) as a thought mode lies in its "unity of theory and practice" or its unique "combination-of-theory-and-practice" (*Valences* 245; 296)

[5] In his review of representative works on Jameson, Ian Buchanan reads Jameson as "an originator of a system of thought or concepts in his own right" ("Reviews" 225). My reading in this chapter moves in a different direction, proposing that the crux of Jameson's theoretical discourse should be found rather in its *anti-systematicity*.

more authentic, dialectical tradition, Marxism is here conceived as that 'untranscendable horizon' that subsumes such apparently antagonistic or incommensurable critical operations, assigning them an undoubted sectoral validity within itself, and thus at once canceling and preserving them" (10). Is this not contradictory? Or is it, really? In some sense, this seeming incommensurability, which leads Homi K. Bhabha to label Jameson as "both the master-builder and the most brilliant *bricoleur*" (*The Location of Culture* 216) or Slavoj Žižek to ask "Are there two Jamesons?" (112-113), is the very crux of Jameson's theoretical project and so demands close scrutiny. In other words, especially when influential contemporary charges thrown at Marxism—such as Derrida's *Specters of Marx*—have to do with the latter's "ontologizing" or "architectonic" thrust, it is of prime importance to examine how Jameson sets for himself the Sisyphean task of eschewing conceptual reification or what Paul de Man would call "thematization," without at the same time hardening into the nominalist and antinomian creeds of difference, contingency, fragmentation, schizophrenia, and the like; and how he forestalls any "will to architecture" or any form of systematization and yet nevertheless grasps global capitalism as a "system to be confronted in its totality, rather than from any purely political or philosophical, or even from any narrowly economic, perspective" ("Sandblasting Marx" 135).

Such a rigorous and painstaking theoretical project, for which his elliptical phrase, "the impossible, unimaginable picture nonetheless imagined in all its impossibility"

(*Fables of Aggression* 85), might serve as a fitting motto,[6] seems to reach its culmination in *Valences of the Dialectic*. Perhaps "culmination" is not the right expression insofar as the cardinal character of his theoretical writing consists in his deployment of the dialectic. As he once observes in *Marxism and Form*, writing dialectically is a daunting process in that it is "as though you could not say any one thing until you had first said everything; as though with each new idea you were bound to recapitulate the entire system" (*Marxism and Form* 306). Not dissimilar to what another luminous American literary critic T. S. Eliot says about art history at the heyday of modernism,[7] such a description of dialectical writing suggests that Jameson's particular text is inextricably entangled in all of his work, and that with each new text, the whole oeuvre is rehearsed in it and transfigured in an ever refreshing way. In that respect Colin MacCabe is right to argue that to read Jameson is never to read a particular single text so much as to read his entire oeuvre (ix). In much the same way, to write on Jameson would also be to grope one's way through the ever-changing constellations of intricately connected problematics into which a particular text weaves itself.

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[6] Incidentally, Terry Eagleton draws parallels between Wyndham Lewis's writing style and Jameson's. He writes, "part of Jameson's perverse fascination with Wyndham Lewis—'the brutal and boring Wyndham Lewis,' as Leavis aptly called him—may be that he detects in Lewis's flailing, agitated prose a kind of savage caricature or nightmarish version of what his own literary style might look like if it were to throw off all decorum" ("Jameson and Form" 124). See also Eagleton's much earlier essay, "Fredric Jameson: The Politics of Style" (15).

[7] In "Tradition and the Individual Talent" Eliot writes, "what happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it" (553). My comparison here is intended less to hint that Jameson's critical practice bears resemblance to Eliot's formalist and modernist poetics than to highlight the *historical* and *dialectical* relationship each text forms with other texts in Jameson's oeuvre.

Keeping in mind the dialectical nature of Jameson's theoretical discourse, this

chapter examines Jameson's cartography of the present historical juncture by reading his

work from "Metacommentary" (1971) to *Valences of the Dialectic* (2009) and *The Hegel

Variations* (2010)[8] with a particular emphasis on the aforementioned "contradictions" in

his theory. I will demonstrate that such theoretical "contradictions," coming as they do in

large part from the incommensurability between his resistance to systematization on one

hand and his Marxian stress on totalization on the other, are not so much a conceptual

and formal inconsistency on Jameson's part, but rather issue from the very *historical*

contradictions he cognitively maps. To be more specific, I interrogate the tensions

between the "will against architecture" and the "imperative to totalize" in Jameson's

"cognitive mapping" as *spatial* problematics and look at how the way he works out those

spatial problematics is intricately intertwined with the *spatial contradictions* of the

contemporary world he investigates. While I thus pay attention to the ways in which

conceptual and cognitive problems can be translated in architectural and spatial terms and

in which architectural and spatial issues are indissociable from philosophical and

theoretical problems, I draw together his intervention in contemporary theoretical

discourse and his analysis of the postmodern globalizing world. Through a process of

transcoding theoretical, architectural, and spatial issues in Jameson's work, I am

particularly interested in showing that his mapping of the overdetermined topos of the

contemporary world—what Marc Augé defines as the "non-place" of supermodernity—is

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[8] At the time of my completion of this dissertation, *The Hegel Variations* has not been published yet. I am grateful to Professor Jameson and Verso for allowing me to read the unpublished manuscript.

predicated upon his earlier engagement with the philosophical and theoretical "prison-house" or the structural closure of contemporary thought. By reading Jameson's theoretical discourse as a superb cartography of the "non-places" of (post)structuralism, postmodernism, and globalization, I propose to read Jameson's theoretical discourse as a new form of spatial thinking that attends to the contradictory dynamics of the newly emergent spatial apparatus of global capitalism and the latter's political unconscious—or what I theorize as the *spatial unconscious of globalization*.

Dismantling the Architectonics of Structuralist Hermeneutic

In his study of Adorno, *Late Marxism*, Jameson writes that the (negative) dialectician's life work is a testament to a simultaneous crisis of and commitment to totality, and hence stands and falls with the notion of totality (244, 9). Such an observation holds just as well for Jameson's own work. Jameson himself comments that his "cognitive mapping" stands and falls with the conception of "some (unrepresentable, imaginary) global social totality" ("Cognitive Mapping" 356). Indeed, what sets Jameson apart from other prominent figures in the contemporary theoretical landscape is, more than anything else, his unremitting commitment to the concept of totality at the very moment when it has by and large been discredited and consigned to the historical dust heap. Therefore, one way to illustrate the uniqueness of his theoretical discourse is to look at the ways in which he keeps faith with the notion of totality without sinking into the mire of the "will to architecture." Moreover, inasmuch as Marxism, as he underlines

time and again, is not a host of positivistic and systematic doctrines but rather aims to

rectify in dialectical fashion other erroneous positions or preexisting phenomena

(*Marxism and Form* 365), it is apposite to grasp his entire oeuvre as an iridescently

unfolding series of polemics with other thinkers and conceptual models over the validity

of the concept of totality. And it is, among others, Derrida whose deconstruction

counterpoints and can place in perspective Jameson's dialectical thinking. Even if

Jameson and Derrida are rarely discussed together, their theoretical writings, precisely

because of their seeming incompatibilities, can provide a vantage point from which to

chart the complex morphology of contemporary social and cultural formations whence

their disparate modes of thinking emerge. In particular, as will be shown in the following

discussions, Derrida's deconstruction and Jameson's "cognitive mapping," being as they

are two distinctively *spatial* forms of contemporary thought, shed light on the

idiosyncratic and even contradictory spatial contours of the present. (This peculiarly

Jamesonian strategy of drawing together apparently incommensurable modes of thought

and cultural forms as a means to examine the complex configurations of the

contemporary world will be deployed throughout this dissertation.)

A good starting point of comparison is Derrida's "Structure, Sign and Play in the

Discourse of the Human Sciences," a seminal text which Jameson considers to be "a first

step in the inauguration of a *post*modernism based on play and randomness" (*Late

Marxism* 244) as well as "one of the inaugural documents of what later comes to be

called poststructuralism" (*The Seeds of Time* 23). Originally presented at the Johns

Hopkins University in 1966, this essay convincingly details how the entire history of the

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concept of structure has always preoccupied itself with center or origin (278). In this anti-

Oedipal attack on structuralism, or the "Structuralist critique of Structuralism" as

Jameson dubs it (*The Prison-House of Language* 186), Derrida demonstrates that the

coherence of the structure is organized by and oriented toward the center (*qua* full

presence) and other correlated principles—"*eidos, archē, telos, energeia, ousia* (essence,

existence, substance, subject) *alētheia*, transcendentality, consciousness, God, man, and

so forth" (279-280). While putting to the test the idea of the center as presence, Derrida

dwells on "play" as a way to conceptualize a structure without any center. He puts

forward play as "the disruption of presence" (292) and seeks to decenter the concept of a

centered structure, Claude Lévi-Strauss' structural anthropology being the principal

culprit here. In such a typically deconstructionist move, play functions as an

"abandonment of all reference to a *center*, to a *subject*, to a privileged *reference*, to an

origin, or to an absolute *archia*" (286). This position is reaffirmed in *Of Grammatology*,

published one year later, in which he censures Lévi-Strauss' structuralism for its

metaphysics of "stratification" (99) and argues that play is at once "the absence of the

transcendental signified" and "the destruction of onto-theology and the metaphysics of

presence" (50).[9] One also reads an analogous position in *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles*,

wherein Derrida's characteristic aversion to "essentializing fetishes" (55) leads to the

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[9] In this work Derrida reads Lévi-Strauss' structuralism alongside Rousseau's "dangerous supplement" and writes: "In Western and notably French thought, the dominant discourse—let us call it 'structuralism'—remains caught, by an entire layer, sometimes the most fecund, of its stratification, within the metaphysics—logocentrism—which at the same time one claims rather precipitately to have 'gone beyond'" (99). As will become clear later, we might ask whether Derrida's own de-stratifying thinking does not somehow turn into another metaphysic in its own right, thereby constituting an obverse side of structuralism.

assertion that an act of interpretation is an endless "parodying play with meaning" (133) that casts our hermeneutic nostalgia for truth, unveiling, and illumination into the bottomless abyss of non-truth, veiling, and dissimulation (119).

If Derrida's "Structure, Sign, and Play" thus sounds the death knell of structuralism and trumpets the advent of what is later called poststructuralism, Jameson's critical intervention in structuralism appears five years later in "Metacommentary." In this essay that is later to form the backbone of his substantive engagement with (post)structuralism, Jameson outlines an "absolutely formalist" interpretive method that deviates significantly from a conventional hermeneutic belief in positive content and takes into consideration both an object of interpretation and the very mental processes involved in that interpretation. Taking thus as the twin object of an interpretative act both a hermeneutic problem and the very conditions of possibility of the problem itself, Jameson puts it, "every individual interpretation must include an interpretation of its own existence, must show its own credentials and justify itself: every commentary must be at the same time a metacommentary as well" (5).

Framed in this fashion, Jameson's metacommentary seems to share some unexpected affinity with Derrida's position on conventional hermeneutics. Particularly worth mentioning is that Derrida in the aforementioned text uses as his epigraph Montaigne's statement that "We need to interpret interpretations more than to interpret things"—a statement that is as well suited to Jameson's metacommentary. Jameson, later in *The Political Unconscious*, defines his metacommentary in an analogous manner and writes, "our object of study is less the text itself than the interpretations through which we

attempt to confront and to appropriate it" (9-10). Additionally, Derrida's contention that

"language bears within itself the necessity of its own critique" ("Structure, Sign, and

Play" 284) makes his approach stand close to Jameson's metacommentary. Despite these

similarities, however, Derrida's and Jameson's "interpretations of interpretation" divurge

widely from each other when Derrida elaborates on his own deconstructionist version of

metacommentary:

> There are thus two interpretations of interpretation, of structure, of sign, of
> play. The one seeks to decipher, dreams of deciphering a truth or an origin
> which escapes play and the order of the sign, and which lives the necessity
> of interpretation as an exile. The other, which is no longer turned toward
> the origin, affirms play and tries to pass beyond man and humans, the
> name of man being the name of that being who, throughout the history of
> metaphysics or of ontotheology—in other words, throughout his entire
> history—has dreamed of full presence, the reassuring foundation, the
> origin and the end of play. (292)

Derrida is not alone in following this line of inquiry and calling for a new form of

interpretation as distinguished from traditional hermeneutics. Deleuze's schizoanalysis or

rhizomatics, too, can be seen as an "acentered, nonhierarchical, nonsignifying system" of

hermeneutics designed to set to flight the "binary logic and biunivocal relationships" in

the "root-book" of structuralism (*A Thousand Plateaus* 21, 5). Or one may think of

Roland Barthes' attempt at reconjugating a conventional hermeneutic act through

recourse to the pleasure/*jouissance* of the text or the notion of the writerly.[10]

From Jameson's rebuke of metaphysical system and content ("Metacommentary"

3), it can be inferred that he, like Derrida (and Deleuze and Barthes), discredits the first

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[10] What Richard Howard calls Barthes' "erotics of writing" is presented in *The Pleasure of the Text*. See
especially pp, 3-8, 51-53. For Barthes' discussion of *readerly* and *writery* texts, see *S/Z*, pp. 3-6.

type of interpretation, structuralism included, which aims to excavate the "origin" or the

"proper" (*le propre*). This similarity aside, however, Jameson's metacommentary

suggests that there is a way of decentering the first type of interpretation that is utterly

different from the second type championed by the likes of Derrida. Whereas

poststructuralists put forth play (Derrida), deterritorialization and rhizome (Deleuze), and

pleasure (Barthes) as means to undo the ontotheological residues in structuralism,

Jameson seeks to dismantle the self-enclosed system of structuralism by breaking it open

to the larger horizon of *history*. "It seems to me that a genuine transcendence of

structuralism (which means a completion, rather than a repudiation, of it) is possible,"

writes Jameson,

> only on condition we transform the basic structuralist categories
> (metaphor and metonymy, the rhetorical figures, binary oppositions)—
> conceived by the structuralists to be ultimate and rather Kantian forms of
> the mind, fixed and universal modes of organizing and perceiving
> experience—into *historical* ones. For structuralism necessarily falls short
> of genuine metacommentary in that it thus forbids itself all comment on
> itself and on its own conceptual instruments, which are taken to be eternal.
> For us, however, it is a matter not only of solving the riddle of the sphinx,
> that is, of comprehending it as a locus of oppositions, but also, once that is
> done, of standing back in such a way as to apprehend the very form of the
> riddle itself as a literary genre and the very category of our understanding
> as reflections of a particular and determinate moment of history. (13)

For Jameson, the ontotheological in a structuralist hermeneutic or, as he puts it, the

"ultimate and rather Kantian forms of the mind" and the "fixed and universal modes of

organizing and perceiving experience" should be decentered and transfigured in such a

way that keeps in view the historical situation of the commentator and of the work in

question. It is through such a rigorous historicization of the seemingly universal and

eternal epistemological and interpretative categories, suggests Jameson, that structuralism can draw a line of flight out of its conceptual closure. In other words, far from proposing the Derridean idea of play (or, for that matter, Deleuze's deterritorialized rhizome or Barthes' pleasure), Jameson's metacommentary aims to deconstruct the architectonics of structuralism through attention to *history*. In this regard Jameson's insistence on history does not issue from a teleological nostalgia or a metaphysical impulse, as some of his detractors often argue. Rather, his metacommentary is is a radical way of *deconstructing* traditional modes of interpretation and thought by digging through the deep layers of the latter's nominalist and monadic structures to a stark confrontation with history itself.

Mapping the "Non-places" of Contemporary Thought

It may be objected that Derrida's bracing critique of structuralism does indeed concern itself with the question of history. As Geoff Bennington and Robert Young emphatically vindicate in *Post-structuralism and the Question of History*, while structuralism brings with it an "effacement of history" and cannot account for its own historicity, the "post" of poststructuralism, above all Derrida's deconstruction, is intent on reintroducing history into its theoretical agenda (1-2). Indeed, it is in such terms that Derrida's own attack on ahistoricity in structuralism is couched. In "Structure, Play, and Sign" Derrida writes,

> More concretely, in the work of Lévi-Strauss it must be recognized that the respect for structurality, for the internal originality of the structure, compels a neutralization of time and history. For example, the appearance of a new structure, of an original system, always comes about—and this is

the very condition of its structural specificity—by a rupture with its past, its origin, and its cause. Therefore one can describe what is peculiar to the structural organization only by not taking into account, in the very moment of this description, its past conditions: by omitting to posit the problem of the transition from one structure to another, by putting history between brackets. (291)

Here Derrida takes structuralism to task for the reason that it brackets history in general, and more specifically its own historicity, and thereby falls short of a sufficiently rigorous interpretation of interpretation. Derrida's contention may well prove paradoxical because that is the very fallacy Jameson later accuses him of committing. While, as Karatani pointedly argues, many contemporary anti-foundationalist discourses oftentimes leave uexamined their own metaphysical ground (28), Jameson's metacommentary pushes the Derridean interpretation of interpretation to its limit and deconceals its architectonic *Grund*. In this respect Jameson's metacommentary might be said to propose something like an interpretation of an "interpretation of interpretation." Hence his characterization of his dialectical thinking as "thought to the second power" (*Marxism and Form* 307).

If "Metacommentary" sketches Jameson's perspective on structuralism in a way different from Derrida's deconstruction (without identifying it as such), it is in *The Prison-House of Language* that his polemic with Derrida becomes fully-fledged. In this critical account of Saussurean linguistics and its Formalist and Structuralist projections, Jameson illustrates the way in which these synchronic paradigms of thought, owing to their attempt to "rethink everything through once again in terms of linguistics" (vii), tend to bracket the referent and the outside world and therefore cannot adequately deal with the realities of time and history. Borrowing the phrase "the prison-house of language"

from Nietzsche, whose impact on much of poststructuralism and postmodernism cannot be overemphasized, Jameson argues that structuralism is trapped in its own conceptual prison in that "what was initially a method (the isolation of the signifier for purposes of structural analysis) slowly turn[s] about into what amounts to a metaphysical presupposition as to the priority of the signifier itself" (131). Even though this seems to run parallel to Derrida's reproach of the metaphysics of presence in structuralism, Jameson holds Derrida as well responsible for the same kind of epistemological blindness. Not that Jameson does not acknowledge the significance of Derrida's intervention in structuralism; it is just that as the "final moment of Structuralism" (186), Derrida's deconstruction is still mired in the structuralist dilemma—namely, that the arbitrary decision to rethink reality in terms of linguistic systems necessarily ends up privileging language as the fundamental and ultimate interpretive or explanatory code. More specifically, Jameson opines that in his very act of denouncing any transcendental signified or any metaphysical concept of presence, Derrida unwittingly invents a new one, that is, "script" (or "writing" as Gayatri Spivak translates it five years later) (182-183).[11] Consider, by way of an example, Derrida's following remark:

> This is the possibility on which I wish to insist: the possibility of extraction and of citational grafting which belongs to the structure of every mark, spoken or written, and which constitutes every mark as writing even before and outside every horizon of semiolinguistic

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[11] Derrida's following passage in *Of Grammatology*, for instance, shows his self-consciousness about the extent to which his project of deconstructing onto-theological concepts, such as origin, presence, and ground, risks reconstructing and prioritizing certain "originary" concepts derived from the differing-deferring processes of signification: "Differance by itself would be more 'originary,' but one would no longer be able to call it 'origin' or 'ground,' those notions belonging essentially to the history of onto-theology, to the system functioning as the effacing of difference" (23)

communication; as writing, that is, as a possibility of functioning cut off, at a certain point, from its "original" meaning and from its belonging to a saturable and constraining context. (*Limited Inc* 320)

While Derrida here seeks to decenter the metaphysics of communicability in speech act theory, he conceives of writing as something that is unwedged from its "original" context and yet functions as *différance*, as an "originary" process of differing/deferring. In this light, it is instructive to recall what Jean Baudrillard observes apropos of linguistics and its structuralist variants, namely, that they have themselves become "the contemporary master discipline" despite their repudiation of the *grand récits* ("Requiem for the Media" 141, n. 3).

This residual will to ontologization or to archi-tectonicity in deconstruction leads Peter Dews to remark pointedly that Derrida's *différance*, unexpectedly yet eventually, collapses into absolute identity (32). Vincent Descombes chimes in with Dews, claiming that deconstruction becomes indistinguishable from the Hegelian identity that it sets out to deconstruct (152). Deconstruction, Jameson similarly concludes, is still in thrall to the prison-house of language out of which it struggles to draw a line of flight:

> Thus Derrida's thought denies itself the facile illusion of having passed beyond the metaphysics of which it stands as a critique; of having emerged from the old models into some unexpected country whose existence such a critique had implied, if only by the negation of a negation. Instead, his philosophic language feels its way gropingly along the walls of its own conceptual prison, describing it from the inside as though it were only one of the possible worlds of which the others are nonetheless inconceivable. (*The Prison-House of Language* 186)

Derrida himself knows all too well that he cannot do away with the metaphysics of presence altogether by the mere taking of thought any more than he can ignore them.

Therefore, he admits in *Of Grammatology* that "Grammato*logy*, this thought, would still be walled-in within presence" (93). Elsewhere in the same book, he also notes that deconstruction can no more break completely with transcendental or metaphysical thinking than it can be reduced to it (62). Suspended between its will to break free from metaphysics and its firm rootedness therein, Derrida's deconstruction keeps contriving a series of neologisms—*différance*, writing, trace, supplementarity, dissemination, spurs, spacing, specter, *pharmakon*, iterability, prosthetic synthesis, and so forth—while moving from one to another lest these new concepts, no sooner deployed, should be turned into a kind of presence which they were supposed to deconstruct in the first place. As if to dispel any possible conceptual and formal reification or "thematization," Derrida is at such pains to de-ontologize even the internal dynamic of each notion as witness his well-known formula, "sous rature," or his mobilization of *différance* as an interminable process of "dislocat[ing] itself in a chain of differing and deferring substitutions" ("Différance" 26).

Taking this peculiar strategy as part of Derrida's deconstructive injunction against any positivistic thesis or affirmation, Richard Rorty suggestively says, "For Derrida, writing always leads to more writing, and more, and still more" (145). Jameson, too, detects such restlessness set in motion in Derrida's de-ontologizing process and designates it as the "interminable and ultimately necessarily unsuccessful effort to avoid names" ("Marx's Purloined Letter" 83). Yet Jameson is not of the opinion that any

scrupulously self-conscious thought can ever free itself from metaphysics.[12] No judicious

contemporary thinker could possibly espouse such a position, not least after Jacques

Lacan theorized how the construction of our subjectivity and worldview is *a priori*

structured through *méconnaissances* (6) or after Louis Althusser provocatively proposed

that ideology is something built into the very frame of our mental operation.[13] Jameson is

nonetheless adamant in pointing out that Derrida's allergy to conceptual reification is in

danger of bracketing and backgrounding history. When Bennington and Young endorse

Derrida's attention to, and problematization of, history, they cite the following famous

sentence: "if the word 'history' did not carry with it the theme of a final repression of

differance, we could say that differences alone could be 'historical' through and through

and from the start."[14] What Derrida thereby insists on is the imperative to unmask the

ontology of history or what he elsewhere calls the "present's presence" (*Spurs* 107). With

respect to Derrida's substitution of such differing-deferring processes of sign(ifier)s for

history, Jameson holds that "it is the temporality latent within the sign itself, and not the

temporality of the object, not that of lived existence on the one hand, or of history on the

other" (*The Prison House of Language* 188).

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[12] In *Marxism and Form*, to cite one example, Jameson writes: "We cannot, of course, ever really get outside our own subjectivities: to think so is the illusion of positivism; but, every time they begin to freeze over, to spring us outside our own hardened ideas into a new and more vivid apprehension of reality itself is the task of genuine dialectical thinking" (372).

[13] This alludes to Althusser's influential definition of ideology as a "representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" ("Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" 109). Regarding the ideologies of Marxism, Jameson remarks as follows: "I do think that there are Marxist ideologies, that we are all ideological in our specific situations—national, personal, psychoanalytical, and so forth—which determine deep ideological and classical commitments we are not always aware of, and this is true of Marxism as well" (*Jameson on Jameson* 183-184).

[14] Derrida, *Speech and Phenomenon and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs* (141; qtd. in Bennington and Young 2).

Inasmuch as Derrida's notion of history is locked in the "prison-house of language" and triggers the charge that "Saussure and his structuralist progeny suffer from a failure of historical consciousness that stems from the hierarchizing of synchrony and diachrony" (Lentricchia 117), one might think that there is an unmistakable similarity between such a philosophical model and the "non-places" of the reified cultural landscape of the world today. For the way Derrida dissociates history from its concrete and often sordid realities and looks into it through the (deconstructed) lens of *différance* and textuality does not differ greatly from the way contemporary commercialized or *logofied* social spaces disconnect themselves from their material sites of production and turn into self-sufficient and sealed-off enclosures.[15] In hindsight, Jameson's cartography of synchronic thinking in *The Prison-House of Language* is not simply about the anti-diachronic or anti-historical *Zeitgeist* of the present, but also, and above all, about the *spatializing* and *spatialized* features of contemporary culture that later preoccupy him after the "postmodern" and "global" turn.[16] Already in the book he detects the close affinity between ahistorical epistemological models and the "world saturated with messages and information" and its "systematized and disembodied nightmare which is our culture today" (ix)—a position also found in *Marxism and Form*, where he brings to mind the "seamless web of marketing and automated production" of postwar capitalism

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[15] For my more analysis of Marc Augé's "non-places" in the context of postmodern global commodity culture, see Epilogue, below.

[16] The fact that diverse *spatial* elements, including diagrams, graphs, figures, and so on, are skillfully put to use in synchronic models of thought might be taken as an indication of how those models, despite their *ahistoricity*, are in some ways *historical* in that they attest to the spatializing process underway in the age of postmodern globalization.

(xviii-xix). In this sense *The Prison-House of Language* can be said to cognitively map the conceptual and epistemological "non-places" of contemporary culture, which, as Augé discerningly delineates, "[establish] the traffic conditions of spaces in which individuals are supposed to interact only with texts" (96).

How are we to get out of this "prison-house of language" or the "non-places" of textualized history? How are we to disrupt "the generation of time out of stillness" (*The Prison-House of Language* 199) and to "[break] out of the windless present of the postmodern back into real historical time, and a history made by human beings" ("Future City" 76)? In the subsequent work, *The Political Unconscious*, Jameson addresses such questions by famously opening the text with the slogan, "Always historicize!" Therefore, with these questions in mind, let us proceed to his substantive engagement with the location of history in the contemporary world.

"Breaking back into History"

In opposition to a temporality imprisoned in the static "non-places" of language and sign, Jameson's hermeneutic, while it integrates into its *modus operandi* some of (post)structuralist critiques of metaphysics, attends determinately to the problematic of history. He finds such a hermeneutic possibility in A. J. Greimas' transcoding. Similar in spirit to metacommentary,[17] transcoding refers to an interpretive process that does not

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[17] It may appear that Jameson makes distinctions between metacommentary and transcoding. In his "Introductory Note" in the first edition of *The Ideologies of Theory*, vol. 2, he characterizes metacommentary as a "reflexive operation proposed for staging the struggle within an individual literary

presuppose anything substantive and positivistic about truth or meaning, and instead

approaches the latter *via* the mechanism of translation from one code or language to

another (*The Prison-House of Language* 215-216). The hermeneutic model thus outlined

is more elaborately fleshed out in "On Interpretation," the first chapter of *The Political*

Unconscious. Faithful to the spirit of transcoding as a constant translation among

different and even incomparable interpretive codes and models, Jameson here tackles a

plethora of competing theoretical frameworks while he at times plays them off against

one another and at others makes mediations among them. Though Cornell West calls into

doubt Jameson's "unexamined metaphor of translation, an uncritical acceptance of

transcoding" or his "problematic methodological uses of various notions of analogy and

homology" (188), the mechanism of transcoding does not rest upon such traditional,

unproblematized tropes. Nor does it have any intention or desire to synthesize different

theoretical models and paradigms into a "single system of truth" ("Introductory Notes"

viii) or a "master language" (*Jameson on Jameson* 173). To the contrary, especially in the

light of Jameson's repeated injunctions against all-inclusionary system building, his

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and cultural text of various interpretations" (viii). Then he suggests that when we leave the level of an
individual text, it is better to stage the struggles among interpretive codes and methods in terms of
transcoding. Despite this asserted difference, I regard metacommentary and transcoding as being akin to
each other, in that both of them are deployed as part of Jameson's construction of a Marxian hermeneutic
that appropriates into its own framework structuralism and other competing interpretive models without
nevertheless building an all-inclusionary system. A similar observation is made by Roland Boer. See his "A
Level Playing Field? Metacommentary and Marxism" in Caren Irr and Ian Buchanan, eds, *On Jameson:*
From Postmodernism to Globalization, pp. 51-69.

transcoding is to be viewed as his endeavor to avoid system or content and not to lapse into any loose methodology of metaphor, analogy, or homology.[18]

On a cursory glance the constant translation mechanism of transcoding or that which Roland Boer characterizes as "perpetual shifting" (62) seems not dissimilar to the interminable process of deconstruction which Derrida describes as a "perpetual revolution" in his last interview (*Learning to Live Finally* 31). In a comparable manner Jameson defines the cardinal mechanism of dialectical thought as "permanent revolution" (*Marxism and Form* 362). Despite such convergence, however, Jameson's and Derrida's formal operations diverge on account of their differing perspectives on history. While Derrida bases his notion of history on the never-ending shuffling of *différance*, Jameson's transcoding does not in the least lead to such a position, still less other postmodernist and poststructuralist takes on the Nietzschean transvaluation of values and the attendant sheer relativism. Rather, Jameson relates his interpretive process ultimately back to history: as is unambiguously expressed in the injunction to "Always historicize!" he brings to the foreground history as "the ultimate ground as well as the untranscendable limit of our understanding in general and our textual interpretations in particular" (100). And this emphatic emphasis on history is accompanied by his insistence that Marxism alone can offer an adequate account of history (19). Boer takes this seeming incommensurability between transcoding as an open-ended interpretive method and Jameson's privileging of

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[18] Jameson himself expounds on this in *Postmodernism* in the following terms: "Transcoding and the production of theoretical discourse are a flight from, as the French say, and their momentum is maintained by what burns all the bridges and makes retreat impossible, namely, the growing old of the codes, the planned obsolescence of all the older conceptual machinery" (397).

Marxism to be the central "dilemma" Jameson has yet to resolve (62). As previously

mentioned, Žižek also takes note of such a tension at work in Jameson's interpretive

method and amusingly asks whether there are not two Jamesons—"one, postmodern, the

theorist of the irreducible multiplicity of the narratives, the other, the more traditional

partisan of the Marxist universal hermeneutics" (112-113). If Marxism is the "imperative

to totalize" (*Valences* 390), as Jameson recently reaffirms, we have come back again to

the central question of how Jameson's theoretical discourse reconciles his will against

system and his Marxian "imperative to totalize."

Regarding how Jameson handles this "irresolvable" tension—a daunting task

excellently epitomized in West's question, "How to take history, class struggle, and

capitalist dehumanization seriously after the profound poststructuralist deconstructions of

solipsistic Cartesianism, transcendental Kantianism, teleological Hegelianism, genetic

Marxism, and recuperative humanism?" (178)—we need to explore Jameson's intricate

Marxian account of history more closely. Greimas once expressed his bewilderment

about why no Marxist attempt has been made to "work out *homogeneous* and comparable

descriptions of the *different* structural levels of societies" (*On Meaning* 207; emphasis

added). Walter Cohen, too, demands in his overview of contemporary Marxist criticism

that Marxism should "[articulate] a comprehensive theory that nonetheless respects

important differences" (346). In a certain sense this ostensibly contradictory task of

developing a totalizing and comprehensive theory of heterogeneous and differential

structural levels seems close to the task Jameson sets for himself in *The Political*

Unconscious. In this text Jameson formulates his theory of history by building on various

contemporary theoretical frameworks, Althusser's structural Marxism central among

them. Althusser bases his account of history on the conception of structural causality, as

distinguished from mechanical causality and expressive causality. Steering a course away

from the last two models of monocausality which conceive of causality or "effectivity" in

terms of a mechanical or deterministic model of cause and effect or an expression of

some deeper underlying essence, Althusser grasps history as a structural totality in which

all levels and elements in a given social formation are related by way of their structural

difference (41). To the notion of structural causality Althusser integrates Spinoza's idea

of "absent cause," with an eye to theorizing history as a structure that is accessible to us

not as a *Ding-an-sich*, but only through its effects. Jameson further expands on

Althusser's concept of structural historicism by conflating it with Lacan's conception of

the Real as something inaccessible except through the Symbolic. In *Fables of Aggression*,

a text originally planned to be published together with *The Political Unconscious* as a

single book, Jameson pithily propounds his intricate theory of history—what Sean Homer

calls "a conception of structural historicism that incorporated Althusserian Marxism and

Lacanian psychoanalysis…within an overarching Hegelian philosophy of history" (73).

Jameson writes:

> This is the sense of Althusser's otherwise scandalous description as a
> "process without a subject or a *telos*," and leads us to the second important
> implication of the definition in question. For the "Real" on this view is
> conceived, neither as an unknowable thing-in-itself, nor as a string of
> events or set of facts you can know directly in the form of some "true" or
> "adequate" representation for consciousness. It is rather an asymptotic
> phenomenon, an outer limit, which the subject approaches in the anxiety
> of the moment of truth—moments of personal crisis and of the agonizing
> political polarization of revolutionary situations. (12-13)

The advantage of this Althusserian/Lacanian formulation for Jameson becomes evident

when he draws a distinction between Althusser's structural historicism and other popular

contemporary takes on history. In one of the most luminous passages in *The Political

Unconscious* he asserts,

> What Althusser's own insistence on history as an absent cause makes
> clear, but what is missing from the formula as it is canonically worded, is
> that he does not at all draw the fashionable conclusion that because history
> is a text, the "referent" does not exist. We would therefore propose the
> following revised formulation: that history is *not* a text, not a narrative,
> master or otherwise, but that, as an absent cause, it is inaccessible to us
> except in textual form, and that our approach to it and to the Real itself
> necessarily passes through its prior textualization, its narrativization in the
> political unconscious. (35)

Later in the text he reiterates this position by arguing:

> That history—Althusser's "absent cause," Lacan's "Real"—is *not* a text,
> for it is fundamentally non-narrative and nonrepresentational; what can be
> added, however, is the proviso that history is inaccessible to us except in
> textual form, or in other words, that it can be approached only by way of
> prior (re)textualization. (82)

Here Jameson at once adopts and repudiates the prevailing idea in much of contemporary

theoretical discourse that history is a text(uality): while he leaves some room for

understanding history *via* textuality and even entertains the idea that "everything is

narrative" (*Valences* 484), he nonetheless saves history from degenerating into a mere

text(ualization) or narrative. Needless to say, such a position is predicated upon his

earlier indictment (in *The Prison-House of Language*) of synchronic thinking for its

incapacity to adequately deal with history. Now, through his complexly interwoven

transcoding of Spinoza's absent cause, Althusser's structural causality, and Lacan's Real,

among others, Jameson sets his theory of history apart from other contemporary accounts

of history, some eminent examples of which include Derrida's idea of history as *différance*, Hayden White's "history as narrative," Foucault's explanation of historical changes in terms of *épistémè*, Deleuze's recourse to the Nietzschean eternal return, and even Francis Fukuyama's notorious conjectures on the "end of history." In contradistinction to those positions, Jameson conceptualizes history as the ultimate horizon while he is careful to prevent history from turning into a chronologizing and ontologizing master narrative on the one hand and a flee-floating textualization or a merely discursive act on the other.

Jameson insistently reiterates this view on history as he concludes the "On Interpretation" section in *The Political Unconscious*:

> History is therefore the experience of Necessity, and it is this alone which can forestall its thematization or reification as a mere object of representation or as one master code among many others. Necessity is not in that sense a type of content, but rather the inexorable form of events; it is therefore a narrative category in the enlarged sense of some properly narrative political unconscious which has been argued here, a retextualization of History which does not propose the latter as some new representation or "vision," some new content, but as the formal effects of what Althusser, following Spinoza, calls an "absent cause." Conceived in this sense, History is what hurts, it is what refuses desire and sets inexorable limits to individuals as well as collective praxis, which its "ruses" turn into grisly and ironic reversals of their overt intention. But this History can be apprehended only through its effects, and never directly as some reified force. This is indeed the ultimate sense in which History as ground and untranscendable horizon needs no particular theoretical justification: we may be sure that its alienating necessities will not forget us, however much we might prefer to ignore them. (102)

Here Jameson strives hard to open the "prison-house" or the "non-place" of

text(ualization) in influential contemporary theory onto its *hors-texte,* that is, History.[19]

For this reason Ian Buchanan asserts, "For Jameson (contra Derrida) history *is* outside the

text, and indeed the outside of text" (*Fredric Jameson: Live Theory* 58). Homer, too,

finds the foremost achievement of Jameson's theoretical project in his unflagging effort

"to hold open that gap between history and text, to refuse to collapse history back into

discourse or narrative, and to insist on the determinate contradiction between two" (87).

With such a stereoscopic perspective, Jameson probes into history through the lens of

textuality and yet comes out of that windless "prison-house" of signs to face the "winds

of history." In doing so, he seeks to simultaneously *de-ontologize* and *de-textualize*

history.

Marxism and the Onto-theo-archeo-teleology of History

Whereas Jameson refutes the then-fashionable practice of textualizing history and

instead argues for a historicization of text(uality), the practitioners of poststructuralism

respond to Jameson by insisting upon re-textualizing history along the axis of language

and textuality. In "Demanding History," for instance, Bennington chides Jameson for his

"limited acceptance of textuality" (22). As he contends that Jameson's Marxian theory of

history is "transcendental," Bennington asserts that deconstruction is "in some senses the

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[19] This is, of course, an allusion to Derrida's controversial statement "il n'y a pas de hors-texte" (*Of Grammatology* 158).

most historical of discourses imaginable" (17). Adopting basically the same line of inquiry, Jean-François Lyotard presents the following rebuttal in his review essay on *The Political Unconscious*: "Isn't it necessary to proceed, under the banner of the 'political unconscious,' so far as to revise also the theater of force, the metaphysics of production, and the supremacy of the economic that support them; and to introduce the 'linguistic turn' (which is not linguistic, but one of language [*langagier*]), already intimated by the notion of a 'political unconscious,' even into the critique of political economy?" ("The Unconscious, History, and Phrases" 79) What is at stake here is ultimately Marxism's predominant stress on the economy, as is implied in Jameson's three concentric hermeneutic frameworks, the structure of which marks a dialectical enlargement of horizons of interpretation from the political (chronological events), through the social (class struggles), to the historical (the modes of production) (*The Political Unconscious* 75-102). Censuring the predominance Marxism lends to a mode of production, Lyotard proceeds to argue that "Marxism belongs to metaphysics, especially Christian metaphysics" (78).

For all these criticisms coming from the (post)structuralist camps, my position on Jameson's theory of history is that it is not to be criticized for its "limited acceptance" of textuality and the linguistic turn. Emphatically to the contrary, I argue that Jameson goes *all the way* through the linguistic or textual turn so as to come out on the other side, to

use one of his favored metaphors.[20] That explains one of the reasons why he says that his

metacommentary that attempts a "genuine transcendence of structuralism" is a

"completion, rather than a repudiation" of the latter ("Metacommentary" 13). In *The*

Political Unconscious, too, he takes poststructuralism only as an "initial moment" out of

which he eventually strives to emerge to tackle the question of History.[21] Such a strategic

or even "eclectic" operation of metacommentary/transcoding is well in evidence when he

fully incorporates, instead of simply refusing or moralizing against them,

(post)structuralist insights into his theoretical accoutrement and then mediates them with

other seemingly incompatible theoretical models. At the heart of Jameson's theoretical

framework, therefore, there exist tensions that issue from his endeavor to synchronically

transcode diverse theoretical models and codes, (post)structuralism included, on the one

hand, and to diachronically reposition them within history, on the other. In the concluding

section of *The Prison-House of Language* he touches on this as he accounts for the

methodology of transcoding and writes, "it is only, it seems to me, at the price of such a

development, or of something like it, that the twin, apparently incommensurable,

demands of synchronic analysis and historical awareness, of structure and self-

consciousness, language and history, can be reconciled" (216). It is in large part because

of such stereoscopic frameworks that Hayden White maintains that Jameson's notion of

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[20] In this regard, what he says in his interview with *Diacritics* is suggestive: "But I also happen to be Hegelian enough to think that one does not simply *refuse* a thought like this in toto…but that one goes all the way through it so as to emerge on the other side" (*Jameson on Jameson* 23).
[21] He writes, "The current post-structural celebration of discontinuity and heterogeneity is therefore only an initial moment in Althusserian exegesis, which then requires the fragments, the incommensurable levels, the heterogeneous impulses, of the text to be once again related, but in the mode of structural difference and determinate contradiction" (*The Political Unconscious* 56).

history is "not only *sequenced* but also *layered*" ("Getting out of History" 4). Indeed, the productive and creative dimension of Jameson's dialectical theory of history springs from the way he holds those seemingly incompatible positions simultaneously and in tension with one another, with a view to making that incommensurability shed light on the complex and multivalent dimensions of history.

Insofar as Jameson formulates such an elaborate theory of history, Lyotard's perspectives on Jameson's metaphysics and Marxism's "Christian metaphysics" need to be reconsidered. Especially given that Lyotard defines metaphysics as "a way of thinking that fails to criticize the presuppositions implied by the terms of its own argument" ("A Postmodern Fable on Postmodernism" 194), his critique of Jameson seems wide of the mark. For the primary force of Jameson's metacommentary derives from its painstaking scrutiny into its own mental operations as well as into its own conceptual conditions of possibility. Or to use Jameson's own words, his dialectical metacommentary is an "attempt to think about a given object on one level, and at the same time to observe our own thought processes as we do so" (*Marxism and Form* 340), as well as a form of "interpretation [which] directs the attention back to history itself, and to the historical situation of the commentator as well as of the work" ("Metacommentary" 5).[22] Lyotard himself acknowledges, albeit in passing, how strenuously Jameson avoids making a metaphysical or teleological claim:

> The Jamesonian interpretation of Marxist interpretation appears
> remarkable to me not for its totalizing or capitalizing dogmatism but rather

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[22] For a similar proposition, see *The Political Unconscious*, p. 47.

for its uneasiness: the critical task is not only endless; it might even be without fixed criteria. And the originality of the book might well consist in this: the claim that to be a Marxist critic is also to critique criteria. ("The Unconscious, History, and Phrases" 73)

This passage rightly suggests that Jameson's is not a "totalizing or capitalizing" theory, but in effect an "endless" and even "uneasy" operation that cancels and decenters "fixed criteria." In his "Introductory Note" in the second volume of *Ideologies of Theory*, Jameson notes that what people have thought to be "eclectic or, still worse, synthesizing and 'Hegelian'" actually is nothing but a transcoding process, rather than an all-including system building (ix). He expresses a similar opinion in an interview with Xudong Zhang by commenting that what appears to be an unifying belief or philosophy in his theory actually has to do with his "translation mechanism" (184). Then he goes on to say that the significance of Marxism as a privileged mode of thinking resides not in its essentialist recourse to some ultimate "truth," but in its "mediatory function," that is, its ability to mediate and translate between disparate theoretical systems and languages in a more subtle and supple way than any other paradigms of thought (184).

In spite of all such de-essentializing and de-ontologizing efforts on Jameson's part, Marxism becomes the target of disapproval again in Derrida's *Specters of Marx*. In taking up his long-postponed engagement with Marx(ism), Derrida discusses the specter or the ghost as another variation of his deconstructionist concept (*sous rature*, of course) of *différance*. In Derrida's compelling intervention in Marx, the "specter" is contrived to decenter the binary opposition between actuality and ideality or "the border between the present, the actual or present reality of the present, and everything that can be opposed to

it: absence, non-presence, non-effectivity, inactuality, virtuality, or even the simulacrum in general, and so forth" (39). With such a typically deconstructionist gesture which he dubs *spectrality* or *hauntology*, Derrida dislodges the self-identity of the present out of itself and shows that "the time is out of joint," as he puts it by appropriating Hamlet's famous exclamation. In so formulating an inexorable *différance* that resides within the ostensibly self-same present, or what he calls a "disjointure in the very presence of the present" (25) or a "non-contemporaneity with itself of the living present" (xix), he strives to put into question "the onto-theo- but also archeo-teleological concept of history" (74). The main target of Derrida's *hauntology* is the *ontology* of Marxism (as much as that of Hegelianism): he wishes to "purify" Marxism of the baleful curse of an ontologizing tendency and salvage a deconstructionist "*spirit* of the Marxist critique" from "Marxism as ontology, philosophical or metaphysical system," "Marxism as historical materialism or method," and "Marxism incorporated in the apparatuses of party, State, or workers' International" (68). Or, as he concisely sums up in his response to Marxist critics of his book, his anti-onto-theological work turns on "the most problematic aspect of Marx, namely the unrestrained, classical, traditional (dare I add 'Platonic'?) desire to conjure away any and all spectrality so as to recover the *full, concrete reality* of the process of genesis hidden *behind the specter's mask*" ("Marx and Sons" 258).

Although Derrida contends that Marxism does not embrace spectrality nor appreciate the non-contemporaneity of the present with itself, but instead promulgates an onto-theo-archeo-teleogical concept of history, Jameson's Marxian idea of history is far from "onto-theological" in the sense Derrida imputes to the word. In some sense

Jameson's Marxism is no less decentering and deconstructive than Derrida's own hauntology.[23] The de-ontologizing nature of Jameson's Marxism can be illustrated when it is juxtaposed with Derrida's deconstruction. For instance, as a way to deconstruct Marxism's alleged ontology and teleology, Derrida theorizes what he terms "messianicity without messianism," and sees the latter as "the asymptote, and *only the asymptote*" (250). Yet, as we have seen above, Jameson's appropriation of the Lacanian/Althusserian Real already implies that our historical reality is asymptotical and beyond our reach. Moreover, as long as Althusser strives to "cleanse Marxism of all its Hegelian—which is to say Germanic and idealist—baggage" (*The Seeds of Time* 3), the Althusserian/Spinozist notion of "absent cause" enables Jameson to refrain from granting any eschatological or teleological content to history.[24] Hence Jameson argues that "the 'Real' on this view is conceived, neither as an unknowable thing-in-itself, nor as a string of events or set of facts you can know directly in the form of some 'true' or 'adequate' representation for consciousness. It is rather an asymptotic phenomenon, an outer limit, which the subject approaches in the anxiety of the moment of truth" (*Fables of Aggression* 12-13). On a similar note he remarks elsewhere, "'Totalizing' does not imply a belief in the possibility of access to the totality, but rather a playing with the boundary itself" (*Postmodernism* 363). This explains why he never tires of reminding us that History, though it is an

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[23] Incidentally, Jameson underscores some affinity between Marxism and deconstruction by observing that they are "cross cousins in some extended kinship system" as it were (*Valences* 282), while Derrida says, "Deconstruction has never had any sense or interest, in my view at least, except as a radicalization, which is to say also in the tradition of a certain Marxism, in a certain spirit of Marxism" (*Specters of Marx* 92).

[24] Althusser's anti-anthropocentric and anti-teleological claim that "History is a process without a *telos* or a subject" bears repeating here. See *The Political Unconscious*, p. 29 and Althusser's "Preface to Capital Volume One" (61) and "Lenin before Hegel" (81).

inexorably concrete and material reality—"History is what hurts" (*The Political*

Unconscious 102)—is always out of reach from us save in textual form and

apprehensible only through its effects.

Similarly, despite Derrida's (and Lyotard's) reproving portrayal, a mode of

production in Jameson's theory of history is anything but a homogeneous and

undifferentiating system. Jameson appropriates some of the most valuable findings of the

"linguistic turn" (such as difference, differentiation, and *differend*), and accordingly

conceives of a mode of production as a differential structure of social relations in which

diverse and even tensional economic, social, and cultural impulses and tendencies are

related to one another by way of their difference without forming any homogenized

reality (*The Political Unconscious* 41). Not only does Jameson grant semi-autonomy to

disparate levels in a given mode of production; but he also tries to forestall the

metaphysics of economism by taking the fundamental Marxian notion of base and

superstructure not as an incontestable doctrine but rather as a *problem* to be worked out

(*Late Marxism* 46).[25] His problematization of base-superstructure is evidenced when he

later speculates on "the becoming economic of the culture" and "the becoming cultural of

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[25] Jameson here writes, "My own position has always been that everything changes when you grasp base-and-superstructure not as a full-fledged theory in its own right, but rather as the name for a problem, whose solution is always a unique, ad hoc invention" (46). In his foreword to Lyotard's *Postmodern Condition* he problematizes the rigid hierarchy of base and superstructure by contending that "although the category of the mode of production has sometimes been misunderstood as a narrowly economic or 'productionist' one, its adequate solution clearly demands a structural examination and positioning of the superstructural levels of a given social formation and, most urgently, the function and space to be assigned to culture itself: no satisfactory model of a given mode of production can exist without a theory of the historically and dialectically specific and unique role of 'culture' within it" (xv).

the economic" in global postmodernity ("Globalization as Philosophical Issue" 60).[26]

Such perspectives on a mode of production revise vulgar Marxist versions of onto-theological economism by embracing the logics of differentiation and semi-autonomy in a certain social structure.

Moreover, when viewed diachronically, a mode of production is permeated with multifarious traces or *specters* of the earlier, present, and later modes of production, as is suggested when Jameson comments that in late capitalism "all the earlier modes of production in one way or another structurally coexist" (*The Political Unconscious* 100). This position is fleshed out in *Postmodernism*, in which he invokes Antonio Gramsci and Raymond Williams and conceptualizes the coexistence of "residual," "dominant," and "emergent" forms of cultural production (6, 406).[27] Comparable to what Derrida calls the "non-contemporaneity" or "non-simultaneity" of the present, such a view is also presented when Jameson draws from Ernst Bloch's notion of *Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitigen* to explain the way in which the capitalist world system is structured by the "nonsynchronicity of the synchronous" (*The Seeds of Time* 79) as much as by the "synchronicity of the nonsynchronous" (*Postmodernism* 307). For this reason Michael Hardt and Kathi Weeks acclaim Jameson's "non-synchronous consciousness" with which

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[26] In another essay, "Globalization and Political Strategy," Jameson similarly touches on the symptom of "collapsing the cultural into the economic—and the economic into the cultural" (53). He further argues that it is "that dedifferentiation, that confluence between the various and distinct levels of the economic, the cultural, and the political, that characterizes postmodernity and lends a fundamental structure to globalization" (54-55).

[27] In an interview with Anders Stenphanson, Jameson further explains his ideas as follows: "My conception of postmodernism is thus not meant to be monolithic, but to allow evaluations of other currents within this system—which cannot be measured unless one knows what the system is" (*Jameson on Jameson* 53).

he theorizes a mode of production as "an internally differentiated set of structures and practices" (12).[28]

In this light, Jameson's theory of history in no way risks an onto-theo-archeo-teleological reductionism, but rather gestures toward the "non-simultaneity" and "non-contemporaneity" of the present as much as Derrida's hauntology does. While addressing such "nonsynchronicity of the synchronous," however, Jameson simultaneously draws our attention to the "synchronicity of the nonsynchronous" as well. As we shall see shortly, the significance of Jameson's diagnosis of the "ontology of the present" lies in the fact that he holds in a simultaneous focus both Difference ("nonsynchronicity of the synchronous") and Identity ("synchronicity of the nonsynchronous") at a given historical conjuncture. That is to say, while Derrida demands that we de-ontologize the present and acknowledge the *différance* and heterogeneity of the present, Jameson, besides doing that, also brings into focus the ontologization and homogenization of the present. (This is another sense in which Jameson pushes the "linguistic turn" and the resultant "textual revolution" *all the way* so as to come out on the other end.) It is perhaps against this backdrop that we need to make sense of his following response to Derrida's hauntology: "It is as though Derrida, in what some call postmodernity, is in the process of diagnosing and denouncing the opposite excess: that of a present that has already triumphantly exorcized all of its ghosts and believes itself to be without a past and without spectrality,

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[28] Hardt and Weeks' argument that "The capitalist mode of production is distinctive in the extent to which it thrives on heterogeneities, processes of differentiation, and uneven developments. The mode of production thus refers to the dominant power that rules over a heterogeneous set of forces" (12) can also be taken as a pertinent response to many contemporary critics' attacks on the "metaphysics" of Marxism.

late capitalism itself as ontology, the pure absence of the world-market system freed from all the errors of human history and of previous social formations, including the ghost of Marx himself" ("Marx's Purloined Letter" 103). It is indubitable that Derrida's hauntology will be with us for some time, constantly bringing to our awareness the peril of any will to presence and ontology. However, if read as Derrida's work of mourning for presence and ontology, *Specters of Marx* leaves the very presence and ontology of postmodern globalization un-exorcized and un-mourned, as it were. And this improperly exorcized and mourned presence and ontology of global capitalism will haunt Derrida's spectralogy, as Hamlet's father does with the repetitive (and differential?) exhortation "Remember me."

When it comes to Derrida's critique of Marxism's ontology, it is no less important note that Jameson's interrogation of the global phase of capitalism *does* come to terms with *spectrality*. In his response to Derrida's hauntology, Antonio Negri delineates how the labor paradigm has changed in such a way that global capital now thrives on "a mobile, flexible, computerized, immaterialized and spectral labor" ("The Specter's Smile" 9). Negri's perceptive observations on what he calls "the ghostly production of postindustrial capitalism" (10), a central thematics to be developed further in terms of immaterial labor and biopolitical production in his collaborative work with Hardt,[29]

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[29] Consider, for example, Hardt and Negri's following comments: "today in many respects economic production is at the same time cultural and political. We will argue that the dominant form of contemporary production, which exerts its hegemony over the others, creates 'immaterial goods' such as ideas, knowledge, forms of communication, and relationships. In such immaterial labor, production spills over beyond the bounds of the economy traditionally conceived to engage culture, society, and politics directly. What is produced in this case is not just material goods but actual social relationships and forms of life. We

constitute the core of Jameson's cartography of postmodern global capitalism as well.

When Jameson draws from Ernest Mandel's work on late capitalism and Giovanni

Arrighi's work on finance capital, for instance, he outlines the ways in which the

contemporary mode of production gives rise to and is undergirded by cybernetics,

information, immaterial labor, and monetary abstraction. To take one representative

example, the following passage show that Jameson's mapping of globalization factors in

the immaterial or *ghostly* dimensions of contemporary production:

> Now this free-floating capital, on its frantic search for more profitable
> investments (a process prophetically described for the US as long ago as
> Baran and Sweezy's *Monopoly Capital* of 1965) will begin to live its life
> in a new context; no longer in the factories and the spaces of extraction
> and production, but on the floor of the stock market, jostling for more
> intense profitability, but not as one industry competing with another
> branch, nor even one productive technology against another more
> advanced one in the same line of manufacturing, but rather in the form of
> speculation itself: specters of value, as Derrida might put it, vying against
> each other in a vast world-wide disembodied phantasmagoria. This is of
> course the moment of finance capital as such. (*The Cultural Turn* 142)

Such attention to "specters of value" and "world-wide disembodied phantasmagoria"

germane to the "ultimate dematerialization" of contemporary global capital (154)

illustrates that Jameson's theorization of late capitalism is, among many other things, a

theory of *spectral* production in late or global capitalism. In his response to Derrida's

Specters, too, Jameson grapples with an original historical reality of "postmodern

virtuality"—"a daily spectrality that undermines the present and the real without any

longer attracting any attention at all" ("Marx's Purloined Letter" 108). Insofar as

will call this kind of production 'biopolitical' to highlight how general its products are and how directly it
engages social life in its entirety" (*Multitude* 94).

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Jameson thus contextualizes spectrality within the (de-ontologized) ontology of late

capitalism, it can be said that Jameson's cartography of the present deftly maps the

paradoxically contradictory logic of the latter's *spectral* and *ontological* production.

In response to Derrida's reproach of the dogmatic Marxian vision of the future, it

should be added that Jameson's idea of Utopia goes against such an eschatological and

teleological kind of futurology. In *Fables of Aggression* Jameson takes an uncommon

position on Utopia and proposes that

> the truth of the Utopian imagination indeed may be said to lie not in the
> representations it achieves, but rather ultimately in its failure to imagine its
> object; the greatest Utopias are thus those which, dramatizing the limits
> and the impoverishment of our visions of Utopia, denounce the
> imprisonment of the reading mind in the asphyxiating immanence of its
> here-and-now. (152-153)[30]

This proposition that Utopian thinking should of necessity work its way back upon itself

and its own limits, that Utopias have more to do with failure than success, contradicts

commonsensical notions of Utopia. Caren Irr points out that Jameson's view of the

dialectic as "an immanent and negative project circulating around contradictions that

ultimately reveal their social grounds" is notably Adornian (321). To which we might add

Jameson's idea of Utopia: as in Adorno's negative dialectics or his "ban on graven

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[30] A similar position is laid out in *The Seeds of Time*, where Jameson argues: "Historically then, this is the
sense in which the vocation of Utopia lies in failure; in which its epistemological value lies in the walls it
allows us to feel around our minds, the invisible limits it gives us to detect by sheerest induction, the miring
of our imaginations in the mode of production itself, the mud of the present age in which the winged
Utopian shoes stick, imagining that to be the force of gravity itself" (75). On a similar note, he writes
elsewhere, "My modest recommendation was simply that we use the Utopian visions we are capable of
projecting today in order to explore the structural limits of such imaginings, in order to get a better sense of
what it is about the future that we are unwilling or unable to imagine. In so doing, we will probably want to
sort out what I call an anxiety about Utopia—a repression and occultation of the Utopian imagination—
from what may simply mark the epistemological limits of our current political vision" ("Comments" 76).

images," whose mantra requires "not permitting Utopia to be positively pictured" (*Negative Dialectics* 207), Jameson's Utopian imagination refuses to afford in a facile manner any substantive representation of ideal societies. Consistent with his vigilance against system-building or conceptual reification, such an idiosyncratic approach or that which he himself calls a "'negative' Utopian strategy" ("Comments" 76) is most elaborately laid out in his recent study of Utopian discourse, *Archaeologies of the Future*. Keeping faith with his conception of metacommentary, which tends toward a formalist hermeneutics by excising it of all positive content, Jameson's morphology of Utopias in *Archaeologies* gestures toward an "absolute formalism" (212) and speculates on the possibility of some "zero-degree Utopia" (172). Maintaining that it is a "mistake" to approach Utopias in terms of positive expectations, he conceives Utopian thinking fundamentally as a "critical negativity" (12, 211). In other words, rather than draw a positive and positivistic blueprint for an ideal society attainable in the future, Jameson insists, Utopian thinking should work to lay bare the structural determinants of society and our own epistemological stumbling block that prevent us from recognizing the reified world as such and from imagining something other than what is.

Therefore, just as Marx resolutely refuses a positivistic utopianism and instead unlocks the internal contradictions of the present, so Jameson takes as the first and foremost task of Utopian imagination a thoroughgoing interrogation of "the systemic, cultural and ideological closure of which we are in one way or another prisoners" and "our constitutional inability to imagine Utopia itself" (*Archaeologies* 289). For Jameson, Utopian imagination is thus at one with a formal process of outlining the "prison-house"

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or the "non-place" of the present historical conjuncture and of unveiling our

imprisonment in the "asphyxiating immanence of its here-and-now." Such a position that

accentuates the intertwining of *no-place* (Utopia) and the *non-place* of the present, or the

interconnection between the *no-where* and *now-here*, as Deleuze might put it,[31] is

beautifully put forth in the following stunning passage written in an early phase of

Jameson's career:

> Utopia's deepest subject, and the source of all that is most vibrantly
> political about it, is precisely our inability to conceive it, our incapacity to
> produce it as a vision, our failure to project the Other of what is, a failure
> that, as with fireworks dissolving back into the night sky, must once again
> leave us alone with *this* history. ("Of Islands and Trenches" 101)

Given that Utopian imagination, once its mesmerizing fireworks come to an end, thus

makes us face our own situation and *this* history, Jameson's "archaeologies of the future"

is at one with his de-ontologized study of the "ontologies of the present" (*A Singular

Modernity* 215).[32] This view that envisaging a Utopian space is at one with delineating

the "non-places" of our social, historical, and political lineaments, an idea developed as

the "dialectics of Utopia and ideology" in the concluding chapter of *The Political

Unconscious*, is fundamental for his engagement with the *hic et nunc*. Keeping in mind

this dynamic between Utopia and ideology in Jameson's oeuvre, the next sections discuss

his mapping of the dialectic of *now-here* and *no-where* by reading his discourse on the

historical conditions of the postmodern globalizing world.

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[31] Drawing from Samuel Butler's *Erewhon*, Deleuze formulates the entwinement of "no-where" and "now-here." For instance, see his *Difference and Repetition* (xx-xxi); "On Nietzsche and the Image of Thought" (141); and his collaboration with Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* (99-100).
[32] Jameson concludes *A Singular Modernity* with this sentence: "Ontologies of the present demand archaeologies of the future, not forecasts of the past" (215).

Postmodern Globalization and Its Antinomies

In considering Jameson's mapping of the contemporary world, it is necessary to mention at the outset the relationship between postmodernism and globalization. As with many other academic trends and buzzwords that have their ephemeral ebbs and flows like fashion styles, the idea of the "postmodern turn" does not seem to be "in" any longer. As the spawning of impassioned debates over postmodernism in the eighties and early nineties slowly lost momentum, there have recently been some pronouncements on the "end of postmodernism."[33] The alleged demise of postmodernism has given rise to new concepts that distinguish the latest historical condition from postmodernity—an interesting phenomenon in its own right, one might think, that mirrors the way postmodernism strove to cut its tie from its antecedent a couple of decades ago. "Supermodernity" as Hans Ibelings and Marc Augé call the current *post*-postmodern period is one notable example, while people like Arif Dirlik use the concept of "global modernity" to define a situation where modernization permeates through the entire globe to the point where the so-called "global turn" has left an indelible mark on every social sphere. In comparison to these standpoints, what is striking about Jameson's theory of the contemporary world is that he sees postmodernism and globalization as part and parcel of

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[33] On the "end" or "death" of postmodernism, see, for instance, Heide Ziegler's *The End of Postmodernism: New Directions* and Alan Kirby's "The Death of Postmodernism and Beyond," *Philosophy Now* 58 (2006). Kirby's provocative argument in the essay, namely that postmodernism as a cultural logic and period is over, is elaborated further to form the backbone of his recent book *Digimodernism* (2009). However, any historically-minded or dialectical thinker would not thus prematurely pronounce a death sentence on postmodernism, it being understood that the latter is a historical and historicizing concept.

more or less the same historical processes under late capitalism.[34] In an unpublished

manuscript presented at a conference in Norway after he was awarded the Holberg

International Memorial Prize (2008), he reasserts that "Postmodernity is a periodizing

category; at its most ambitious it designates a whole historical period, which you can also

call the third stage of capitalism, or globalization, or post-Fordism, or other current

slogans." He goes on to argue that since postmodernity refers to "a whole historical

period, a whole moment of the mode of production, a whole socioeconomic dynamic," it

is meaningless to repudiate it from a standpoint of taste or morality.[35] Owing to such a

symptomal approach that historically reads postwar social and cultural production in the

light of the restructuration of the late capitalist mode of production, Jameson could

diagnose postmodernism as "the reflex and the concomitant of yet another systemic

modification of capitalism itself" (*Postmodernism* xii) and investigate the advent of

globalization way before it appeared on the horizon of many academic disciplines.

Taking postmodernism and globalization as interrelated historical symptoms, the

following discussion neither posits a "break" between them nor distinguishes other

related concepts such as postmodernity, supermodernity, global modernity, and the like.

This is intended to draw together these diverse yet related perspectives in a way that

illuminates the complex contours of the world today as much as it is designed to spell out

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[34] In *Valences of the Dialectic*, for example, he identifies the current phase of capitalism as the "stage of globalization or of postmodernity" (260).
[35] One might notice, rightly so, that Jameson here differentiates the term "postmodernity" from "postmodernism." Whereas postmodernity refers to a historical concept, he glosses, postmodernism is "a kind of style, maybe even a period style." Even when postmodernism and postmodernity are used somewhat interchangeably in some of his earlier work, his imperative to historicize the postmodern is unambiguous.

the renewed validity of Jameson's earlier investigation of postmodernity for our understanding of globalization. In charting Jameson's cartography of the present historical juncture, I will place an emphasis upon the way in which his earlier formulation of *political unconscious* informs his later engagement with some of the salient contradictions of the spatial system of global capitalism.

Although Jameson's essay "Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism" gives a methodical analysis of postmodernity, it seems equally constructive and informative, especially for our discussion of contradictory contemporary cultural production and the political unconscious of globalization, to examine his polemic with one of the most well-known expositions of postmodernism, namely, Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition*. In this short yet contentious treatise Lyotard famously defines *postmodern* as "incredulity toward metanarratives" and finds constitutive features of postmodernity in a multiplicity of language games, difference, and incommensurability, among others (xxiv-xxv).[36] Serving as a manifestation of what Lyotard himself calls "the crisis of metaphysical philosophy" (xxiv) and also in part as an incisive critique of what Karatani glosses as "a will to architecture" in philosophy, such antipathy toward *grand récit* is also found in a more explicit manner in his dispute with Jürgen Habermas. In "Answering the Question: What Is Postmodernism?" Lyotard reproaches Habermas for

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[36] In "A Postmodern Fable on Postmodernity, or: In the Megalopolis," Lyotard reiterates his position and asserts that "*modernity* was and still is concerned with 'Grand Narratives,' and that *postmodernity* conveys the global feeling that they no longer 'work'" (188).

denouncing postmodernism as a form of neo-conservatism[37] and ends his acerbic

counterattack with a declaration of war on totality: "The answer is: Let us wage a war

against totality; let us be witness to the unpresentable; let us activate the differences and

save the honor of the name" (82).

In view of the efflorescence of inimical stances on metaphysical or teleological

metanarratives in contemporary thought, Lyotard's "war against totality" is hardly new,

still less surprising. Nonetheless, what does merit some close attention is his commentary

on the "unpresentable" in postmodernity. For him the problematic discrepancy between

the conceivable and the presentable constitutes the core of modern aesthetics. What

distinguishes the postmodern from the modern is that in the former, unpresentability is

foregrounded in a much more intensified form than in the latter. While in modernism the

unpresentable is put forward in a self-conscious way and understood in connection with

the content to be presented, postmodernism flaunts unpresentability itself without any

nostalgia for the content.[38] Tellingly enough, as Lyotard thus speculates on what might be

termed the "crisis of representation," he attributes, though in passing, the increasing

unpresentability to the inexorable process of derealization that results from the advance

of capitalistic reification:

> But capitalism inherently possesses the power to derealize familiar objects,
> social roles, and institutions to such a degree that the so-called realistic

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[37] For Habermas' critique of "the postmodernism of the neoconservatives," see his "Modernity—An Incomplete Project," especially pp. 13-15.

[38] Jameson's comparable take on the "unrepresentable" in modernism and postmodernism is elaborated in *Valences*, pp. 61-62.For the relationship between the problematic of representation and the advance of capitalism in modernism and postmodernism, see also Jameson's *Late Marxism* (264) and David Harvey's *The Condition of Postmodernity* (265).

representations can no longer evoke reality except as nostalgia or mockery, as an occasion for suffering rather than satisfaction. (74)

Lyotard's mention of the derealizing force of capitalism as something that underlies the problem of unpresentability is somewhat paradoxical in that, as Perry Anderson reminds us, when Lyotard came up with the notion of master narrative, the main and only target was Marxism, a science of capitalism (*The Origins of Postmodernity* 29). It is indeed intriguing that Lyotard, while he impugns Marxism, calls attention to the derealizing and reifying power of capital and thereby hints at the lasting explanatory power of Marxism. Alongside that, it is no less paradoxical that Lyotard wages a war against *grand récits* when capital writes the most totalizing and grandiose of all grand narratives in history, or that Anderson aptly describes as "a single, universal story of liberty and prosperity, the global victory of the market" (32).

Lyotard's assessment of the postmodern condition, if seen in this way, can be said to simultaneously pronounce a death sentence on totality and acknowledge the continued existence thereof. Apropos of this contradiction underlying Lyotard's concomitant repudiation and affirmation of metanarratives, Jameson writes in his "Foreword" to *The Postmodern Condition*:

> This seeming contradiction can be resolved, I believe, by taking a further step that Lyotard seems unwilling to do in the present text, namely to posit, not the disappearance of the great master-narratives, but their passage underground as it were, their continuing but now *unconscious* effectivity as a way of "thinking about" and acting in our current situation. (xii)

As he thus attends to the central contradiction of Lyotard's polemic, Jameson goes on to argue for the "persistence of buried master narratives in what I have elsewhere called our

'political unconscious'" (xii). Employing the concept of a political unconscious formulated in his earlier work, Jameson demonstrates that there is something like a return of the repressed in Lyotard's text, that his decidedly anti-totalizing narrative reaffirms, though *unconsciously*, the persistence of global capitalism as a derealizing and totalizing force. In this sense, Lyotard's discourse on postmodernism needs to be taken as a symptom of the postmodern condition which it sets out to diagnose in the first place. Lyotard, in other words, exemplifies a typical postmodern political unconscious in which the almost knee-jerk animosity toward totality oftentimes blinds us to or even represses the unmistakable existence of *grand récits* of the now all-pervasive logic of the market.

The signature move of Jameson's dialectical criticism is discernible not only when he points out that "Lyotard's theory of the end of grand narratives is itself another grand narrative" (*A Singular Modernity* 5),[39] but, more importantly, when he interrogates the historical conditions of possibility of such an anti-totalizing claim. Inquiring why contemporary society is so congenial and favorable toward such an antinomian gesture or what he calls "the desire called antifoundationalism, the desire called antiessentialism" (*The Seeds of Time* 35), Jameson relates it to the "dynamic of late positivist capitalism" (41), one principal feature of which is expressed in so-called post-Fordism that deviates from its antecedents with its "flexible" tailoring to the customers' varied and capricious needs and demands. In *Archaeologies of the Future*, too, he points toward the paradox or

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[39] Jameson revisits his polemic with Lyotard later and contends that "the very refusal and repudiation of narrative calls up a kind of narrative return of the repressed and tends in spite of itself to justify its anti-narrative position by way of yet another narrative the argument has every interest in decently concealing" (*A Singular Modernity* 4-5). Here the expressions such as "repressed" and "concealing" highlight his point that there is something like a political unconscious at work at the heart of the "postmodern condition."

"ambiguity" of postmodern thought by arguing that its "progressive endorsement of anti-essentialist multiplicity and perspectivism" often times works to "[replicate] the very rhetoric of the late-capitalist marketplace as such" (163). For that reason he proposes that we should be chary of the essentialism and foundationalism of the "whole postmodern metaphysic" (*The Seeds of Time* 51) that lies behind the façade of difference, heterogeneity, and hybridity. Jameson's distinctive perspective on the "metaphysic" of postmodern globalization or what he elsewhere dubs "free-market fundamentalism" (*Valences* 412) is unambiguous here: while he shares with many other contemporary thinkers an anti-metaphysical desire and seeks to debunk any foundationalism or essentialism, he is heedful of the complicit relations such an anti-totalizing position might have with the all-encompassing, totalizing logic of the market under global capitalism.

In so conducting a symptomal reading of the contradictions of the postmodern condition, Jameson is intent on examining how the anti-totalizing and anti-metaphysical *Zeitgeist* often evades and *represses* the totalizing and metaphysical dynamic of global capital. Such an analysis of the *political unconscious* of the contemporary world is further developed in his mapping of the "antinomies" of postmodern globalization. In "The Antinomies of Postmodernity," one of his Wellek Library lectures at the University of California, Irvine, collected later in *The Seeds of Time*, he sketches four key conflicting dimensions of contemporary culture. Instead of repeating the traditional way of distinguishing contradiction and antinomy, according to which the former leads to some sort of solution or resolution while the latter does not, he takes an antinomy as a symptom of a contradiction (4). He outlines some of the most conspicuous antinomies of the

present, and in doing so, seeks to delve into some deeper social and historical

contradictions of which those antinomies are taken to be manifestations. By bringing

such a symptomalogical approach to our present, he calls for an awareness of both the

contradictory dimensions of the world today and the latter's political unconscious.

The four main antinomies of the contemporary world Jameson draws out center

on time, space, nature, and Utopia. All these four antinomies are indissociably

interrelated historical symptoms, and yet the first two antinomies are of more direct

relevance to our discussion of the political unconscious of globalization.[40] The first

antinomy of the present results from two seemingly irreconcilable temporal phenomena.

On the one hand, our contemporary world is excessively obsessed with accelerated

changes and transformations. On the other hand though, no other historical period has

been as standardized and static as this one: while the logic of the market and

neoliberalism are pervasive everywhere, trumpeting the "end of history," there is a dearth

of sustained efforts to change the system as a whole. Jameson grapples with such a

situation in terms of "the temporal paradox" and tersely states that "absolute change

equals stasis" (19).

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[40] To summarize roughly the last two antinomies, the third antinomy concerns two divergent tendencies
with regard to nature—the one to oppose to everything "natural" and insist on the constructed, de-
naturalized and anti-essentializing aspects of things, and the other to return to Nature (as in ecology and
environmental movements) and invoke something essential and natural (as in religious fundamentalisms).
The fourth antinomy affirms the Jamesonian dialectic of Utopia and dystopia: although the times are by no
means propitious for Utopia and Utopian thinking, he opines that any active or political anti-Utopianism
itself has a Utopian dimension in that it lays emphasis on the possibility of changing what is and a
collective life to come; and that Utopia has to do with throwing into relief the dystopian structures of the
current social form and of our mindset alike.

Related, or even complementary, to the temporal antinomy, the spatial antinomy

refers to the ways in which the slogans of diversity, heterogeneity, and multiplicity are

extensively promoted as never before at the very moment when the entire globe is

infiltrated and cannibalized by the metaphysic of the market. Jameson asks how the most

homogenized social reality in human history can at one and the same time be thought of

as being so heterogeneous and differentiating. Hence he bluntly asks, "Is global

Difference the same today as global Identity?" (*The Seeds of Time* 205) In a similar

context he poses the question as to whether the increased proliferation and tolerance of

difference does not presuppose as its condition of possibility an unparalleled degree of

social homogenization and the eradication of social difference (*Postmodernism* 341). He

finds in the current epoch a more complete and intensified form of what Adorno

describes as "the capitalist system's increasingly integrative trend" (*Negative Dialectics*

166) and claims:

> Now what comes to the fore is increasing identity (rather than difference):
> the rapid assimilation of hitherto autonomous national markets and
> productive zones into a single sphere, the disappearance of national
> subsistence...the forced integration of countries all over the globe into
> precisely that new global division of labor I mentioned before. Here what
> begins to infuse our thinking of globalization is a picture of
> standardization of an unparalleled new scale; of forced integration as well,
> into a world-system from which "delinking" (to use Samir Amin's term) is
> henceforth impossible and even unthinkable and inconceivable.
> ("Globalization as Philosophical Issue" 57).

Reflecting thus on the heretofore unprecedented level of standardization on the globe,

Jameson hypothesizes the highly plausible possibility that the internal logic of global

capitalism now produces difference and differentiation. So he defines the contemporary

world in terms of "the same masquerading itself as difference" ("Is Space Political?"

197), and claims that "homogeneity has become heterogeneity" in late capitalism (*The*

Seeds of Time 32).

As is the case with his symptomatic reading of Lyotard's anti-totality, Jameson's

analysis of the postmodern antinomies brings into view some of the contradictory aspects

of contemporary social, historical, and cultural realities and also calls attention to the way

one pole in those antinomies is repressed in our collective unconscious while its opposite

number thrives and proliferates. In this respect his cartography of contemporaneity

deconceals the processes by means of which such notions as stasis, homogeneity, nature,

and Utopia go *underground*, so to speak, and constitute the *political unconscious* of

postmodern globalization.

In some sense Jameson's oeuvre attests to his prodigious efforts to bring into

perspective a series of contradictions in the contemporary world and to lay bare what has

been repressed in our historical imagination. More specifically, insofar as he finds the

most distinct feature of global capitalism in its spatial apparatus, which through

geographical expansion and contraction as well as worldwide interconnection and

disconnection produces a host of novel social spaces, his work on postmodernism and

globalization can be said to turn particularly on *spatial* contradictions of our time. Not

surprisingly, in his recent book, *Valences of the Dialectic*, he sets out to reinvigorate the

dialectic as a critical mode of thinking that grapples with the unresolvable internal

contradictions of global capitalism, and in so doing, proposes a spatial dialectic. I take his

proposal for the spatial dialectic to be a radical attempt to understand and tackle the new

spatial world system of globalization and the latter's spatial contradictions. Yet what are

some of the most salient spatial contradictions in the contemporary global world system?

And how does Jameson intervene in those spatial contradictions and map out the *spatial*

unconscious of globalization? Before moving on to *Valences of the Dialectic*, I will try to

address these questions by examining Jameson's theorization of global spatial production

and Derrida's conceptualization of "spacing," "nonlocus," and "trace." After looking at

Jameson's and Derrida's divergent perspectives on space, I interrogate American

architect Peter Eisenman's architectural theory and practice so as to demonstrate some

key features of spatial production in the age of globalization.

Jameson's Cartography of Global Spatial Production

In his reflections on postmodernism and globalization Jameson often underlines

the increased importance of space for contemporary cultural production. While

modernism was preoccupied with time and history, to which Heidegger's *Sein and Zeit*,

Bergson's *longue durée*, and Proust's *Search for a Lost Time* are some of the most

radiant testaments, such a profound sense of and sensitivity to time—that which

Wyndham Lewis called the "Time Cult" (qtd. in *Fables of Aggression* 3)—does not quite

seem to be with us any longer. Meanwhile, space has become a prominent feature that

differentiates postmodernism from modernism proper. This so-called "spatial turn" leads

Jameson to posit space as an "existential and cultural dominant" in the contemporary

world (*Postmodernism* 365). His account of the waning of the modernist thematics of

time and temporality in postmodernity should be taken to mean less that space has replaced or abolished time altogether than that there has been a fundamental shift in the structure of the "historical chronotope" or "spatio-temporal continuum" (*Valences* 68). As Kant and others teach us, time and space as two of our central mental categories are *a priori* inseparable, and one is often expressed in terms of the other. Jameson holds, as Lefebvre does before him, that each historical epoch produces its own temporality and spatiality, and that epochal historical developments triggered by contemporary globalization have drastically altered the time-space nexus.[41]

While he ascribes such a radical transformation to the process of modernization, an inexorable process of industrialization and the resultant standardization, Jameson develops his compelling theory of modernity and postmodernity. In commenting on Habermas' thesis of "modernity as an unfinished project," Jameson opines that modernization was incomplete in modern times because it could never be completed under the historical constraints of the period (*A Singular Modernity* 11-12). He thus characterizes modernity as a historical situation of "uneven development" or incomplete modernization, in which pre-modern or anti-modern enclaves still retained some form of autonomy. In contrast, he defines postmodernity as a historically original condition wherein such a modernizing process is more or less complete, to the point that even the hitherto (semi)autonomous realms such as nature and the unconscious have been brought into the all-inclusive grip of modernization. Or to put it in his own words,

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[41] Chapter 4, below, examines in more detail the transformation of the time-space nexus in postmodernity and its ramifications for narrative production by reading Paul Auster's literary representation of the global city.

> This is why we were led earlier to define *modernism* as the experience and
> the result of *incomplete* modernization, and to suggest that the postmodern
> begins to make its appearance wherever the modernization process no
> longer has archaic features and obstacles to overcome and has
> triumphantly implanted its own autonomous logic (for which, of course, at
> that point the word modernization becomes a misnomer, since everything
> is already "modern"). (*Postmodernism* 366)

As an example that supports this proposition, one can think of Baudelaire's depiction of

modernity. In "The Painter of Modern Life" Baudelaire defines modernity in terms of the

coexistence of "the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent" and "the eternal and the

immutable" (12). That is to say, what is central to modernity is that stark contrast

between what has long seemed eternal and unchangeable and what is fleeting and thus

constantly changes. Insofar as this contrast also obtains in the unbridgeable difference

between the city and the countryside, between the pre-modern and the modern, modernity

is constituted by such "uneven development" or "incomplete modernization." The

modern sensitivity to deep time arises, as Jameson explains elsewhere (and as

Baudelaire's *flâneur* senses in the streets of modern Paris), in large part from the

coexistence of different historical realities and from the "comparativist perception of the

two socioeconomic temporalities" ("The End of Temporality" 699).

However, as the modernizing process tendentially reaches every part and corner

of the globe and brings with it a historically unmatched level of homogenization, a keen

sense of time, the New, innovation, and the very excitement of the "modern" itself, to

which Baudelaire's poetics memorably bears witness, finally evaporates into the air. The

eclipse of temporality and historicity Jameson inveighs against in *Postmodernism* is

attributable to such a historical process of *even* development and complete

modernization.[42] The "spatial turn" in postmodern globalization thus has as its structural

precondition the waning of time and temporality. (From this perspective, the ideological

closure of synchronic models of thought under attack in *The Prison-House of Language*

and *The Political Unconscious* can also be seen as historical symptoms of the postmodern

condition of even development and the ensuing spatialization and detemporalization.)

Accordingly, Jameson contextualizes the spatial turn within the transformation of the

postmodern global world system. In "The Geopolitics of Knowledge and the Colonial

Difference" Walter Mignolo demonstrates that the modern world system has since its

inception in the sixteenth century has structured itself along its "spatial articulation of

power," and calls upon postcolonial theory to come to terms with the "spatialty of

Western history" (60). To be sure, the world system has been spatial all along, and yet

there is an obvious sense in which space has become the dominant operative category in

the global stage of the world system. Hence, whereas the world system theory school is

generally reluctant to posit a structural *coupure* between the present world system and its

precursors, Jameson simultaneously endorses such a view and zeroes in on the

distinctively spatial nature of the contemporary mode of globalization. As his theory of

globalization intimates, when the economic situation and the historical reality all over the

world become more or less standardized, and even more so, when the processes of

globalization facilitate instantaneous interconnection among multiple axes and nodal

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[42] This is not to be taken, however, to mean that every corner of the world is now completely standardized and identical. Jameson's position, rather, points out the *tendential* movement of globalization toward Identity. Or as will be discussed below, it might be more correct to say that his dialectical thinking grasps the simultaneously differentiating and de-differentiating dynamic of globalization. For an analysis of *uneven* development in globalization, see Harvey's *Spaces of Global Capitalism*, especially pp. 69-116.

points on the globe and bring about a simultaneity of social production through

informational technology and cybernetics, time loses much of its meaning as an

organizing principle, while space is bound to take on a special meaning as never before.

That is, as Jameson persuasively demonstrates, in a historical situation where time is thus

reduced to immediacy and instantaneity and where contemporary society is imprisoned in

a perpetual present, even time becomes *spatial* in postmodernity (*Valences* 392).[43] This

increased significance of space constitutes the backdrop against which Jameson calls

attention to the spatial configuration of globalization as a way to grasp the *historical*

conditions of the contemporary world.

Derrida's Nonlocus, Spacing, and Trace

Due to the ascendance of space as a cultural dominant, Jameson is keen on

insisting that any vigorous and rigorous political model of culture should somehow

address the problem of space in our time (*Postmodernism* 51). In view of the importance

of space in his analysis of the contemporary world, it would not be too much to say his

earlier political slogan "always historicize!" is translatable into "always spatialize!" (As

will be discussed later in this chapter, it must be added that historicizing and spatializing

are one and the same thing, in that they are attempts to grasp contemporary society in its

totality.) There are other thinkers who assiduously attend to spatial issues in

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[43] I examine such a spatialization of temporality in later chapters by discussing, among others, Arnold
Schoenberg's twelve-tone music and Pierre Boulez's "smooth space" (Chapter 2) , Nam June Paik's
"postmusic" and video art (Chapter 3), and Paul Auster's postmodern detective fiction (Chapter 4).

contemporary social production. Such illustrious figures as Henri Lefebvre, Michel

Foucault, Michel de Certeau, David Harvey, and Edward Soja easily come to mind. On

the other hand, however, some influential spatial theorists demand that the rise of space

as a cultural dominant be considered from a different vantage point, since global

interconnection and transnational cultural exchange via finance capital and cybernetic

technology make not just time but also space their casualties. Marshall McLuhan thus

baldly declares, "'Time' has ceased, 'space' has vanished" (63). Augé's concept of "non-

places" is another such effort to theorize the dissolution of space under the regime of

global capital. As part and parcel of "the spatial overabundance of the present" and "the

worldwide consumption space," the "non-places" of globalization such as airports, hotels,

and shopping malls are only for temporary stay and lose their meaning as place since

people do not develop a sense of attachment and belonging. Deleuze's virtuality and

deterritorialized "smooth space," Jean Baudrillard's hyperreal space of simulacra,

William Gibson's representation of cyberspace, and Arjun Appadurai's space of

"disjuncture and difference," to mention only some of the most prominent examples, can

be seen as analogous diagnoses of spatial production in the age of globalization.

To such a plethora of resplendent works on global "non-places" I would like to

add Derrida's theory of "nonlocus," "spacing," and "trace," in order to contrast it with

Jameson's theorization of the postmodern "spatial turn" and global social space.

Notwithstanding their often diverging views on politics, history, textuality, ethics, and

what not, both Jameson and Derrida take great interest in space and architecture, and their

inimitable modes of thinking, as roughly labeled as "cognitive mapping" and

"deconstruction" respectively, exemplify two representative *spatial* forms of contemporary thought. As was the case with my discussions above, my position in the following examination will be that precisely due to the irreducible differences of their perspectives, these thinkers' theoretical discourses on space and architecture give us insights into the multifarious and overdetermined contours of global spatial production.

Derrida's deconstructive space is put forth in "Structure, Sign, and Play," in which his deconstruction of center and presence in a structure gives rise to the idea of *nonlocus* as a decentered form of space. Here the nonlocus is conceived as "the absence of center or origin" and as an anti-transcendental and anti-metaphysical locus that deconstructs a system of presence, identity, and being, by infinitely extending the play of signification and the signification of play. Designed to disrupt and unsettle the ontology of presence, the nonlocus—that which Derrida terms a "field of infinite substitutions" (288) or a "noncenter" (292)—is assigned a vital position in his ever-expanding inventory of neologisms.

Closely associated with nonlocus in Derrida's theorization is "spacing." In "Différance," to cite one classic example, the idea of "spacing" is theorized in conjunction with *différance*. As Derrida explicates, what is ingenious about the term *différance* is that it converges two different meanings, that is, "to defer" and "to differ," with a view to debunking the metaphysics of temporal and spatial presence. For Derrida, *différance* is an unceasing process of signification that drives a wedge into the putative identity of the present (as a temporal and spatial construct) through its alterity. The seeming self-identity and immediacy of temporal and spatial presence is thus disjointed

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and disrupted by the process of *différance*, a simultaneous process of temporally

deferring and spatially differing. Derrida elucidates this destabilizing process of

différance in terms of "spacing." Or to quote his explanation at length,

> It is because of différance that the movement of signification is possible
> only if each so-called "present" element, each element appearing on the
> scene of presence, is related to something other than itself, thereby
> keeping within itself the mark of the past element, and already letting
> itself be vitiated by the mark of its relation to the future element, this trace
> being related no less to what is called the future than to what is called the
> past, and constituting what is called the present by means of this very
> relation to what it is not: what it absolutely is not, not even a past or a
> future as a modified present. And interval must separate the present from
> what it is not in order for the present to be itself, but this interval that
> constitutes it as present must, by the same token, divide the present in and
> of itself, thereby also dividing, along with the present, everything that is
> thought on the basis of the present, that is, in our metaphysical language,
> every being, and singularly substance or the subject. In constituting itself,
> in dividing itself dynamically, this interval is what might be called *spacing,*
> *the becoming space-of time or the becoming-time of space (temporization).*
> (*Margins of Philosophy* 13; emphasis added)

Like "nonlocus," "spacing" in this sense is tantamount to deconstructing presence, both

temporal and spatial, by means of the infinite procession of *différance*. By this originary

process, the constitution of a linear temporality is *differed* and the formation of a

homogeneous spatiality is *deferred*. For this reason Derrida says in other places that

"spacing" is the "disruption of presence" (*Margins of Philosophy* 327) and "the

impossibility for an identity to be closed on itself, on the inside of its proper interiority, or

on its coincidence with itself" (*Positions* 94).[44]

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[44] In *Of Grammatology* as well, Derrida emphasizes the significance of spacing as an *originary* writing by arguing that "*Spacing* (notice that this word speaks the articulation of space and time, the becoming-space of time and the becoming-time of space) is always the unperceived, the nonpresent, and the nonconscious…Arche-writing as spacing cannot occur *as such* within the phenomenological experience of

As an infinite process of differing and deferring, "spacing" is also linked to

"trace" in Derrida's work. Not unlike his hauntological appropriation of the specter in

Specters of Marx, "trace" demarcates the borderline, simultaneously blurred and blurring,

between absence and presence, between identity and difference. Derrida deploys "trace"

as another "dangerous supplement"—something that simultaneously marks the appearing

and disappearing of the present and structurally functions as both addition and

replacement, as both excess and lack. Or, to repeat Derrida's description of supplement,

the trace "*is* not, is not a being (*on*). It is nevertheless not a simple nonbeing (*mēon*),

either. Its slidings slip it out of the simple alternative presence/absence. *That* is the

danger" (*Dissemination* 109).[45] Maintaining that grammatology is devised to demystify

what we understand by such words as "proximity," "immediacy," "presence," and

"proper," he adds that such a project can be carried out through "the irreducible notion of

the trace (*Spur*)" (*Of Grammatology* 70). Neither presence nor absence, the trace makes

its appearance in *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles* as well, in which Derrida dissects Nietzsche's

styles and disrupts the architectonics of hermeneutics through his trademark play with

words—*éperon* (French), spur (English), and *Spur* (German).

Employed to dismantle the architectonics of presence or what Derrida calls the

"ontotheological unfolding of parousia" (*Margins of Philosophy* 95) in Western

philosophy, I argue, those interrelated de-spatializing conceptions of "nonlocus,"

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a *presence*. It marks *the dead time* within the presence of the living present, within the general form of all presence" (68).

[45] For Derrida's thematization of "dangerous supplement" see his reflections on Rousseau in *Of Grammatology*, pp. 141-164.

"spacing," and "trace" lend us insights into contemporary social space. In his reflections on globalization or what he calls "an ageless world" Derrida fittingly says, "It is not only time that is 'out of joint,' but space, space in time, spacing" (*Specters of Marx* 83). As much as Derrida's idea of *contretemps* can be recast so as to help us to understand a peculiar temporality pertaining to the contemporary globalizing world, the concepts of "nonlocus," "spacing," and "trace" can give us a glimpse of decentered and disjointed contemporary global social spaces. As a way to examine more specifically what insights, if any, Derrida's deconstructive space/spacing can offer into contemporary spatial production, let us have a look at the interactions and tensions Peter Eisenman's architectural theory and practice have with those Derridean de-spatializing concepts.

Eisenman and a New Architectural Hermeneutic

Insofar as deconstruction aims to dismantle an irredeemably metaphysical mode of philosophy which, as Karatani eloquently characterizes, flaunts an incorrigible "will to architecture," it is unsurprising that Derrida has had a great impact on contemporary architecture. Especially, architects often associated with deconstructive architecture, Frank O. Gehry, Bernard Tschumi, and Peter Eisenman principal among them, build on Derrida's deconstruction in order to defy the architectonic metaphysics of architecture. Goethe once said that "architecture is frozen music" (qtd. in Eisenstein 48), while Schelling also similarly commented that "Architecture is music in space, as it were a

frozen music."[46] Yet deconstructive buildings oftentimes look as though they were melting down, as Gehry's Los Angeles Philharmonic Concert Hall remarkably displays. This will *against* architecture, so to speak, existent at the heart of deconstructive architectural practices is well captured when J. Hillis Miller observes, "as the perpetually transformative, transferring, differentiating, dissociating, decomposing, recomposing nature of this new architecture indicates, it is without fixed origin, end, organic continuity, narrative hierarchical, or dialectical form. It has no discernable immovable ground plan as foundation. It resolutely resists totalization" ("Beginning from the Ground Up" 17). The idea of incorporating deconstruction into the construction of buildings—this rather provocative idea has galvanized previously inconceivable architectural models and practices and altered beyond recognition what it means to do architecture. Amongst all the *auteurs* canonized in the history of deconstructive architecture, Eisenman is exemplary in that he has most persistently experimented with Derrida's philosophy and interrogated the possibility of *constructing* an architectural form that is at the same time a form of *deconstruction*. Hence, Eisenman's architectural form—that which he at times characterizes as "not-architecture" or "an architecture of absence"[47]—demonstrates what possibilities deconstruction opens up for contemporary architecture and space as well as what new insights his deconstructive architecture in turn lends into Derrida's deconstruction. And most importantly, his architectural theory and practice illustrate to what extent both philosophical deconstruction and deconstructive architecture register

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[46] I am grateful to Prof. Jameson for drawing my attention to Schelling's view.
[47] This alludes to the subtitle of his book, *Moving Arrows, Eros, and Other Errors: An Architecture of Absence*.

and come to terms with some of the most significant contradictions in contemporary spatial production in which they are implicated.

Eisenman's "undoing" of architectural metaphysics unfolds in many interrelated forms, one conspicuous example of which is his formulation of "post-functionalism." In his essay "Post-Functionalism" (1976) he takes issue with the "form-follows-function formula" or the "ethical positivism of form and function" (85, 86) in traditional architecture, and seeks to re-establish a non-metaphysical relation between form and function. As he aptly argues in another essay, "Strong Form, Weak Form," architecture has traditionally been a "strong form" discipline: whereas sign, signified, and signifier are separated from one another in language, symbolism, function, and form are always merged in architecture (51). In this sense, architectural functionalism and its "strong form" are still deeply anchored in the Enlightenment notion of anthropomorphism and hence do not see architecture save as man's shelter or dwelling. In such a functionalist framework there is not much room left for investigating the inner logic of architectural forms. As Habermas notes, such "unity of form and function," having long been the key guiding principle for architecture, began to be questioned in modern architecture and is finally ruptured in postmodern architecture ("Modern and Postmodern Architecture" 425). Indeed, Eisenman seeks to break free from what Cynthia Davidson dubs the "tyranny of the functional diagram" (177) and to lay out post-functionalist architectural conditions

with the help of the linguistic paradigm.[48] In so doing, Eisenman problematizes the one-to-one relation between function and form, meaning and structure, meaning and function, and thereby endeavors to reveal "the unconscious repressions" in classical and modern architectural systems (*Eisenman Inside Out* xiii).

House I and House II are highly illustrative of Eisenman's post-functionalism. Instead of embodying what Heidegger intimates by the term "dwelling"[49] or what Gaston Bachelard calls the "essence of the notion of home" (5), these houses are planned as an interrogation of deep structure in architectural form. As Eisenman explains, House I is a study of the internal logic and nature of architectural structure freed from function and meaning ("Cardboard Architecture" 29). As a way to dislocate the connection between form and function, he uses architectural materials such as columns, beams, and colors not as functional but as formal devices. For instance, although our commonsense dictates us to see columns in terms of their function, that is, their supporting role, Eisenman strategically reduces or "unloads" such a function by cutting the columns short of the ceiling. In thus stripping the column of any conventional function or referent, he accentuates the underlying formal structure of the house (Figure 1.1). House II also represents such an attempt "to free the house of acculturated meaning whether traditional

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[48] Eisenman's use of the linguistic paradigm is glimpsed when he theorizes "weak form" as follows: "Weak form derives from several ideas: that there is no single truth; that there is no decidability (things have to be undecidable, arbitrary); that things are no longer essential (there is no essence to architecture, there is no essence to anything); that it is all in the excess…Weak form is arbitrary, undecidable, excessive, and has no ontology or teleology of values, that is, no strong relationship to narrative space or time ("Strong Form, Weak Form" 53). Resonant with Derrida's anti-ontologizing and anti-teleological spirit, Eisenman's deconstruction of the architectonics of "strong form" thus holds dear the logics of undecidability, contingency, non-essentialism.
[49] Consider the following remarks: "Thus dwelling would in any case be the end that presides over all building. Dwelling and building are related as end and means" ("Building Dwelling Thinking" 144).

or modern" ("Misreading Peter Eisenman" 214). Here the basic spatial coordinates of

architecture—linear, planar, and volumetric—are permutated or *trans*-formed in order

not so much to cater to the residents' needs and their long-established dwelling habits,

but rather to unmask the internal structure of the architectural space. Through its foray

into the formal interactions and superimpositions among various spatial coordinates and

formal elements that crisscross the entire space, House II brings into view the deep

structure, or what Eisenman calls an "unconscious level of formal structure" ("Cardboard

Architecture" 39), that underlies the spatial organization of the built form (Figures 1.1

and 1.2).

Of great importance here is that as long as Eisenman tries to remap the

relationship between form and function, between architectural sign and its meaning, his

post-functionalism can be seen as a kind of *architectural hermeneutic*. The hermeneutic

aspect of his post-functionalist built form is well documented when he explicates the

formal structures of House I and House II and their "meaning":

> If we analyze the nature of meaning in any specific context we realize it
> has two aspects. The first is meaning, which is iconographic and symbolic
> and derives from the relation of the form to some reference which is
> external to it…But underlying that level of meaning there is another aspect,
> itself a potential source of information, which conditions any iconographic
> interpretation; it is derived from, and is in a sense inherent in, the structure
> of form…This second level conditions the way we perceive the first level
> by providing a structure for the visual cues which exist in the first level.
> And since it has the capacity to be known, we must be concerned with
> how this happens. If we mark both these levels in the environment they
> can be explicitly perceived and understood. This is the third aspect of the
> work—a shift in focus from an actual structure to an implied structure and
> to the relationship between the two. ("Cardboard Architecture" 31-32)

While the first level of meaning concerns an actual physical space and its relationship to its exterior, the second level has to do with the formal structure of the actual space. Eisenman's new architectural hermeneutic seeks to mediate these two different levels of architectural meaning and to dig into some deep architectural structure. This formalist and anti-humanistic spirit, which extends far back into various modern art forms—such as the abstract paintings of Malevich and Mondrian, the atonal and polytonal music of Schoenberg and Webern, the non-figurative literature of Joyce and Apollinaire, and even the rationalized and streamlined architecture of the Bauhaus and the International Style— makes it possible for Eisenman to see architecture in terms of relationship as opposed to object or substance. It is such insistence on relationality in architectural form (for which Saussure's linguistics serves as a prototypical point of reference) that guides the American architect's quest for architectural deep structure and his endorsement of Lévi-Strauss' structuralist critique of anthropocentrism ("Post-Functionalism" 86).

If Eisenman thus deviates markedly from traditional architectural hermeneutics and from "the claustrophobic rhetoric of a so-called natural or classical language of architecture" (*Eisenman Inside Out* vii), to that degree his post-functionalism is comparable to the new hermeneutic theories and practices proposed in Derrida's "Structure, Sign, and Play" and Jameson's "Metacommentary." Virtually contemporaneous with Derrida's and Jameson's texts, however, Eisenman's post-functionalism is still mired in the very structuralist framework that the two theorists berate for its metaphysical and ahistorical ideologies. We need not rehearse Derrida's and Jameson's pointed critiques of structuralist hermeneutic here. Instead, we can place

Eisenman's post-functionalism in perspective by bringing to our discussion another figure, Adorno, whose theoretical discourse offers multiple points of contrasts and convergences with Derrida's and Jameson's.[50]

Eleven years before Eisenman propounds his post-functionalism, Adorno in his lecture "Functionalism Today" demands that architecture "mediate" in a more rigorous manner the "two extremes—formal construction and function" ("Functionalism Today" 38). Whereas Eisenman sets out to dismantle functionalism with the hammer of structuralism, Adorno here approaches the "antithesis between use and uselessness" (40) from a materialist and historicizing standpoint. What can be inferred from his scathing disapproval of Kant's idea of art as "purposiveness without a purpose" and of Adolf Loos' view of non-functional ornament as crime is that the dualistic oppositions of useful and useless, functional and functionless, function and form, are *historical* problems—one might even want to say, ideological projections of capitalism—that cannot be dismissed by the mere taking of thought. A simple denunciation of functionalism or, for that matter, formalism is unfeasible in that it cannot take into account the historical dynamic whereby, as Adorno puts it, "What was functional yesterday can therefore become the opposite tomorrow" or vice versa (31). Therefore, Adorno exhorts us to be chary of how something *becomes* functional and useful and how the very oppositions of function and non-function, of use and non-use, come into existence as problematics not in a historical vacuum but at a particular historical conjuncture. In this sense Adorno's perspective on

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[50] Some of the chief similarities and differences among Adorno, Derrida and Jameson, especially as they concern totality and history, will be discussed in Chapter 2, below.

functionalism seems to call forth another mode of post-functionalism that differs from the one proposed by Eisenman. That is to say, Adorno is insistent upon a historical revision of post-functionalism so that we critically reassess architectural functionalism and question, rather than bracketing, the very "functionalist" society in which everything functional and use-oriented is welcomed and favored. In short, Eisenman's structuralist foray into the "unconscious level of formal structure" that has been repressed in architectural functionalism in turn *represses* history by papering over the historical contradictions between functionalism and post-functionalism. In this respect Eisenman's structuralist post-functionalism can be said to be still imprisoned in its conceptual closure or in the "prison-house of language."

Eisenman later acknowledges that he has come to abandon his earlier view of architecture as a linguistic structure (*Eisenman Inside Out* xiv). Although his critique of the form-function hierarchy persists into the later phase of his career, his recourse to structuralist thinking takes a new direction as he turns to Derrida. As I will try to show in the next section, this rendezvous between the American architect and the French philosopher becomes a locus in which we can observe not just some of the central theoretical contradictions inherent in Derrida's deconstruction that we have discussed above, but also some key structural contradictions at the heart of Eisenman's built form and, by extension, contemporary spatial production.

Architecture of *Différance* and Its Spatial Unconscious

Of particular importance in our discussion of the architectural translation of

philosophy and the philosophical translation of architecture is Eisenman's

implementation of Derrida's spatial *différance*—nonlocus, spacing, and trace. As Mark C.

Taylor elucidates in "Refusing Architecture," the principal challenge that Eisenman's

deconstructive project faces is not simply how he builds *differently* but how he constructs

différance when the latter is a kind of "nonsite" that is "never present without being

absent" (83). Because architecture has traditionally been site-specific, Eisenman finds in

deconstruction a possibility of putting to test such a belief in architectural *presence*.

Eisenman's inquiry into deconstruction as a new possibility of architecture is

unambiguously articulated when he explains the paradigm shift in architectural designing

from "forming" to "spacing." Questioning the ontology of architecture, he writes,

> Central to such a questioning is a movement from design as a process of
> forming presences, or object gestalts, to what can be called "spacing," or
> the articulation of voids, absences that have the density of presences
> without their material being. The attempt is to produce an architectural
> object that is no longer complicit with its previous terms of embodiment or
> with the form/matter dialectic. ("Processes of the Interstitial" 94)

Building upon the idea of spacing, which Derrida theorizes as "a non-identity, a non-

figure, a simulacrum" (*Spurs* 49) and as "the unperceived, the nonpresent, and the

nonconscious" (*Of Grammatology* 68), Eisenman conceives of an architectural space

freed from its principal metaphysical ideology of presence. He defines such an

architectural *différance* as a "double absence," "a presence within an absence," or "an

absent presence in an absence" (*Blurred Zones* 100, 259). Since Derrida's spacing

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necessitates that a built space and its preconditions—the binarisms of form-function, presence-absence, subject-object, and original-model, among many others—should be fundamentally rearticulated through the interminable process of differing-deferring, Eisenman sees spacing as "an *other* condition of architecture" (98). Eisenman's introduction of spacing to architectural space is followed by many other related concepts, including "the interstitial," "blurred zones," "in between," "zones of undecidability," and "becoming." Constituting kaleidoscopic variations on the theme of spacing, these concepts are contrived to deconstruct the presence, being, and ontology of architecture.

To be sure, the stimulating idea of bringing Derridean *deconstruction* to the site of architectural *construction* helps Eisenman reformulate some of the basic assumptions about (un)doing architecture. I tend to think the extensive impact of Derrida's deconstruction on architecture (as much as the latter's privileged position in postmodern global cultural production) is indissociable from the fact that architecture is *non-representational*. Stated differently, inasmuch as Derrida pushes to extremes Saussure's linguistic *epoché*, or the bracketing of the referent, and reframes the world in linguistic terms, such an approach can dexterously dissect and analyze the formal protocols and structures of architecture in large part because architecture, as Heidegger remarks, "cannot be ranked as representational art" ("The Origin of the Work of Art" 40). And doesn't Hegel also remind us, at the murky dawn of the modern, that architecture cannot fully express the Idea as the latter reveals itself in the world (*Aesthetics* 188-189)? In some sense one of the reasons that architecture has become such a privileged locus for deconstruction (and vice versa) is that there is some indubitable affinity between

architecture as a non- or anti-representational art and deconstruction as a mode of thinking that unwedges itself from the *Lebenswelt* and nullifies the question of representing the latter.

However, this is in no way the whole story about the encounter between deconstruction and architecture. Another thing that defines architecture, that is, its irreducible physical *presence*, is also to be factored into the story. The very act of introducing the de-ontologizing spirit into the foremost genre of presence, while in itself innovative and revolutionizing to a certain degree, nevertheless demarcates the limits of deconstruction not only for architecture but also for contemporary thought more generally. In his contemplations on Eisenman, Derrida claims that the deconstructive architect's critique of the binarism of presence and absence in architecture should be pursued even further along the de-ontologizing process of linguistic signification to the point where it entirely overturns the ontology of architectural presence ("Why Peter Eisenman Writes Such Good Books" 346). Derrida's demand for a thoroughgoing deconstruction of architectural construction, which Jameson describes as a "fundamental (and historically new), properly postmodern possibility, that even site itself can be done away with" (*The Seeds of Time* 165), marks at once the most productive and most problematic point in Eisenman's rendezvous with Derrida. The conflicting views between Derrida and Eisenman are well documented in their correspondence. Not fully content with Eisenman's limited embrace of deconstruction, Derrida chides him for not having de-ontologized and de-theologized in as radical a way as his own philosophy demands ("A Letter to Peter Eisenman" 63). This charge, similar in kind to the one Derrida levels

at Marxism and Hegel, is reiterated in his writing about another deconstructive architect Bernard Tschumi, in which he regards architecture as "the last fortress of metaphysics" and stresses that architecture should dis-joint itself and arrest dis-order and madness in its very dislocation ("Point de folie—Maintenant l'architecture" 573, 579).

Interestingly, and even surprisingly, especially in the light of Eisenman's earlier structuralist formal investigation, his response to Derrida moves in a direction similar to that taken by Jameson in *The Political Unconscious* and *Fables of Aggression*. In a manner not completely different from Jameson's contention that history is not a text, Eisenman replies to Derrida by underscoring that architecture is not language *per se*. For Eisenman, architecture is different from language in that it is grounded in presence, in "the real existence of the signified" ("Post/El Cards: A Reply to Jacques Derrida" 69). Elsewhere, he goes even further in arguing that "architecture cannot be thought without presence" (*Blurred Zones* 7); and that "Unlike language, architecture is both object, a presence, and sign, an absence" (*Eisenman Inside Out* 223). In this way, Eisenman's deconstruction of architecture as a sign(ifier) does not ultimately prevent him from addressing the question of the "present" and "real" existence and materiality of architecture. His distanciation from Derrida's deconstruction is more explicit in the following passage:

> In my view, your deconstruction of the presence/absence dialectic is inadequate for architecture precisely because architecture is not a two-term, but a three-term system. In architecture, there is another condition, which I call presentness, that is neither absence nor presence, form nor function, neither the particular use of a sign nor the crude existence of reality, but rather an excessive condition between sign and the

Heideggerian notion of being: the formation and ordering of the discursive event that is architecture. ("Post/El Cards" 69)

Eisenman attempts to throw out of joint the architectonics of presence all the while he critically intervenes in the inexorable condition of architecture as presence. In other words, his problematic of "presentness" strives to de-ontologize the ontology of architecture without nonetheless losing sight of its inevitable materiality. He acknowledges that this presentness, or what he labels as the "unavoidable imperative of presence in architecture" (*Blurred Zones* 222), cannot simply be deconstructed along the axis of language. Architecture differs from language because it is both being and its representation, both the sign(ifier) and the signified/the referent. Therefore, though Eisenman draws on deconstruction as a way to call into doubt the presence of architecture, he also knows how to get out of Derridean substitution of sign(ifier) for architecture. In this sense his concept of presentness, while being present, nevertheless deconstructs presence. That is perhaps what he means when he says, "it decenters while it centers" (225). Through this notion of presentness, which Andrew Benjamin ingeniously describes as "the anoriginal presence of a differential ontology" (307), Eisenman at once departs from the metaphysics of presence in conventional architecture and keeps alive a non-metaphysical idea of architectural presence.

The manner in which Eisenman critiques architectural presence through the notion of "presentness" is illustrated in his technique of "scaling." In "Architecture as a Second Language" he mentions that architecture has traditionally been thought of as being "univocal" because of its presence—"its here and now, its time and space

specificity" (228). As a way to introduce a multivalent temporality and spatiality into architecture, he proposes to see architecture not in terms of presence but as a site of in-betweenness. Scaling is such an effort to inscribe differential or "in between" scales within architecture and to call for a new configuration of architectural time and space. Eisenman notes that the scalar relationship between man and a built space is an "institutional signifier" that underwrites anthropocentric architecture ("Misreading Eisenman" 218). He confronts such a human-centered and function-oriented architectural scale by means of his multivalent scaling. Although, as Derrida remarks, scaling is, first and foremost, an attempt to destabilize a humanism or an anthropomorphism inherent in the traditional notion of built spaces constructed for the human body ("Why Peter Eisenman Writes Such Good Books" 337), it is also to be understood as a way to decenter the *chronotopic* presence of architecture and thereby to free the "meaning" of architectural time and space from a linear, static, or homogeneous signification.

The technique of scaling is masterfully used in the *Romeo and Juliet* project which Eisenman looks upon as one of his first "texts of between." In this project for the Venice Biennale in 1986 he constructs a structure in which a series of elements with different scales and lengths are superimposed on one another. By superposing the end points of three segments with different lengths and making them have the same length, for instance, he makes these three different segments of one and the same axis exhibit different scales. The co-existence or "congestion" of multiple scales within one axis disrupts the idea of linear time and continuity as well as spatial homogeneity and stability

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implicit in the notion of the axis in architecture. What results in is, instead, a dis-location

of time and space:

> The perception at one point of all the elements of the progression,
> rearranged in scale and distance, dislocates the relationship between time
> and space. In the same way, one might proceed along the axis
> encountering the same elements several times. Time and space, figure and
> form, are thus collapsed as interdependent entities. This allows the
> elements—time, space, place, form, figure—to be deployed in a system
> which contains its own contradictions, and the meaning of space and time
> is freed from a linear symbolic representation. The definition of time as
> linear or circular, and of space as dynamic or static, now has no meaning
> in the traditional sense. ("Architecture as a Second Language" 232)

Scaling is thus the procedure of inscribing multivalent chronotopic traces into

architectural presence. This technique of scaling, or what Franco Purini calls a

"chronotopic interlacing" (28), is further developed in the Aronoff Center for Design and

Art at the University of Cincinnati, Ohio. In this dazzling and dizzying milestone in the

history of contemporary architecture, Eisenman radically challenges and restructures

conventional norms and protocols associated with architecture, such as human scale,

stability, inhabitability, right-angled verticality and horizontality, and the like, by various

means of exponential overlapping, phase shifting, asymptotic tilting, and exponential

torquing, among others (Figure 1.3). As a result, the clinical purity and orderliness often

exhibited in customary box-and-steel buildings and the accompanied sense of presence

and stability are rewritten in such a way in which all the heterogeneous and jumbled

segments and elements of the building register and generate multilayered temporalities

and spatialities.

It is quite tempting to think that Eisenman's "scaling" of architectural chronotope is structurally analogous to Nam June Paik's postmusic/video that destabilizes a sense of temporality and spatiality in modern music by its inscription of displaced temporalities and spatialities.[51] Like Paik, Eisenman can be seen as laboring to introduce disjointed chronotopic features into his postmodern art media by way of jumbling and relating the seemingly heterogeneous architectural scales. At any rate, what is more important is that Eisenman examines the incommensurability between his de-ontologizing critique of presence and the inevitable present of architecture as an internal contradiction in architectural form. His interrogation of "presentness" through the lens of scaling is neither some antiquated nostalgia for presence nor a Derridean deconstruction of presence. Instead, Eisenman's architectural theory and practice grasp such opposing conditions of architecture as contradictions, and gesture toward a new architectural configuration. While his early formal experiments try to open up the "unconscious repressions" in classical and modern architecture (*Eisenman Inside Out* xiii), therefore, his notion of presentness and scaling can be said to unveil what has been repressed in Derrida's deconstruction of presence and to brings into view the "presentness" in Derrida's deconstructive spaces such as as nonlocus, spacing, and trace.

Nevertheless, there is one more layer of "presence" or "presentness" that Eisenman has left unexamined and even repressed. That is, if, as Eisenman himself says, architecture differs from language owing to its presentness and cannot be thought without

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[51] Chapter 3, below, reads such a multilayered and even schizophrenic chronotopic affect in conjunction with Paik's postmodern-postcolonial subjectivity and the overdetermined historical configurations of globalization.

the "imperative of presence" (*Eisenman Inside Out* 223), architecture is also

distinguished from language because it is more deeply grounded in the *presentness* of

complex social, historical, and material conditions. As J. Hillis Miller argues, architecture

is complexly embedded in the "surrounding political, economic, financial, governmental,

environmental, technoscientific and institutional power structures" (16). Jameson also

claims that the privileged position of architecture among the arts resides in the fact that

"its Other or exterior is coeval with History and society itself" ("Architecture and the

Critique of Ideology" 44). Among all historical and social grounds, however, the

economy is becoming more fundamental and crucial for contemporary architectural

production, especially in the light of the structure of land speculation and rent, the role of

multinational companies in new mega structures, the astronomical cost of contemporary

buildings, among others. For this reason David Harvey, following Lefebvre, describes

architecture as "landed capital" (*Spaces of Global* 102), while Jameson tersely states that

"Architecture is business as well as culture" ("Is Space Political?" 193). In spite of all

that, Eisenman is not particularly attentive to the intertwining of architecture and the

economy or to the "presentness" of the economy in architecture. Insofar as architecture is

more closely bound up with the economy than any other cultural forms and nevertheless

represses its rootedness in the economy, it is arguably in architecture that contradictions

in contemporary cultural production are most problematically registered and rehearsed.

When we take Eisenman's architecture to be a political unconscious in which

some of the prominent cultural contradictions in the contemporary world are sedimented,

it is notable that his multilayered scaling constructs a historically new temporal and

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spatial affect through the intersection and interference of radically differentiated and differential architectural lines, planes, volumes, and other materials, in the very historical situation in which such a temporal and spatial differentiation becomes increasingly inconceivable in the wake of global homogenization and standardization. He is well aware of such a historical milieu from which his architectural theory and practice spring.[52] In his prescient assessment of the intended political aspect of his architecture for the age of "transnational capital," he observes:

> Ultimately, systems of clarification and utility create an excess in the space of power. The political system of transnational capital already suggests an organization of space and time, city, building, etc., that demands clarity and utility in order to create this excess. Standardization and technological processes are used to create the possibility of an excess, which presently resides in capital. To suggest the possibility of an excess, an excess that requires a radical change in the existing modes of production and consumption, becomes a political act. To produce a condition of spacing, of interstitiality, of something that cannot be consumed because it is no longer legitimated by utility and significance, is not merely an aesthetic argument, it is a political one; it is speaking of a different kind of excess. Processes that produce such a difference through displacing affect can be seen to be resistant to the existing spaces of power. ("Processes of the Interstitial" 101)

For Eisenman, standardization and homogenization are the principal processes by means of which transnational capitalism extends and expands its power over the globe. In such a situation, he claims, producing different and differentiating chronotopes, something that cannot be easily co-opted by the all-integrative grip of global capital, is a political act. As

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[52] In his interview with Robert E. Somol he once comments that "[my work] is always about the *Zeitgeist*. You cannot do classical architecture today and be relevant. But equally you cannot do Modernist architecture and be relevant. The notion of undecidability comes from the *Zeitgeist*" (130). My position is that as a historical symptom of the postmodern *Zeitgeist*, Eisenman's "undecidability" risks repressing the decisive (as well as "undecidable") maneuver of global spatial production.

if to respond to such a position, Jameson offers a rather different perspective in "Is Space

Political?":

> But the logical contradiction lies elsewhere, in the difficulty of producing
> difference out of the same. It is a difficulty compounded by our conviction
> as to the increasing systematicity of this system, of its closure as a totality
> from which, as Foucault taught us again and again, we can scarcely hope
> to escape. In that case, what we think of as a radically different space from
> our own is little more than a fantasy projection of difference, it is the same
> masquerading itself as difference. (197)

To paraphrase this position in the terms in which Jameson's diagnosis of global

antinomies have been explicated in earlier sections of this chapter, the question that

remains for Eisenman to address is what if global capital operates through Difference as

well as Identity, or what if global Difference is the same as global Identity today? (*The*

Seeds of Time 205). Or, in the words of Hardt and Negri, "what if a new paradigm of

power, a postmodern sovereignty, has come to replace the modern paradigm and rule

through differential hierarchies of the hybrid and fragmentary subjectivities that these

theorists celebrate?" (*Empire* 138)

Apropos of the implications these questions have for Eisenman's politics of

architectural difference, his Nonutani Headquarters Building in Tokyo and Memorial to

the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin offer interesting points of reference. In the

Nonutani building, Eisenman tries to break away from the fundamental architectural form

of grid. As he does with his idea of scaling, Eisenman here overlaps, tilts, and rotates a

multiplicity of grids and adroitly puts to use those differentially shifted and blurred grids

as a way to decenter the typical verticality, horizontality, stability of architecture (Figure

1.4). In consequence, the building seems to be precariously suspended between stasis and

collapse, a state which Eisenman describes as a "limp erection" (qtd. in Davidson 178) to make his anti-phallogocentric import unmistakable (Figure 1.5). Eisenman's strategic destabilization of grids is also visible in his Memorial in Berlin. As a way to represent the unrepresentable horror and inhumanity of the Holocaust, he arranges 2,700 some concrete pillars, each 95 centimeters wide and 2.375 meters long, with varying heights from 0 to 4 meters (Figure 1.6). He explains the goal of this project as follows: "The project manifests the instability inherent in what seems to be a system, here a rational grid, and its potential for dissolution in time. It suggests that when a supposedly rational and ordered system grows too large and out of proportion to its intended purpose, it loses touch with human reason. It then begins to reveal the innate disturbances and potential for chaos in all systems of seeming order, the idea that all closed systems of a closed order are bound to fail" (*Blurred Zones* 314). There is no question that Eisenman does a commendable job of providing a historical caveat that too rational, ordered, and rigid a system is ultimately doomed to collapse. As faithful as such a project might be to his politics of difference, he does not seem to fully consider, especially in the context of contemporary globalization, how a system can also evolve in a way that proliferates chaos, disorder, and difference. For, as Giovanni Arrighi and Beverly J. Silver brilliantly demonstrate in *Chaos and Governance in the Modern World System*, the seemingly contradictory mechanism of "chaos and governance" is the very logic of capital. In this context, we may recall Jameson's remark that "a system that constitutively produces

differences remains a system" (*Postmodernism* 343)[53] or Stuart Hall's reminder that "this concentrated, corporate, over-corporate, over-integrated, over-concentrated, and condensed form of economic power…lives culturally through difference and…is constantly teasing itself with the pleasures of the transgressive Other" (31).

In this sense, Eisenman's perspective contrasts with one of the most interesting contemporary architectural and spatial studies of the grid, that is, Rem Koolhaas' analysis of "the Manhattan Grid" in *Delirious New York* (18). In this idiosyncratic exploration of urban form (and book form, it must be added), Koolhaas probes into the grid structure of Manhattan, an intricate structure by means of which the seemingly delirious discontinuity and difference in the urban space coexist with a considerable degree of "consistency and coherence" (10).[54] While upholding a proposition markedly different from Eisenman's view on the relationship between system and chaos in globalization, Koolhaas dwells on "The ultimate oxymoron: chaos as project" (*S, M, L, XL* 365) and posits the possibility that chaos can be part of the internal logic of a regulatory and ordered system. In taking

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[53] John Gray's *False Dawn: The Delusions of Global Capitalism* also emphasizes the way that the so-called global regime of *laissez-faire* regime is actually "centrally planned" and is a "product of artifice, design and political coercion" (17). Additionally, Gray points to the necessity for coordinating Identity and Difference in the mechanism of the *laissez-faire* regime of globalization. He remarks, "Globalization is often equated with a trend towards homogeneity. That, again, is just what globalization is *not*. Global markets in which capital and production moves freely across frontiers work precisely because of the *differences* between localities, nations and regions…There would not be profits to be made by investing and manufacturing worldwide if conditions were similar everywhere. Global markets thrive on differences between economies. That is one reason why the trend to globalization has such an irresistible momentum" (57-58). I do not think that his stress on difference is incompatible with the insistence upon the homogenizing process of globalization. As has been reiterated throughout this chapter, it is crucial to grasp the Janus-faced logics of globalization.

[54] In *The Seeds of Time*, Jameson brings into relief how Koolhaas' analyses of the Manhattan grid and the elevator point to the centralizing and decentralizing aspects of urban and architectural production (199). See also Phillip E. Wegner's "Horizons, Figures, and Machines: The Dialectic of Utopia in the Work of Fredric Jameson" (70).

such a position on the coexistence of continuity and discontinuity, of order and disorder, of identity and difference, in spatial production, Koolhaas also mentions, though in passing, "Manhattanism's *unconscious* architectural production" (11; my emphasis). Although Koolhaas does not theorize the architectural and spatial unconscious in the way the present chapter does, his remark seems to hint at the contradictory dimensions of spatial production in the (post)modern world system and the repression of identity, totality, and systematicity. Eisenman's architectural theory and practice, by contrast, do not primarily deal with the complex reality of contemporary spatial production. As long as Eisenman leaves uncharted "the persistence of the Same through absolute Difference" (Anderson, *The Origins of Postmodernity* 32) or fails to grasp contemporary transnational capitalism as a totalizing system of closure the operational logic of which integrates and coopts difference and multiplicity, his architectural praxis risks falling into the pitfall of the sundry postmodern formulations of *différance*, hybridity, and disjuncture.

The postmodern antinomies of identity and difference, order and disorder, continuity and discontinuity and the like, help us to interpret the "meaning" of Eisenman's architectural production as a spatial antinomy or as a symptom of some deeper spatial contradictions of globalization. That is to say, we should address the extent that contemporary spaces of difference and differentiation are in effect firmly and inescapably anchored in the all-inclusive and all-penetrating spatial apparatus of global capital. Inasmuch as globalization operates by the logic of both Identity and Difference, we also need to understand the so-called *post-spatial* productions of globalization—not only Eisenman's "presentness," "scaling," and "interstitiality," but also Derrida's

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"spacing," "nonlocus," and "trace," Augé's "non-place," and Mark Taylor's "nonsite," Baudrillard's "hyperreal space," and what not—in conjunction with the *spatializing* logic of global capital.[55] These seemingly incompatible spatial phenomena—the putative disappearance of space and the diminishment of the importance of space on one hand, and the unprecedented importance of space for global capital on the other—comprise another antinomy of globalization. Rather than scrutinize the simultaneously spatializing and de-spatializing logic of globalization, Eisenman's architectural theory and practice, as other contemporary theories of postspatiality and placelessness do, leave unexamined the spatializing apparatus of the global world system that generates and undergirds the de-spatializing processes. What is ideological about Eisenman's architectural form in this respect is that in its proliferation of difference and differentiation, it excludes and even represses another dimension of global spatial production. Seen as a historical symptom, his architectural form gives expression to spatial contradictions under globalization and thereby serves as a registering apparatus of the *spatial unconscious* of globalization.

The Dialectic without *Aufhebung*

If Eisenman's architectural theory and practice give us a glimpse of the spatial contradictions of globalization, one of the foremost "valences" of Jameson's theoretical

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[55] Arguably, the foremost literary genre that represents this contradictory spatiality of globalization is the cyberpunk novel. William Gibson's cyberspace in *Neuromancer*, to take one quintessential example, points to the *post-spatial* and the *spatial* as seemingly different yet related internal mechanisms of the spatial apparatus of globalization. Despite its appearance as a simulated, hyperreal, and post-spatial site, cyberspace is actually a concrete material site that brings to expression the restructuring of global capitalism in general and, more specifically, the economic rivalry between U.S. and Japan in the eighties.

discourse for the contemporary world, I argue, lies in his mapping of the political

unconscious in which such spatial contradictions are registered. In his essay "Is Space

Political?" he uses in passing the phrase "spatial unconscious" (194). In *The Geopolitical*

Aesthetic he also talks about "a geopolitical unconscious" as he calls for attention to the

global world system (3-4). Although he does not elaborate on a "spatial unconscious," it

can be argued that such a concept is implied and assumed in his theorization of

postmodern globalization or of the contemporary political unconscious.[56] He once said,

"all thinking today is also, whatever else it is, an attempt to think the world system as

such" (*The Geopolitical Aesthetic* 4). One feels tempted to say something similar about

Jameson's own theoretical discourse: his stereoscopic and kaleidoscopic thinking is,

whatever else it is, also an attempt to think the spatial unconscious of global cultural

production. Having said that, I would also like to suggest that one of the things his recent

book, *Valences of the Dialectic*, aims to do is to illuminate and affirm the renewed

significance of the dialectic for X-raying and diagnosing the spatial unconscious of

globalization.

To be sure, Jameson is not the first to refashion a non-reductive mode of

dialectical thinking. A few decades earlier Adorno famously declares in *Negative*

Dialectic that "Dialectics is the consistent sense of nonidentity" and strains after a

"dialectics no longer 'glued' to identity" (5, 31). In comparison to Adorno's negative

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[56] In his "Periodizing Jameson," Wegner remarks, "*The Geopolitical Aesthetic* stands as an allegorical figuration of what a global cognitive mapping might look like" (269). To such a position I will only add that Jameson's book on "cinema and space in the world system," as well as his texts on postmodernism and globalization, offers a cognitive mapping of the *spatial unconscious* of globalization.

dialectics and his pessimistic or "melancholic" vision of politics, however, Jameson's undertaking is even more complicated and demanding in that he should cope with the deep-seated anti-dialectical and anti-totalizing sentiments in contemporary theoretical discourse and invent a new mode of dialectical thinking for the postmodern global stage of capitalism. This means, if anything, that our understanding of the dialectic cannot and should not remain the same after (post)structuralism's indiscriminate attacks on dialectical thought; and that if one is to reaffirm the valences of the dialectic for contemporary society, he should go all the way through those contemporary criticisms and come out on the other side. Such is the task Jameson sets for himself in *Valences of the Dialectic* (and his forthcoming book, *The Hegel Variations*). As he has done in his previous works, he responds attentively to (post)structuralist critiques here and provides an original and radical reading of Hegel and of the dialectic for the world today. Such a radical rewriting of the dialectic is encapsulated in the provocative subtitle for the Hegel chapters in *Valences*—"Hegel without *Aufhebung*" (73).

Regarding Jameson's theorization of "Hegel without *Aufhebung*," it is worth mentioning that Derrida, too, seeks to remodel Hegelian thinking in a somewhat similar direction, as witness his catchphrase "a Hegelianism without reserve." In *Writing and Difference* Derrida rebukes the implications of "conservation," "self-reproduction," "circulation," "sovereignty" and "abstract negativity" in dialectical sublation (*Aufhebung*) (255-257). Since nothing is wasted or left behind and everything conserved and saved for the later moment in the *Aufhebung*, Derrida likens Hegel to a great philosophical

speculator. Along the same lines, he further characterizes Hegel's *Phenomenology* as a work of *ontologics* in which no meaning is lost and non-meaning inconceivable:

> Absolute comicalness is the anguish experienced when confronted by expenditure on lost funds, by the absolute sacrifice of meaning: a sacrifice without return and without reserves. The notion of *Aufhebung* (the speculative concept par excellence, says Hegel, the concept whose untranslatable privilege is wielded by the German language) is laughable in that it signifies the *busying* of a discourse losing its breath as it reappropriates all negativity for itself, as it works the "putting at stake" into an *investment*, as it *amortizes* absolute expenditure…The blind spot of Hegelianism, *around* which can be organized the representation of meaning, is the *point* at which destruction, suppression, death and sacrifice constitute so irreversible an expenditure and a negativity *without reserve*—that they can no longer be determined as negativity in a process or a system. (*Writing and Difference* 257-259)

Derrida labels Hegel's dialectical economy of conservation as a *restricted* economy and contrasts it to George Bataille's *general* economy of excess, non-profit, "without return," and "without reserve," which opens itself to non-meaning, loss, death, play, and chance. In doing so, Derrida demands that a restricted, speculative philosophical economy be thrown open towards a general economy or a "Hegelianism without reserve." In *Margins of Philosophy* Derrida similarly rewrites Hegel's dialectic through recourse to semiology and ingeniously translates "Aufhebung" as "relève." This word comes from the verb *relever*, which means both to "lift up" and to "relieve." Where the first meaning of the word is intended to retain a sense of *Aufheben*, the second meaning refers to the process of substitution (as when someone relieves somebody else on duty). By translating *Aufhebung* into *relève*, Derrida aspires to inscribe the process of substitution and *différance* into the Hegelian dialectic ("The Pit and the Pyramid: Introduction to Hegel's Semiology" 106-107).

While Derrida labors to subsume the dialectic in general and Hegel's speculative, "restricted" economy in particular under a "general" economy, and thereby tends toward a "Hegelianism without reserve,"[57] Jameson moves almost in the opposite direction, trying to incorporate semiotic thinking into Hegel's dialectic. Derrida's deconstruction, having acknowledged Hegel as a "thinker of irreducible difference" and "the first thinker of writing" (*Of Grammatology* 26), virtually suppresses the radical spirit of the Hegelian dialectic. In contrast, Jameson, as he unearths "heterogeneities" in Hegel, undertakes the project of galvanizing Hegel's dialectic for the contemporary theoretical scene by demystifying the "myth of Hegel as a teleological thinker" (*The Hegel Variations* 132, 79). While he drives a sharp wedge between philosophy and theory in terms of the latter's "never-ending, never finished task and vocation of undermining philosophy and unraveling affirmative statements and propositions of all kinds" (*Valences* 59), he proposes to re-read Hegel as a non-metaphysical and de-ontologizing thinker.

To that end, Jameson sets out to rectify the common views that comprehend the dialectic in terms of synthesis, unity, and identity, as epitomized in the popularized yet erroneous tripartite schema of thesis-antithesis-synthesis. Berating such widespread misconceptions, he claims that the dialectic is not a conceptual method that miraculously reconciles opposites or bridges tensions, any more than it is a teleological or eschatological mental operation. The dialectic is rather "the injunction to keep faith with

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[57] In *Positions* Derrida pits *différance* against Hegel's dialectic and says, "If there were a definition of *différance*, it would be precisely the limit, the interruption, the destruction of the Hegelian *relève wherever* it operates" (40-41).

tension and contradiction" (*The Hegel Variations* 88). Thus he gainsays the prevalent

misapprehension of the dialectic by asking,

> But supposing the dialectic were not at all contemplative or subjectivizing
> in that sense? Supposing that on the contrary the reorganization of identity
> and difference into opposition were something like an active intervention
> into the flux and very precisely a kind of praxis in which the cosmological
> matter were reorganized into great loose forces, in order ultimately to
> drive them forward into the revolutionary clash of Contradiction itself?
> (*Valences* 119)

Jameson demonstrates that the dialectic is not, as the caricatured versions of the "identity

of identity and difference" have it, a simplistic and static amalgamation of identity and

difference, to say nothing of the crushing of difference and nonidentity. On the contrary,

he finds the dynamic force of the dialectic in its capacity to hold the very oppositions in

tension with each other without synthesizing them or folding one into the other.

Therefore he emphasizes that the foremost mechanism of the dialectic is contradiction

itself and proposes a "dialectic without a synthesis" (545; 290).

What is probably most original about Jameson's proposal of "Hegel without

Aufhebung" and the "dialectic without a synthesis" is that he reinterprets contradiction,

the very crux of dialectical thought, through the structuralist lens of binary oppositions.

As has been illustrated in the earlier discussions of Jameson, Derrida, and Eisenman, the

revolutionary aspect of structuralism rests upon its capacity to debunk the substantialist

and anthropomorphized notion of truth, origin, and presence by means of the relational

and differential structure of binary oppositions. As is suggested in his Saussurean

characterization "Hegel 'without positive terms'" (*The Hegel Variations* 48), Jameson

appropriates such a structuralist mode of thinking as a way to keep contradiction from

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reifying itself into a metaphysical substance or an anthropomorphic movement toward a

telos. While Deleuze contends that "Dialectic thrives on oppositions because it is

unaware of far more subtle and subterranean differential mechanisms: topological

displacements, typological variations" (*Nietzsche and Philosophy* 157), Jameson's "rather

structural reading" of Hegel (*The Hegel Variations* 127) aspires to explore a totally new

Hegel who is fully aware of those "differential" mechanisms and operations. Jameson

excavates such a possibility by reading the *Phenomenology* afresh: he detaches the text

from the so-called Hegelian system which has solidified into an identitarian and systemic

philosophical architectonics (132). In doing so, he reads the *Phenomenology* not as a kind

of "ontologics" as Derrida portrays it (*Writing and Difference* 257) nor as a

crystallization of metaphysical thinking, in which everything is homogenized and

sublimated in the name of Absolute Spirit; he reinterprets the book rather as a text of

heterogeneity, difference, and otherness (*The Hegel Variations* 131-132). He goes so far

as to hold that the *Phenomenology* is a "profoundly structuralist work *avant la lettre*"

(48).

Strategically though he integrates structuralist thinking into the dialectic, Jameson

is equally vigilant against the reifying nature of structuralism, not the least of which are

its conceptual closure and historical amnesia. Therefore he proposes to read Hegel's

dialectic as a mode of thought that includes radical aspects of structuralism within its

theoretical framework and yet does not freeze over into a philosophical system or an

ahistorical epistemological enclosure as such. A Hegel thus reinterpreted is presented like

this:

Hegel's own form-problem: he must somehow give content to his own analyses without perpetuating that content, allowing it to multiply into the thematics of any number of oppositions without allowing the terms of any of those oppositions to harden over into a specific philosophical thesis. Meanwhile, he must also practice the dialectical exercise of such oppositions without allowing the method to be reified either, as it does in structuralist doctrine, and as it threatens to do even in the characterization of it as dialectical (a word he avoids as much as possible, as we have seen). Differences without positive terms, as has been observed; but one may also characterize the method as the deconstructive evasion of positive propositions, or that Frankfurt School suspicion of positivisms and of affirmative positions of all kinds (for them ideological, for the philosophers' of Hegel's period "dogmatic"). (*The Hegel Variations* 84)

Deleuze once invoked the necessity for a "*philosophically* bearded Hegel" (*Difference and Repetition* xxi). In the above characteristically Jamesonian reading, Hegel emerges as the "great non- or anti-philosopher Hegel" (*Valences* 60), whose formal mechanism of dereifying conceptual thematization and positivism resonates with and even outshines some of the most innovative schools of thought in the twentieth century, including Saussure, structuralism, poststructuralism, and the Frankfurt School. The radical and fresh nature of Hegel's form-problem is such that Jameson suggests that even Deleuze's viscerally anti-Hegelian formula of "et…et…" is in the line of the Hegelian multiplication of oppositions without synthesis (89).[58] He also speculates on the possible

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[58] Deleuze's anti-Hegelian philosophy of nonidentity is examined further in Chapter 2, below. For Deleuze's "et…et…" see, above all, *Anti-Oedipus* (1-8). There, the "et…et…" formula is one of the defining characters of what Deleuze and Guattari call "desiring-machines": "Desiring-machines are binary machines, obeying a binary law or set of rules governing associations: one machine is always coupled with another. The productive synthesis, the production of production, is inherently connective in nature: 'and…' 'and then…' This is because there is always a flow-producing machine, and another machine connected to it that interrupts or draws off part of this flow…And because the first machine is in turn connected to another whose flow it interrupts or partially drains off, the binary series is linear in every direction" (5). When Jameson likens Hegel's unsystematic and non-synthesizing use of oppositions to Deleuze/Guattari's "et…et" formula, it has the double-pronged objectives—it neutralizes poststructuralist wholesale repudiations of Hegel's dialectic at the same time as it invigorates the latter.

correspondence between the dialectic and Derrida's theory of *différance* to the extent to

which he hypothesizes a "dialectical (rather than anti-dialectical) Derrida" (288) and asks

whether "the dialectic is already deconstruction, *avant la lettre*" (105).[59] Such a fresh

take on Hegel's *Phenomenology* might look close, at first glance at least, to Derrida's

proposal for a "Hegelianism without reserve." However, Jameson is quick to set his

position apart from such a stance by emphasizing that the dialectic intransigently refuses

be assimilated to deconstruction through its insistence on determinacy. He remarks, "We

cannot, in other words, fulfill such injunction against positivity by persisting in

indeterminacy: we must give ourselves over to the determinate and make our way

through such specific content and thematics until we come out the other side, a

requirement that seems to me to distinguish this dialectical from the more absolute

skepticism of deconstruction" (*The Hegel Variations* 85).

One suspects that the above remarkable passage on the Hegelian form-problem

applies to Jameson's own thought as much it does to Hegel's. For, as we have already

seen, from "Metacommentary" onwards, Jameson has strategically appropriated diverse

conceptual models in his refusal of any "ontologizing" systematicity and nevertheless

retained the dialectic as a determinate way to de-ontologize the "ontology" of other kinds

of thinking on one hand and the "ontology of the present" on the other. Not unlike

Hegel's form-problem, Jameson's own dialectical thinking has to keep itself from being

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[59] Jameson's placing Deleuze and Derrida in some new relationship with the dialectical tradition is also glimpsed in his recent essay "Marxism and Montage," in which he notes, "Many important intellectuals have—as it were, posthumously—endorsed Marxism: one thinks of Derrida's *Spectres of Marx* and of Deleuze's unrealized *Grandeur de Marx*" (109).

turned into "an economic ontology" while refraining from "a purely negative critique or deconstruction" (*Valences* 295). When he convincingly presents a "non-teleological Hegel" (*The Hegel Variations* 50) and advocates Hegel's dialectic as an unsystematic and de-ontologizing mode of thought, therefore, Jameson can be said to make a strong case for the valences of his own Marxian dialectic too. This is tantamount to saying that while Derrida censures the dialectic's "incapacity to think its outside" (*Margins of Philosophy* 107), and while Deleuze chides the dialectic's "powerless[ness] to create new ways of thinking and feeling" (*Nietzsche and Philosophy* 159), Jameson sets himself the onerous task of saving the dialectic from such charges and of demonstrating the valences of his own Marxian dialectic as a new mode of thinking in the contemporary world.

In view of the grave significance of globalization as a historically original phenomenon, it would not be too far-fetched to say it is more than anything else globalization for which Jameson labors to prove the relevance of the dialectic. The dialectic for globalization! Hegel for globalization! Marxism for globalization! Was it not these trios that have hastily been dumped into the dustbin of history in some of the most prevailing discourses on globalization? Jameson's symptomalogical method of bringing under his microscope what a certain historical epoch finds itself obliged to suppress and exclude is operative here. In the penultimate sentence of *Postmodernism*, he summarizes the primary strategy of the book as an "attempt to see whether by systemizing something that is resolutely unsystematic, and historicizing something that is resolutely ahistorical, one couldn't outflank it and force a historical way at least of thinking about that" (418). One could similarly read *Valences of the Dialectic* as a book in which Jameson inquires

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whether by thinking in a dialectical, Hegelian, and Marxian way something that is determinedly anti-dialectical, anti-Hegelian, and anti-Marxist, one couldn't chart the complex contours of the world today. Typically Jamesonian, such a theoretical strategy is remarkably deployed in his earlier essays on the present, "Globalization and Political Strategy" and "Globalization as Philosophical Issue," now reprinted in *Valences of the Dialectic*. In those essays he experiments with the Hegelian dialectics of universal and particular, part and whole, and identity and difference, as a means to delineate some of the central contradictions of global capitalism, such as the tensions between the national and the global, between the proliferation of difference and the worldwide processes of standardization, and the like. By doing so, he insists on a "return to Hegel" in order to bring to new light the complex dimensions of globalization and its aftermath ("Globalization as a Philosophical Issue" 75-76). His interrogation of antinomies in postmodernism is also squarely in the line of such a Hegelian effort to scrutinize antinomies as expressions of contradictions in globalization.

Now this line of inquiry is pushed even further in *Valences of the Dialectic*, where he aims to revitalize the dialectic as a critical mode of thinking that is best suited to the study of the unresolvable internal contradictions of the global stage of capitalism. To do so, Jameson reminds us that Marx and Engels, most noticeably in the *Manifesto*, illustrate with exemplary perspicuity the at once progressive and destructive features of capitalism. It is only through such a stereoscopic perspective on both positive and negative sides in a given phenomenon that we can properly cope with the paradoxically contradictory and contradictorily paradoxical dynamic of capitalism. Or as he writes,

> Only a dialectical view can do justice to this fundamental ambiguity or
> ambivalence, which is far from being mere indeterminacy, and which can
> be seen to recapitulate itself in the positions on postmodernism and
> postmodernity today, where it seems simplistic either to welcome the new
> social pluralism of the postmodern or to regret its apolitical one-
> dimensionality in any univocal way. Thus, the fundamental ambivalence
> of capital has clearly now been modified by its transformation into this
> third or postmodern stage; and it has seemed to me that only the Marxian
> dialectic remained capable of thinking the system adequately, without
> ideological oversimplifications. (407-408)

Jameson is of the opinion that our political intervention remains an enfeebled one at best

if we do not comprehend this fundamentally contradictory dynamic of globalization, and

that only the Marxian dialectic can do justice to those contradictions. At the same time as

he shows that the dialectic is in no way an onto-teleological mode of thinking and to the

contrary keeps faith with contradiction and tension, Jameson now claims that such

stereoscopic vantage points are what makes the dialectic most fitting for the

contemporary world in which capitalism is in full force.

This position appears to recapitulate, with some slight variations, his earlier

claim in *The Political Unconscious* that Marxism is the "absolute horizon of all reading

and all interpretation" by virtue of its capacity to draw together "two apparently

inconsistent accounts" of synchronicity and diachronicity as the "twin perspectives" our

mental operation takes on History (17, 96-97).[60] Just as Jameson, back then,

counterpoints Marxism's "translational" mechanism that holds these "twin perspectives"

in a simultaneous focus, he in *Valences in the Dialectic* similarly gives emphasis to

Marxism's stereoscopic vision of the order of things. The unsurpassable horizon of the

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[60] For his similar observations on the "twin perspectives" of synchronic and diachronic thinking, see also
The Prison-House of Language, p. 216.

Marxian dialectic, Jameson asserts, comes from this dual standpoint—a "politics of ambivalence and ambiguity" as he calls it (408). With such a claim we are back at the heart of the "contradiction" in his theoretical discourse with which this chapter began. That is to say, *Valences of the Dialectic*, like Jameson's other texts, divulges the seemingly irresolvable contradiction between his will against systematicity and his insistence on the Marxian dialectic as the ultimate mode of theory-and-practice. However, is it not in the capacity to hold contradictions in a simultaneous focus, or "the revolutionary clash of Contradiction itself" Jameson calls it in the book (119), that he finds the foremost valences of the dialectic? In this sense, the "dilemma" or "contradiction" in Jameson's work, upon which many critics seem to fixate, is something that he is the least interested in resolving or reconciling. Rather, as this chapter has so far tried to show, Jameson embraces contradictions in tension with one another, in order to make the very tension itself cast a new light on the multiple and complex dimensions of a certain phenomenon. Therefore, instead of ascribing such seeming inconsistency in Jameson's work to an epistemological *aporia* (as Derrida, for example, does about the theoretical impasse of deconstruction), I propose to read it in the context of the very *historical contradictions* in which Jameson's theoretical discourse is entangled and with which he is at such pains to grapple.

Particularly worth scrutinizing is Jameson's vindication of the "imperative to totalize," which for him is nothing but an imperative to make connections between seemingly isolated and fragmented elements in our social reality and our experience thereof (*The Hegel Variations* 131). Having nothing to do with a totalitarian or repressive

project, totality is rather to be identified as contradiction as such and seen as a "non-thing," a "non-object," and an "absent totality" (*Valences* 589, 592). In "Absent Totality" he also unequivocally states that although nothing can be outside the force field of totalities, they are always *absent* (122). Inasmuch as the "imperative to totalize" is accompanied by such a problematized and de-totalized notion of totality, the pervasive aversion to totality needs to be reconsidered. As Jameson explains,

> "Waging war on totality" seems somewhat misplaced when it is a question of intellectual systems (such as Marxism) for which the very representation of the social totality is itself fundamentally problematic: the imperative to totalize and to achieve a representation of totality by way of the very dilemma of representation itself—this process seems less plausibly characterized as totalitarian than the specific party structure and mass politics such critics also have in mind. (*Valences* 390)

For Jameson it is a peculiar historical phenomenon that many contemporary thinkers direct their assaults at the theoretical "imperative to totalize" when the real target of criticism should be the all-integrating and totalizing processes of globalization and the all-pervasive grip of capital on the entire globe. When the social system itself thus becomes a totalizing one under the regime of global capital, it is a political as well as intellectual imperative to grasp its dynamic in its entirety and totality. There is no reason to jump to the conclusion that the project of tackling the totalizing global system is unavoidably totalitarian for, as Jameson puts it, "it is capitalism which totalizes, which constitutes a total system, not its critics" (286). Or, as he writes in *Postmodernism*, the unifying and totalizing force should be identified with not Marxism, nor the Hegelian Absolute Spirit, nor the party, nor Stalinism, but simply capital itself (410). Seen thus, even if Jameson's theoretical discourse does indeed display a totalizing thrust, then it is

not to be understood as his metaphysical will to a total conceptual system, but needs to be examined in the context of the totalizing nature of the very historical situations he engages with. In this regard, the often criticized theoretical contradiction in Jameson's work is to be seen less as a conceptual error or inconsistency on his part than as part of the *historical* contradictions of our time. As the science of capitalism, in other words, Marxism worth the name stands and falls with its committed intervention in the totalizing logic of capital. And if the dialectic is both "situational (situation-specific)" and "reflexive (or conscious of its own thought processes)" and if its fundamental nature and strategies change according to the modifications in the objects or ideologies it seeks to comprehend or challenge (322), the contemporary Marxian dialectic should address global capitalism that has now turned itself into a totality and a market fundamentalism (even if such a commitment risks a formal contradiction).

If the dialectic as a critical mode of thought is not absolute or transhistorical, but instead situational and historical through and through, then it follows that the dialectic cannot and should not remain severed from, and independent of, the all-too-capricious unfolding of history. If the contemporary world has undergone some structural metamorphoses, as Jameson and other theorists argue, the dialectic is bound to alter its nature and strategies accordingly in a way that explains and confronts the changed historical reality. It seems logical, then, that alongside his theorization of the contemporary world as a global stage of capitalism, Jameson demands a "new or third-stage Marxism" (372) or a "postmodern Marxism" (409). What, then, would the postmodern or global-stage Marxian dialectic be like? Extensive attention to the global

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totality, to be sure, will be on its agenda. In addition, insofar as Jameson insists that the

predominant feature of contemporary globalization lies in its historically original spatial

configurations, the new dialectic is expected to address such spatial issues in the world

today.

Global Capitalism and the Spatial Dialectic

Quite fittingly, *Valences of the Dialectic* sketches out a *spatial dialectic* that

restructures the dialectic along spatial lines. Jameson observes that the history of Western

philosophy has oftentimes been undergirded by the ideological belief that consciousness

in its moment of true reflexivity is at one with itself and its object. In such a philosophical

tradition, the construction of self-consciousness as a moment of identity and simultaneity

both within the knowing self and in its relation to the world has been thought of as a

primarily temporal process, of which the conventional *Bildungsroman* and Beethoven's

sonata form can be said to be (no less ideological) literary and musical expressions.[61]

While the movement of becoming self-conscious or becoming-I was understood

temporally, however, scant attention has been given to the way such a process suppresses

its own spatial dynamic. For this reason Jameson suggests that the new dialectic should

reframe the coming-into-being of self-consciousness along spatial as much as temporal

axes and thereby reveal the process whereby the very idea of identity and simultaneity in

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[61] Chapter 2, below, deals with the ways in which Adorno and Deleuze unveil the ideological aspects of
Hegel's philosophical system; and in which their anti-Hegelian forms of philosophizing benefit
respectively from Schoenberg's and Boulez's rewriting of the Beethovenian musical grammar.

the temporal voyage of the contemplating subject is constructed only at the expense of obliterating spatial difference/differential space. As he aptly points out, "It is space which gives such operations their content, while it was time which encouraged the illusions of simultaneity: in other words, it is space which is the source of difference and time which is that of identity" (69).

In regards to Jameson's reconfiguration of the dialectic, his earlier theorization in *Marxism and Form* of the temporal-spatial dynamic of dialectical thought is instructive. In this arguably "most self-consciously dialectical text" in his entire oeuvre (Homer, *Fredric Jameson* 24), Jameson pits dialectical thinking against Anglo-American philosophy—the "mixture of political liberalism, empiricism, and logical positivism" (x). As he thus draws a line of flight out of the epistemological and conceptual closure of Anglo-American philosophy, he charts the distinctive scaffolding of the dialectic characterizing its mental operations as *tautology*:

> Dialectical thinking is therefore not only thought to the second power, thought about preexisting thought, but also the latter's fulfillment, its realization and abolition in a sense yet to be described. For to the degree to which it places the older mental operation or problem-solving in a new and larger context, it converts the problem itself into a solution, no longer attempting to solve the dilemma head on, according to its own terms, but rather coming to understand the dilemma itself as the mark of the profound contradictions latent in the very mode of posing the problem. (340-341)

When faced with a problem, dialectical thinking does not try to solve it head-on but rather interrogates the intellectual operation or the historical condition in which the problem is implicated. As is exemplified in Jameson's "metacommentary," dialectical thinking shifts the framework in which the problem is posed and thereby lets the problem

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itself illuminate its own condition of possibility afresh. Since dialectical thinking thus makes the problem address itself and turns the very problem into a kind of solution, the two seemingly separate, independent states or propositions (problem vs. solution) are shown by dialectical fashion to have been at one with each other all along. So Jameson explains that the dialectic makes a thought process eventually unravel or cancel itself. Because the dialectic thus abolishes the initially established dualism of problem and solution and nullifies the act of thought, it is a "tautological" thought process.

However, that the dialectic is tautological in no way means that its temporality and spatiality is predicated upon a simple form of identity or repetition. Precisely the opposite: the temporal and spatial form of dialectical thinking is to be conceived as something constantly moving in time and space. That is to say, the seemingly repetitive and identitarian mode of dialectical thought in actuality brings with it difference and differentiation, both temporal and spatial. This explains why the chronotopic trajectory of dialectical thinking should be distinguished both from the monotonous identity or linearity of metaphysical philosophy and from the heterogeneous yet no less monochrome repetition, circularity, and difference of much of contemporary thought. Such a unique temporal and spatial dynamic of dialectical thinking is suggested when Jameson expounds on metacommentary:

> What is wanted is a kind of mental procedure that suddenly shifts gears, that throws everything in an inextricable tangle one floor higher and turns the very problem itself…into its own solution…by widening its frame in such a way that it now takes in its own mental processes as well as the object of those processes. In the earlier, naive state, we struggle with the object in question; in this heightened and self-conscious one, we observe

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our own struggles and patiently set about characterizing them. ("Metacommentary" 4)

The dialectical thought process, traditionally associated with a linear and evolutionary temporal movement, is here given a spatial and differential dimension. As dialectical thinking moves in time, it also moves in space. Therefore, dialectical thinking as a theoretical form is far from being linear, circular, or cyclical. Rather, it might be best to think of its mental operation in terms of a spiral, a form which accounts for a spatial as well as temporal movement and whose ever-enlarging movement decenters the binarism of time and space and involves the becoming-space of time and the becoming-time of space. When thus viewed as a spiral movement, dialectical thinking is simultaneously tautological and differential and simultaneously temporal and spatial. As a spiralling form of thinking, then, the dialectic holds both identity and difference, both time and space, both change and stasis, and so on, in their very contradictions and tensions.

Perhaps this is the backdrop against which Jameson's insistence in *Valences of the Dialectic* upon the validity of the dialectic for the contemporary age should be understood. That is to say, if the dialectic has renewed valences in the contemporary world, it has much to do with its stereoscopic vantage point from which to look at the structural contradictions of a certain phenomenon. In this regard it is rather telling that in a manner similar to his characterization of the dialectic, Jameson theorizes the historical processes of postmodern globalization in terms of a spiral movement. In his effort to galvanize the Hegelian dialectic for our understanding of the present, he writes,

I propose that, with the hindsight of Marx's dialectic in *Capital*, we understand this progression in the sense of enlargement, as of *a spiral*

> *rather than of a circular or cyclical process*…Hegel's system itself
> thereby calls in its very structure for the subsequent enlargements of later
> history: first the moment of imperialism (or the "modern" in the technical
> sense) and now that of globalization. These subsequent enlargements are
> very much in the spirit of the Hegelian dialectic and also explains why
> Hegel's own practice is no longer to be associated with dilemmas of
> "modernity," as Pippin would have it, but must now be reconjugated in
> terms of a world market that is only in the process of finding and inventing
> the conceptuality appropriate to it. (*The Hegel Variations* 115-116;
> emphasis added)

As is the case with his dialectical theory of realism, modernism, and postmodernism (or

even with his three concentric hermeneutic circles put forth in *The Political Unconscious*),

the movement of capital is understood here in terms of the enlargement of its temporal

and spatial horizons. The history of capitalism, for Jameson, is a spiral process, or better

still, a historical process of totalization (without a telos), into which ever more expansive

and extensive parts of the globe are integrated. Particularly when such a totalizing

process concretizes in the form of the world market today, it falls to the dialectic to

engage with time and space, identity and difference, stasis and change, and other

contradictory structural dynamics of capitalism in their totality and tension alike.

Accordingly, the dialectic Jameson practices throughout his entire work strives to

challenge and tackle the internal contradictions of the present and the latter's political

unconscious. This is another sense in which Jameson's theoretical form and its

contradictions are at one with the *historical* contradictions of the contemporary world he

cognitively maps.

In order to place in perspective such a stereoscopic mode of dialectical thinking,

the Derridean *leitmotif* that has been interspersed throughout this chapter in many

Jamesonian moments perchance needs to make its last appearance. For Jameson's call for

a spatial dialectic is somewhat comparable to Derrida's standpoint on the repression of

space in the Hegelian *Aufhebung*. In his "semiological" critique of Hegel, Derrida calls

into question the way in which the dialectic completes itself as a temporal/temporizing

process by negating space:

> Now, as Hegel shows elsewhere, the *relève* (*Aufhebung*) of space is time.
> The latter is the truth of what it negates—space—in a movement of *relève*.
> Here, the truth or teleological essence of the sign as the *relève* of sensory-
> spatial intuition will be the sign as time, the sign in the element of
> temporalization…time is the *relève*—that is, in Hegelian terms, the truth,
> the essence (*Wesen*) as Being-past (*Gewesenheit*)—of space. Time is the
> true, essential, past space, space as it will have been thought, that is, *relève*.
> *What space will have meant is time*…it is only in time, or rather as time
> itself that this *relève* can find its passageway. (*Margins of Philosophy* 89)

According to Derrida, the dialectical journey of Absolute Spirit and its culmination in the

Aufhebung are often portrayed as a temporal movement to truth. The putative presence,

essence, and identity of that truth are possible only if space and its differentiating

mechanism remain suppressed. Space does not have any significance in such a mental

operation save as something to be sublated in the temporal march to absolute truth. As

long as Derrida's notion of spac*ing* as an unceasing operation of space as *différance* and

as "nonidentity-with-itself" (*Dissemination* 119) is in principle an effort to bring into

view this suppression of space and to deconstruct the temporal and temporizing process

of the dialectic and its seeming presence and immediacy, his critique of the repression of

space in the dialectic is perceptive and of great relevance to what Jameson calls the

spatial dialectic.

Compared with Jameson's spatial dialectic, however, Derrida's spacing begs the question as to whether it deals with the way in which space has become a dominant apparatus in its own right in a kind of return of the repressed (or in a dialectical reversal) in the contemporary mode of globalization. Not only does Derrida's spacing not sufficiently explain the spatial turn and the increased strategic value of space in the globalizing world; but his insistence upon deconstructive "nonlocus" and "noncenter" (*Writing and Difference* 292) can also potentially blind us to the totalizing and spatializing mechanism of globalization. Having the merit of casting a new light on the interrelated process of the "becoming-space of time" and the "becoming-time of space" (*Margins of Philosophy* 13), Derrida's theory of differential spacing should also be recast so as to illustrate the *historical* transformation of the time-space nexus, according to which, as Jameson often points out, space was often grasped in and through time in modernity whereas time is spatialized in postmodernity (*Valences* 392; "The End of Temporality" 695-697; "Interview with Michael Speaks" 123-125).

With that said, Jameson's spatial dialectic seems closer to Edward Soja's effort. Like Jameson, Soja challenges the predominantly temporal model of the dialectic and demands a "dialectical materialism that is simultaneously historical and spatial," something he alternatively calls a "socio-spatial dialectic" or a "historico-geographical materialism" (76-78).[62] Soja's spatialization of the dialectic later appears in the name of

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[62] In his interview with Paik Nak-chung, held in Seoul on October 28, 1989, Jameson mentions something that appears to allude to Soja's project: "One of the most interesting newer forms of Marxism emerging is coming from radical geographers and is what I would call a spatial Marxism, an analysis of both the urban and of geography, and of geopolitics. It seems to me that that kind of spatial analysis is something to be

"trialetics," a term he uses to describe a "mode of dialectical reasoning that is more inherently spatial than the conventional temporally-defined dialectics of Hegel and Marx" (*Thirdspace* 10). He relates "trialectics" to what he calls "thirding-as-Othering," with the aim of questioning the "completeness and temporal sequencing of thesis/antithesis/synthesis" and recomposing the dialectic through "an intrusive disruption that explicitly spatializes dialectical reasoning" (60-61). Despite the undeniable importance of Soja's endorsement of a postmodern "historico-geographical" dialectic, one might be justified in feeling that his spatial theory is still haunted by what Derrida might call the *presence* of space and does not fully consider the salience of nonlocus or non-place in global spatial production. In other words, Soja's "reassertion of space" in critical thinking should be pushed further in such a way that confronts the non-spatial or post-spatial phenomena of postmodern globalization and their relation to the postmodern "spatial turn" he is arguing for. No less important, his reading of the dialectic is not dialectical enough, in that his one-dimensional understanding of the dialectic (as a sequence of thesis-antithesis-synthesis) does not adequately excavate the valences of the Hegelian and Marxian dialectic for the question of space and spatiality.

When placed in dialogue with Soja's "historico-geographical dialectic" and Derrida's spacing of the dialectic, the dialectical nature of Jameson's spatial thinking becomes a little clearer. While Soja and Derrida concentrate on either spatial or post-

developed" (93). In "Marxism and Postmodernism," published in the same year, he mentions Soja's *Postmodern Geographies* as "the account of the direction of that new spatiality implicit in the pfostmodern" (49). Given that Soja's book was published earlier that year, the "spatial Marxism" mentioned in Jameson's interview with Paik most likely refers to Soja's book, among others.

spatial mechanisms, Jameson is at such pains to grasp such contradictory spatial configurations together in the historical context of the evolution of the global world system. While he is attentive to space as a cultural dominant in the postmodern society of the spectacle, Jameson simultaneously gives emphasis to the "post-geographical and post-spatial" phenomena of globalization (*Valences* 378-379). Insofar as the dialectic, while keeping faith with tension and contradiction, moves toward a "'strangling' of singularity" (108), the Jamesonian spatial dialectic has the advantage of holding together the seemingly conflicting spatial phenomena without privileging or canceling one single dimension. To "transcode" this spatial dialectic into his earlier theory of postmodern antinomies, it can be said that Jameson maps out a spatial antinomy in globalization and shows that focusing exclusively on one single dimension of the antinomy and repressing the other is inadequate and even symptomatic of our historical epoch. Here it is important to note that Jameson's imperative that the spatializing and the de-spatializing should be grasped *simultaneously* by way of their dilemmas and contradictions is at one with his "imperative to totalize"—his insistence that global capitalism be tackled in its totality (with the proviso that that totality is regarded as being fundamentally problematic and contradictory). Just as his cartography of postmodern antinomies is embedded in his insistence that we draw out the social totality of the postmodern world by way of its contradictory features, so his spatial dialectic is an injunction that we should address the (absent) totality of globalization through attention to its spatial contradictions.

When considered against the backdrop of his cartography of the political unconscious of postmodernism and his "imperative to totalize," Jameson's spatial

dialectic can also be considered as a diagnosis of the *spatial unconscious* of globalization inasmuch as he labors to lay bare the ways in which the prevailing antipathy toward totality fails to see the spatial system of global capitalism in its entirety and instead lays an emphasis either on the non-spatial and the post-spatial or on the spatial and the spatializing logic of globalization. In opposition to such a one-dimensional mode of understanding, the new spatial dialectic Jameson envisions and practices grapples with the contradictory spatial features of the present at the very historical conjuncture at which the neo-liberal celebration of the global market and the antinomian and nominalist *Zeitgeist* of the present blind us to the contradictory dynamics of global capitalism. In the *Valences* Jameson does not fully spell out what the new, global-stage Marxian spatial dialectic might look like. Yet, as has so far been demonstrated in this chapter, Jameson's entire work that cognitively maps contemporary epistemological, economic, social, and cultural contours provides a highly exemplary form of spatial dialectic that comes to terms with the spatial contradictions of the contemporary world and its political unconscious.

If Jameson's dialectic undertakes such a mapping of the multifarious and contradictory "prison-house" of the contemporary world, it is first and foremost in order to break out of that asphyxiating historical conjuncture. When even Adorno's typically modernist hope of sending a message in a bottle is denied, as there seems to be no "outside" to the perpetual present of the postmodern global system, Jameson strives persistently to draw out the contradictions of *this* history and *this* space, in an effort to break open the closure of the "ontologies of the present." His determined commitment to

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the *non-place* of the present is, however, at one with his will to revitalize the idea of

Utopia (*no-place*) as the "absolute opposite of our history as a whole" (*Valences* 612).

His writing as a whole registers and enacts this dialectic of *non-place* and *no-place*. In

closing this lengthy study of Jameson's cartography of the spatial unconscious of the

present, therefore, we may say apropos of Jameson's writing what he himself mentions

about Koolhaas:

> The problem to be solved is that of breaking out of the windless present of the postmodern back into real historical time, and a history made by human beings…Yet this alone is not enough: a breaking of the sound barrier of History is to be achieved in a situation in which the historical imagination is paralysed and cocooned, as though by a predator's sting: no way to burst through into the future, to reconquer difference, let alone Utopia, except by writing yourself into it, but without turning back. It is the writing that is the battering ram, the delirious repetition that hammers away at this sameness running through all the forms of our existence (space, parking, shopping, working, eating, building) and pummels them into admitting their own standardized identity with each other, beyond colour, beyond texture, the formless blandness that is no longer even the plastic vinyl or rubber of yesteryear. The sentences are the boom of this repetitive insistence, this pounding on the hollowness of space itself; and their energy now foretells the rush and the fresh air, the euphoria of a relief, an orgasmic breaking through into time and history again, into a concrete future. ("Future City" 77)

CHAPTER TWO

GLOBAL/AMERICAN CULTUER AS (NON)IDENTITY
Or, the Dialectic of Adorno's Monadology and Deleuze's Nomadology

"The American Adorno" *avec* **Deleuze**

"The sky above the port was the color of television, turned to a dead channel," so writes William Gibson in the opening page of *Neuromancer* (1). This arresting image of the sky at dusk determines the overall mood of the now classical cyberpunk novel and typifies the nature of both the Ninsei enclave where the main character Chase lives and the digitized virtual reality called cyberspace or "the matrix." In this world of "an intricate dance of desire and commerce" (11), high technology, multinational corporations, glaring spectacles, and libidinal excitement are swarming. Here, even revolutionary modern cultural forms are incorporated into business and commerce for mass consumption—"A pair of bulbous Disney-styled table lamps perched awkwardly on a low Kandinsky-look coffee table in scarlet-lacquered steel." And unmistakable signs of the breakup of the personal or the private render any question of authenticity in life— "Was it authentic?"—not terribly meaningful (12, 10). Only lethargic euphoria and violence permeate every nook and corner of the globalized society and even the innermost part of human beings. In this dystopian "bodiless exultation of cyberspace" we soon find Chase etherized upon a bed with his nervous system seriously damaged:

"Strapped to a bed in a Memphis hotel, his talent burning out micron by micron, he hallucinated for thirty hours" (6).

Compare this dreary image characterized by the "television sky" and the dehumanized space with T. S. Eliot's opening lines in "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (1915), which depict a no less dismal urban space at dusk where "a patient etherized upon a table" can be looked upon as an objective correlative for Prufrock himself, who has to measure out his life with trivial everyday commodities. Even though Prufrock is unlikely to "disturb" the universe in which he resides, he constantly feels the irresistible temptation of posing "an overwhelming question" to the world (*Selected Poems* 11). And if his challenge rings hollow against the backdrop of coldness and indifference of society and other people, the persistent inquiry into his anxiety-ridden situation seems to imagine desperately a way out of the reified world. Let us go then, you and I, and compare this poem with John Everett Millais' painting *Ophelia* (1852) where there is another human being, this time lying on a water bed, etherized by the breath of death. In this painting, now one of the most popular works among tourists and available in various forms of postcard or poster in the gift shop at the Tate Gallery, London, Millais uses his realistic method nicknamed "pictorial eco-system" to prismatically detail the beauty of the natural world and the latter's integration with the human subject who creeps into its womb. He thus re-presents a harmony between nature and man that Gertrude points to in *Hamlet* when she reports Ophelia's "muddy death" (IV.vii.182).

What comes to the fore in this arbitrary juxtaposition of the three texts are three disparate social spaces, roughly classifiable as premodern, modern, and postmodern, in

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which individual subjects have different relationships to their societies. Just as Prufrock says he is not Prince Hamlet and just as Chase is not Prufrock, so too the worlds they belong to differ noticeably from one another. If one recalls here Georg Lukács' idealized vision of Greek literature as a locus where the I and the Not-I as well as the subject and the world were relatively reconciled, and where the possibility of access to a social totality and likewise the problem of representation or *Darstellung* were not so critical an issue as it would later become, this now somewhat outdated perspective on society and its subjects may serve as a yardstick with which the relationships between particular and universal, part and whole, self and other in the later periods are to be measured. In marked contrast to such a holistic and unitary *Weltanschauung* as that represented in Greek epic poetry, Lukács claims, modern cultural forms, including most notably the novelistic form, are "the mirror-image of a world gone out of joint" (*The Theory of the Novel* 29-39, 17). This disjointed and fragmented totality seems irrevocable now in global postmodernity, and as Martin Jay observes, if one had to find one common denominator existent among a wide array of contemporary thinkers, it would be "hostility toward totality" (*Marxism and Totality* 514-515).

In such a situation where the notion of totality has come under attack from nearly all ends of the philosophical and theoretical spectrum, Theodor W. Adorno is an exceptional figure in that his critique of totality does not necessarily lead to a wholesale

abandonment of that category.[1] Chapter 1 has already shown that Fredric Jameson, while

taking a historicizing stance on the "war on totality" waged by the likes of Jean-François

Lyotard, inquires why such an anti-totalizing spirit comes into new prominence at the

very historical conjuncture at which global capital aspires to attain a totality. Jameson

suggests the possibility that the concept of totality goes *underground* as it were and still

has a "continuing but now *unconscious* effectivity" as a way of grasping and confronting

our current historical condition ("Foreword" xii). Jameson's intervention thereby seeks to

revitalize totality as a concept through which to chart the complex map of the globalizing

world. Meanwhile, he also reconceptualizes the notion of totality as a "non-thing" and a

"non-object" (*Valences* 191) and argues for the valence of "the imperative to totalize and

to achieve a representation of totality by way of the very dilemma of representation

itself" (*Valences* 390). In a comparable manner Adorno problematizes the idea of totality

and reframes totality not simply as a dogmatic and repressive concept, but in conjunction

with the increasingly totalizing mode of capitalistic development. In doing so, his

philosophy attests to a simultaneous crisis of, and commitment to, totality. Not unlike

Jameson's cartography of postmodern global culture, Adorno's bleak picture of the

Culture Industry is thus predicated upon his determined effort to rethink the seemingly

reified and fragmented contours of the world through a non-metaphysical notion of

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[1] It should be made clear at the outset, however, that Adorno by no means endorses the Lukácsian notion of totality. See his "Reconciliation under Duress" in *Aesthetics and Politics*, pp. 151-176 and Jay's "Adorno and the Lukácsean Concept of Totality" in *Marxism and Totality*, pp. 241-275. Yet, as Edward Said discerningly observes, there is no doubt that Adorno is in his predecessor's debt. For Said's assessment of Adorno's attitude toward Lukács, see *On Late Style: Music and Literature against the Grain*, p. 18.

totality, a totality which embraces "fractures, uneven terrains, and incommensurabilities," to use Shu-mei Shih's pertinent description (1349).

The renewed significance that Adorno's critical interrogation of totality holds for us is that his accusation of "the totality of the culture industry" (*Dialectic of Enlightenment* 126, 136) affords numerous insights into some of the most prominent features of the globalizing processes we are currently witnessing. A plethora of social, cultural, and economic phenomena Adorno identifies in the Culture Industry—the list includes, not least of all, the coming of visual culture, the dissolution of authentic art, the end of autonomous subjectivity, the fusion of culture and business, and the spread of the entertainment industry all over the world—is enough to make his work a harbinger of later seminal texts on postmodern global culture. What is of greater importance, especially for the present study of global American culture, is that Adorno's reflections on the Culture Industry and of the "damaged life" are inseparable from his exile experience in America and his intense contact with American culture. It is not only *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and *Minima Moralia* that were written in America. As Adorno later acknowledges, "I believe 90 percent of all that I've published in Germany was written in America" (qtd. in Jay, "The Frankfurt School in Exile" 41). Moreover, as David Jenemann reminds us in *Adorno in America*, Adorno lived in American for almost fifteen years and was an American citizen for nearly a decade (xv). Although Adorno's work is inextricably bound up with America and the burgeoning of the Culture Industry in the country, Jenemann points out, traditional scholarship has often dismissed him as a retrogressive thinker, instead of excavating the meaning of America for Adorno's critique

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of "the rise of a global 'peudo-American' culture" (xxi-xxii). In response to such a trend, Jenemann calls our attention to "the American Adorno" (xxxi) and says, "Now, perhaps more than when he was an American citizen, Americans need Adorno" (190).

Jenemann's fresh take on "Adorno in America" can be realigned with the ongoing efforts to re-examine American culture through what Gayatri Spivak terms "planetarity."[2] Just as Spivak's planetarity serves to reconfigure strictly nation-based cultural studies, dwelling on the importance of America for Adorno and of Adorno for America can "planetarize" the horizons of American culture and cultural studies as well as Adorno scholarship. It is worth mentioning here that in her theorization of planetarity, Spivak invokes its uncanny nature by noting that "I cannot forget the Freud urges us to investigate the uncanny because we are ourselves *Fremdsprächig*, 'foreign speakers'" (*Death of a Discipline* 22). Interestingly, Adorno advances a similar view: when he reflects on his exile experience in America, he puts it, "it is part of morality not to be at home in one's home" (qtd. in Said, "Reflections on Exile" 185). If it is recalled that Spivak characterizes planetarity as "making our home *unheimlich* or uncanny" (74), Adorno's comments dovetail with Spivak's planetarity. In this sense, to rethink Adorno as an "American" thinker and to factor in "the American Adorno" can become an *uncanny* act that estranges the familiar parameters of American cultural production and enlarges the accustomed purviews of American literary and cultural studies.

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[2] For my overview of Spivak's notion of "planetarity" and its impact on the reshaping of the field imaginary of American literary and cultural studies are dealt with in Prolegomena, above.

Taking this line of reasoning as a point of departure, this chapter reads Adorno as an "American" thinker and discusses the ways that he simultaneously departs from Hegel's metaphysics of totality and identity and engages with the totalizing metaphysics of the American Culture Industry. In thus tracing Adorno's complex problematic of totality, the following discussion examines how Adorno, in his rewriting of Hegel's identitarian thinking, draws on Arnold Schoenberg's twelve-tone technique that dismantles a traditional or Beethovenian mode of musical composition; and how he finds in Schoenberg's music an innovative form of writing for his philosophy of nonidentity. As I illuminate how Adorno's multifaceted critique of totality is enacted on the level of both "content" and "form," I bring into my discussion another contemporary philosopher, Gilles Deleuze. Although Adorno and Deleuze are rarely paired together, Deleuze's philosophy has many close parallels with Adorno's in that his thinking is predicated upon a strong aversion to Hegelian metaphysics and also experiments with music in search of a non-totalizing philosophical form. In addition, as is the case with Adorno's attack on the metaphysics of the Culture Industry, Deleuze's critique of identity and totality is extended to the homogenizing and standardizing processes of global capitalism. While looking at how these two thinkers cast a new light on the complex social, cultural, and historical conditions of globalization, I examine another important facet of their philosophies of nonidentity, namely their diverging perspectives on American culture. Whereas Adorno thought of America as culmination of the Culture Industry, Deleuze praised American culture as a superlative exemplar of deterritorialization. I propose to bring these seemingly incompatible views into conversation as a way to critique the

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historical configurations of contemporary American culture as a form of "identity" and to envision a new utopian space of nonidentity. Insofar as Deleuze, like Adorno's imperative to "not be at home in one's home," stresses the importance of "Being like a foreigner in one's own language" (*Dialogues II* 4), their contrasting perspectives on America will enable us to reconsider what American culture is now and what American culture can possibly be in the future.

Adorno's Negative Dialectics and the Metaphysics of the Present

Adorno's perhaps most poignant work, *Minima Moralia*, was written in the United States and based upon his exile experience in the country. In the opening of the text Adorno evokes as the foremost objective of philosophy the "teaching of the good life" (15) and deplores the relative neglect of the latter in his time. As is suggested in one of the epigraphs, "Life does not live," and in the subtitle to the text, "Reflections from Damaged Life," there is a sense in which this book can be read as a diagnosis of the "vanished life" and the "damaged society" (59) in the mid-twentieth century, especially in the context of his experience as émigré in America. As such, his study analyzes (and even anticipates in some sense) a mode of life in the gradual transition from the modern to what is later called the postmodern, bringing into relief the intensification of capitalist domination and the latter's impact on society and individuals. He thus ascribes the ruins of life or the "liquidation of the particular" to the monstrosity of the administered world and famously remarks, "The whole is the false" (17, 50). In stark contrast to Hegel's

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well-known dictum, "the whole is the true," Adorno's aphorism bids "farewell to Hegel" (144) and thereby points to a shift in the significance of the whole and its relation to the part.

Another renowned philosopher, Jacques Derrida, with whom Adorno has often been compared, tells a rather different story in *Specters of Marx*:

> To learn to live: a strange watchword. Who would learn? From whom? To teach to live, but to whom? Will we ever know? Will we ever know how to live and first of all what 'to learn to live' means? (xvii)

When it comes to teaching and learning to live, which Adorno views as the *raison d'être* of philosophy, Derrida seeks to deconstruct the onto-theological and teleo-eschatological dimensions involved in positing any unitary or proper (*propre*) notion of life or subjectivity. In his characteristic fashion, Derrida suggests that attempts to find presence or essence in something are no more than metaphysical, "essentializing fetishes" (*Spurs* 55). For Derrida, the whole, too, is entangled in an endless signifying chain of *différance* and is always already *out of joint*. As Derrida thus appropriates Hamlet's remark "The time is out of joint" into his deconstructive *hauntology,* he suggests that Hegel's view of the whole is contaminated by the metaphysics of presence and therefore outmoded in the age of *grammatology*.[3]

Yet this very "outdatedness," Adorno insists, should be taken as a historical symptom in its own right that would lead one to understand the movement of history:

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[3] Although Derrida trenchantly criticizes the metaphysical aspect of Hegel's philosophy, he also acknowledges that Hegel is a thinker of irreducible difference. For this reason, he calls Hegel "the last philosopher of the book and the first thinker of writing" (*Of Grammatology* 26). Compare this with Adorno's somewhat mitigated attitude toward Hegel in *Minima Moralia*, p. 15.

But perhaps this is the way of all Outdatedness. It is to be explained not only by mere temporal distance, but by the verdict of history. Its expression in things is the shame that overcomes the descendent in face of an earlier possibility that he has neglected to bring to fruition. What was accomplished can be forgotten, and preserved in the present. Only what failed is outdated, the broken promise of a new beginning. (*Minima Moralia* 93)

What one should bear in mind is not just that the Hegelian totality is not valid and true, but also that it *has historically become* invalid and untrue. In other words, if a previously meaningful concept becomes obsolete, that historical process of becoming outdated itself sheds light on the course of history, or "the verdict of history," as Adorno describes it here. Jameson shares this dialectical view of history and comments, "it was History, rather than Hegel, that was wrong" (*The Cultural Turn* 81).[4] Nonetheless, as Jameson makes clear, this historical reevaluation of outdatedness should not be taken as a nostalgic sentimentality of sorts or as an ideal reconstruction as regards the bygone past. For him it is meaningless to conceptualize a historical phenomenon in terms of moral or moralizing judgments (*Postmodernism* 46). Adorno, too, is very careful to abstain from harboring such an unhistorical fantasy and reiterates that fantasizing an outright dismissal of the outdated or a return to some supposedly ideal past would of necessity entail a "fundamental conspiracy with the destructive tendencies of the age" (*Philosophy of Modern Music* xii). Differently put, Adorno believes that attention to the very historicity of outdatedness enables one not just to examine a certain historical phenomenon in the past from the perspective of the present, but also to make that past pass judgment on the

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[4] In his recent study *Valences of the Dialectic*, Jameson offers an original reading of Hegel as a non-totalizing thinker. For his provocative proposition about "Hegel without *Aufhebung*," see Chapter 1, above.

present and thereby reveal the condition of possibility of the present. Deploying such a stereoscopic perspective—one that juxtaposes and plays different historical periods off against each other—Adorno goes against the grain of the monologism of the present and moves towards a dialogical and dialectical understanding of history.

Interpreted this way, even if both Adorno and Derrida offer penetrating insights into the untruth of the Hegelian whole, Adorno does not merely focus (as Derrida does) on the way the whole is *always already* untrue and out of joint. Rather, in a similar manner to Lukács' historicizing idea of "a world gone out of joint" (*The Theory of the Novel* 17), Adorno brings into perspective the historical process by means of which the whole *has become* untrue and the social totality *has gone* "out of joint." Likewise, Adorno and Horkheimer in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* are not content to demonstrate in a deconstructionist manner that the Enlightenment is always already a form of myth (xvi). They are also at pains to point to the concrete history of how such a regression of the Enlightenment into mythology has happened. By doing so, they aim to debunk both a metaphysics of *presence* and a metaphysics of *the present*. Regarding the metaphysics rampant in the contemporary world, Adorno and Horkheimer provide the following diagnosis:

> That the hygienic shop-floor and everything that goes with it, the Volkswagen or the sportsdrome, leads to an insensitive liquidation of metaphysics, would be irrelevant; but that in the social whole they themselves become a metaphysics, an ideological curtain behind the real evil is concentrated, is not irrelevant. This is the starting point of our deliberations. (xv)

Here Adorno and Horkheimer persuasively demonstrate that what they call the Culture

Industry has become a metaphysics in its own right at the present historical conjuncture.

It is against the backdrop of such a *metaphysics of the present* (as well as a *metaphysics*

of presence) that Adorno's lamentations about damaged life must be understood.

Adorno's incisive analysis of the metaphysics of the administered world is further

pursued in his magnum opus *Negative Dialectics*, a text that has often been used to

explain the affinity between Adorno and poststructuralists or to christen Adorno a

deconstructionist *avant la lettre*.[5] Those who read a few pages of this book may well

come to believe the recent attempts to de-Marxify or poststructuralize Adorno are not

groundless altogether, since Adorno *does* share some of the poststructuralist or

postmodernist spirit. In this formidably dense yet profound text, Adorno distances his

philosophizing from Hegel's identitarian philosophy as encapsulated in the concept of

Aufhebung, and insists on "the constant sense of nonidentity" (*Negative Dialectics* 5).

Keeping faith with nonidentity as opposed the "identity" principle in Hegel's dialectics,

he calls for what he dubs "negative dialectics," a "dialectics no longer 'glued' to identity"

(31). Anticipating Lyotard's influential characterization of postmodernity as "incredulity

toward metanarratives" (*The Postmodern Condition* xxiv), he succinctly states that his

negative dialectics is "suspicious of all identity" (*Negative Dialectics* 145). Though

Adorno aims at a revision of the Hegelian philosophy, he in no way (as poststructuralists

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[5] See, among others, Michael Ryan, *Marxism and Deconstruction*, pp. 65-81; Peter Dews, *Logics of Disintegration*, pp. 46-54; and Jay, *Adorno*, pp. 21-22. Jameson is of the opinion that Adorno is more akin to Paul de Man than to Derrida. See *Late Marxism: Adorno, or, the Persistence of the Dialectic*, p. 10 and *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, pp. 217-59.

or postmodernists often do) rejects the notion of totality *in toto*. While interrogating the metaphysics of identity, he writes, "To define identity as the correspondence of the thing-in-itself to its concept is *hubris*; but the ideal of identity must not be simply be discarded" (149).[6] Instead, Adorno offers a more nuanced and critical reading of identity as well as totality, thus simultaneously resisting the logic of identitarian and totalitarian thinking and retaining the theoretical framework of identity and totality as a way to intervene in the metaphysics of the present. That is, what is of paramount significance in Adorno's theoretical inquiry is that his critique of the "compulsory identity" (*Negative Dialectics* 406) inherent in Hegel's philosophical reason (*Vernunft*) is juxtaposed with scrutiny of another dimension of identity in the socio-economic realm, namely an exchange system in the capitalist economy. He contends that "The exchange principle, the reduction of human labor to the abstract universal concept of average working hours, is fundamentally akin to the principle of identification" (146; translation modified).[7] He matter-of-factly moves from one sentence in which he decries the untruth of identity between self and other, between universal and particular, between concept and non-concept, and the like to the next where he criticizes the tendential homogenization of all social levels that results from the totalizing process of late capitalism. His reflections ceaselessly go back and

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[6] Michael Hardt warns against the current tendency to lump diverse thinkers into one single rubric such as poststructuralism or postmodernism. Hardt further calls for a reassessment of poststructuralism and postmodernism not as an opposition to Western philosophical and political discourse *tour court* but rather as a creative affirmation and articulation of the latter's alternative possibilities (*Gilles Deleuze: An Apprenticeship in Philosophy* ix-x, 124, n. 2).

[7] It should be pointed out that as Jameson mentions in his notes on translations of Adorno's texts, "Tauschverhältnis" should be translated as "exchange system," not "barter" (*Late Marxism* x). He also gives a caveat regarding a reading that attends to the simple identification in Adorno between the "the 'identity of the concept and the structure of exchange" (239).

forth between these different layers of the problematic of identity and totality, with the aim of holding them *simultaneously*.

It is precisely on account of this complexity of Adorno's thinking that he can astutely theorize the multifaceted and overdetermined historical conditions where identity and totality underlie outward difference and heterogeneity. For instance, in *Philosophy of Modern Music*, an "extended appendix" to *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, he suggests dialectically that difference is meaningless when everything is completely different from everything else and that if difference is to have any substantial meaning, there should be some form of identity against which difference is measured:

> Differentiation is only of any force when it distinguishes itself from that which is already implicitly established, while the more highly differentiated means themselves—simply placed alongside one another—come to resemble each other and become indistinguishable. (*Philosophy of Modern Music* 79).

Here and elsewhere Adorno implies that difference presupposes a considerable level of homogenization and totalization, and that identity and difference are not simple oppositions but two interrelated and coexistent sides of the same logic by which the contemporary world operates. This proposition prefigures Jameson's full-fledged analysis of the antinomy between the proliferation of difference in postmodernity on one hand and the underlying homogenization of the late or global stage of capitalism on the other.[8] In his study *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Jameson asks an

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[8] In Chapter 1, above, I look at Jameson's historicization of various antinomies in postmodern globalization with close attention to the way he analyzes the presence of seemingly incommensurate phenomena in the world today and lays bare the *political unconscious* of contemporary culture in which some dimensions in the antinomies are *repressed* while others are widely celebrated and propagated.

important question as to whether the production or tolerance of difference does not have as its very condition of possibility an unparalleled level of social homogenization and the eradication of social difference (341). In another instance, he explicitly asks, "Is global Difference the same today as global Identity?" (*The Seeds of Time* 205). For him it is quizzical and even paradoxical that postmodern social space, arguably the most standardized and homogenized in human history, is so intent on fabricating and promoting difference and heterogeneity.[9] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri are of a similar opinion; as they see it, Empire, or the new global form of sovereignty, operates in both territorializing and deterritorializing, homogenizing and heterogenizing manners (*Empire* 297). Foreshadowing such later theoretical discourse on globalization in an extraordinarily prescient way, Adorno interrogates "the capitalist system's increasingly integrative trend" (*Negative Dialectics* 166), while he embraces the logic of non-identity and difference. In consequence, his negative dialectics detects the way capitalism is writing a new chapter of universalizing history with its totalizing logic under the façade of difference.

In light of Adorno's dialectical inquiry into identity and difference and into the complex reality of the contemporary world, his vindication of "nonidentity" in *Negative Dialectics* should be distinguished from a Derridean critique of metaphysics or the great poststructuralist and postmodernist thematics of difference, similar though they may

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[9] Terry Eagleton, too, touches on the paradoxical antinomy of difference and identity in contemporary culture when he writes, "Its problem is how a difference without hierarchy is not to collapse into pure *in*difference, so becoming a kind of inverted mirror-image of the universalism it repudiates" (*The Illusions of Postmodernism* 113). He also points to another antinomy of contemporary culture, namely that postmodernism de-naturalizes everything while it naturalizes and absolutizes the present system.

appear at cursory glance. Adorno has an acuter sense of how life has been "damaged"

under the homogenizing grip of the Culture Industry (*Negative Dialectics* 367; *Minima*

Moralia 15). In a manner parallel to Michel Foucault's theorization of the biopower that

penetrates into the individual subject's inner life,[10] Adorno remarks that

> what the philosophers once knew as life has become the sphere of private
> existence and now of mere consumption, dragged along as an appendage
> of the process of material production, without autonomy or substance of
> its own… Our perspective of life has passed into an ideology which
> conceals the fact that there is life no longer.
>
> The mechanism for reproducing life, for dominating and for destroying it,
> is exactly the same, and accordingly industry, state and advertising are
> amalgamated…state power has shed even the appearance of independence
> from particular interests in profit; always in their service really, it now
> also places itself there ideologically. (*Minima Moralia* 15, 53)

In such a situation where the whole has become the false and fractured, Adorno focuses

on the alienated life rather than on its facile reconciliation with the whole. For him, the

more the concept of totality is in crisis, the more crucial it becomes to retain it not as a

dogmatic scheme, but in order to grasp fragmented reality as such. It is in this context of

the concomitant crisis and persistence of totality that Adorno's criticism of the whole in

general and the damaged life-world in particular needs to be understood:

> In an historical hour, when the reconciliation of subject and object has
> been perverted to a satanic parody—to the liquidation of the subject in
> objective presentation—the only philosophy which still serves this
> reconciliation is one which despises this illusion of reconciliation and—
> against universal self-alienation—establishes the validity of the hopelessly
> alienated, for which a "subject itself" scarcely any longer speaks.
> (*Philosophy of Modern Music* 28)

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[10] In a conversation with Jay, Michel Foucault is said to have acknowledged some parallels between the Frankfurt School's views on the administered world and his own analysis of power (*Adorno* 22).

That is, if "there is life no longer" or if "wrong life cannot be lived rightly," it is in large part because the current society has gone wrong or "out of joint." For this reason, he emphatically declares, "[n]o emancipation without that of society," and also holds that "it is only in the right society that chances for the right life will arise" (*Minima Moralia* 15, 39, 173; *Negative Dialectics* 363). With such a vision of totality, Adorno contextualizes the falsity of the whole, placing it within the concrete history of reification following upon capitalist development.

Twelve-Tone Music as a Philosophical Model

No less important in accounting for Adorno's negative dialectics is that his scathing criticism of totality goes in tandem with the quest for an innovative form of philosophizing. Insofar as Adorno's idiosyncratic philosophical style is concerned, one may well think of his article "The Essay as Form," in which he underscores the importance of the essay as a non-totalizing representational form *par excellence*. Given his examination of the essay as the "consciousness of nonidentity" or the "accentuation of the partial against the total" (9), it is quite revealing that Adorno's ruminations on fragmented life in *Minima Moralia* deploy an essayistic form. This notable correspondence between form and content in Adorno's philosophy is rightly pointed out by Edward Said when he explains that Adorno's critique of the Hegelian dialectics is also accomplished at the level of form itself: "its form exactly replicates its subtitle— reflections from damaged life—a cascading series of discontinuous fragments, all of them

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in some way assaulting suspicious 'wholes,' fictitious unities presided over by Hegel, whose grand synthesis has derisive contempt for the individual" (*On Late Style* 15).

It is no doubt that such a patchy mosaic of contemplations in *Minima Moralia* is exemplary of Adorno's de-totalizing writing, and yet his search for a new form of philosophy is conducted more exquisitely and rigorously in *Negative Dialectics*. This enormously ambitious book begins with a memorable passage on the possibility of doing philosophy at the moment of its alleged failure: "Philosophy, which once seemed obsolete, lives on because the moment to realize it was missed" (3).[11] One of the questions Adorno engages in the book is whether or not it is possible to philosophize without reproducing "the untruth of identity" (5), and his whole theoretical program concerns more than anything else the problematic of revising, through his own version of dialectics, what he calls "compulsory identity" in Western metaphysics. As a way to revise the Hegelian identitarian mode of thinking, he declares that negative dialectics should "strive, by way of the concept, to transcend the concept" (15). *Negative Dialectics* is, therefore, to be taken as a Sisyphean effort on Adorno's part to draw a cartography of philosophy when such a systematic and totalizing project becomes unviable.[12]

Indeed, what is truly remarkable about Adorno is that in the face of the impossibility of philosophical system he does his utmost to come up with a singular mode of thinking not just on a thematic level but also and simultaneously on a formal level.

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[11] Interestingly enough, he opens the first sentence in *Aesthetic Theory* in a similar way by commenting on the situation in which even the existence of art is no longer self-evident (1).
[12] Worth mentioning here is that as early as in his inaugural lecture to the philosophy faculty at the University of Frankfurt in 1931, Adorno rejects the illusion that "the power of thought is sufficient to grasp the totality of the real" ("The Actuality of Philosophy" 120).

This pursuit of a new philosophical form can be situated in the larger context of a crisis in representation in the modern as exemplified in such pioneering figures as Charles Baudelaire and Stéphane Mallarmé. One of the first major literary figures to define modernity, Baudelaire comments that each age has its own comportment, glance and perspective; and that modern art, therefore, should find its own representational that is distinguished from "the sterile function of imitating Nature" form befitting modern life ("The Painter of Modern Life" 13, 34). This problematic of representation in the modern period also comes to the fore in Mallarmé's "Crise de vers," in which the pioneer of symbolist poetry declares that literature is undergoing "an exquisite crisis, a fundamental crisis" (227). In response to such a crisis, he endeavors to invent a innovative form of literature, and in so doing, offers a critique of two conspicuous aesthetic movements of the nineteenth century, that is, Romanticism and realism. Literature should work, asserts Mallarmé, less to correspond directly to the referent than to gesture toward evocations, allusions, or suggestions. He thus calls to task the idea of expression in Romanticism, as encapsulated in William Wordsworth's slogan of "a spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling," and tries to neutralize such an authorial intention:

> The pure work of art implies the elocutionary disappearance of the poet
> who yields the initiative to words, set in motion by the clash of their
> inequalities…Everything becomes suspense, a fragmentary disposition
> with alternations and oppositions, all working towards the total rhythm of
> the white spaces, which would be the poem silenced. (232)

Foreshadowing Roland Barthes' theorization of the "death of the author" or of "writing degree zero," Mallarmé's new compositional space simultaneously explores and decenters the distinctions between prose and verse, presence and absence, and language

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and silence, thereby proposing an innovative form of poetry. As Jameson points out, Mallarmé's book is a book about nothing and holds itself by the sheer internal tensions and forces of its own style (*The Seeds of Time* 35). Such "bleached" or "white" space is, as Julia Kristeva also puts it, a "rhythmic space, which has no thesis and no position, the process by which signifiance is constituted" (*Revolution in Poetic Language* 26).

In modern philosophy a comparable concern with a novel form can be traced as far back as Nietzsche and Heidegger, who wage a war against Western metaphysics in their respective manners. As Alain Badiou elucidates in his explication of French thought, modern philosophy aspired to detach itself drastically from its predecessors and, in the process, laid special emphasis on form and the inseparability of thematic and formal levels. The basic assumption underlying any meaningful subversive philosophical project is, Badiou goes on to explain, that metaphysical concepts cannot be displaced unless a new philosophical form is invented. After contextualizing philosophy thus within the modernist impulse toward the New or the *Novum*, Badiou underlines a characteristic alliance between philosophy and literature ("The Adventure of French Philosophy" 72).

As insightful as Badiou's observations are, especially in view of Mallarmé's influence on poststructuralist thinkers, the formative role played by other artistic genres in the construction of a new means of philosophizing should not be overlooked. For Adorno, it is above all music that provides a unique model for a new philosophical language not least because of its non-conceptual nature or because, in his own words, "music is privileged above all other forms by the absence of illusive imagery—the fact

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that it does not paint a picture" (*Philosophy of Modern Music* 40).[13] Or better still, it is

because, as Thomas Mann cogently states in *Doctor Faustus*, "[music] was the most

intellectual of all the arts, which was evident from the fact that in music, as in no other art,

form and content were intertwined, were absolutely one and the same" (67-68). It is, to be

sure, such traits in music that enable Adorno to push further his critique of identitarian

and metaphysical thinking, to the extent that the hierarchized binarism between form and

content in a rigid mode of thought is abolished. More specifically, he comes up with his

de-totalizing form of critical inquiry by inventively appropriating into his philosophical

model Schoenberg's twelve-tone music, among many other musical forms.

The revolutionary potential that Schoenberg's modern music has for Adorno's

philosophy can be more properly assessed when his twelve-tone composition is compared

with Beethoven's composition, which Adorno claims bears resemblance to Hegel's

philosophy. In his discussion of the universal-particular relations in Beethoven's musical

form, Adorno argues:

> Rather than schematically extinguishing the particular, as was the
> predominant praxis of the age preceding him, Beethoven, showing an
> elective affinity for the spirit of the mature bourgeois spirit of the natural
> sciences, faced the antinomy of the universal and the particular by
> qualitatively neutralizing the particular…The tour de force of each of his
> great works is literally Hegelian. (*Aesthetic Theory* 185)

> Beethoven, like Hegel, made the imprisonment of the bourgeois spirit
> within itself into a driving force, and thus "incited" the recapitulation. In
> the work of both, we find the bourgeois spirit exalted to the utmost.
> (*Beethoven* 16)

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[13] This nonrepresentational and abstract nature of music, Jameson says, has another merit of enabling us to
see the dialectic at work in Adorno (*Jameson on Jameson* 240).

Adorno's comparison of Beethoven with Hegel is discerning since it shows a way in which Beethoven's musical form, as in Hegel's dialectics, is constructed through the ceaseless contradiction and mediation of antithetical motifs and through the consummation of form as a whole. Equally important, Adorno's analysis also suggests how Beethoven's impulse toward a unity, like Hegel's hope for a coercionless identity of identity and non-identity, is in fact a coerced rather than a full reconciliation. Just as Hegel's reconciled subject-object is nothing but a disguised subject, what underlies Beethoven's semblance of reciprocity is, in effect, "the demon, the compositional subject" (185) or "the freedom of the subject that is coming to self-consciousness" (222). Accordingly, the Beethovenian reconciliation of subject and object, and part and whole, ultimately amounts to a camouflaged form of idealism.

For this reason, Adorno concludes that the recapitulation in Beethoven's sonatas is the moment of untruth (*Aesthetic Theory* 185; *Beethoven* 13, 16-17).[14] If read alongside the long passages quoted above, the lines from Clemens Brentano—"Knowing and singing himself alone, / he creates the world that he himself is" (*Beethoven* 10)—which Adorno initially planned to use as an epigraph for the first chapter of the book on Beethoven is quite revealing, for it pithily expresses Beethoven's complicity with the bourgeois ideology. In some sense, it may not be a sheer coincidence that Beethoven was deaf: his deafness symbolizes his inclination to listen to nothing but his own singing. The repercussion of this tendency comes to the surface in one of his last works, *Missa*

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[14] In his discussion of Beethoven's late style, though, Adorno reads a de-totalizing tendency in Beethoven and writes, "In the history of art late works are the catastrophes" ("Late Style in Beethoven" 567).

Solemnis, in which Beethoven had to work on a traditional and unfamiliar genre of the mass which has a social origin. He ends up losing his normal thematic unity and structural coherence while trying to work through the collective and social form ("Alienated Masterpiece" 113-124). Consequently the work remains a solemn "missa" for the deaf bourgeois compositional subject, and the aforementioned epigraph for free and autonomous individuality turns out to be an epitaph for the demise of his bourgeois optimism in the unity of subject and object.

The originality and novelty of Schoenberg's twelve-tone music as a cultural form consists in the way that it breaks with such a Beethovenian mode of composition, in which musical themes are presented, developed, and recapitulated with a view toward reaching their climax or *Aufhebung* in the coda. By contrast, in Schoenberg's new system, a prearranged set of twelve notes of the chromatic scale becomes the composition by means of various permutations of the prime series. Devoting the opening chapter of his *Fundamentals of Musical Composition* to the question of musical form, Schoenberg defines his compositional "method" as follows:

> A composer does not, of course, add bit by bit, as a child does in building with wooden blocks. He conceives an entire composition as a spontaneous vision. Then he proceeds, like Michelangelo who chiseled his Moses out of the marble without sketches, complete in every detail, thus directly forming his material. (1-2)

A composer of twelve-tone music does not develop a series of themes bit by bit to build a totalizing musical block that moves gradually toward a certain climactic ending. To the contrary, he begins with a pre-organized tone row which is itself *already* the music he composes as it were. In other words, the musical raw material to be worked on already

has in itself the finished art work, and in this respect, the musical "content" becomes at

one with its "form." In this manner the traditional distinction between form and content

disappears and form becomes content in its own right.[15]

In view of Adorno's objective to overcome Hegel's philosophical system of

identity, it does not come as much of a surprise that he finds in Schoenberg's radical

rewriting of Western music a new model for his philosophy of non-identity. In this

context, it is interesting that Adorno mentions in his discussion of art something

comparable to Schoenberg's aforementioned passage:

> It is hard to say whether, in the production process, he is faced with a self-imposed task; the marble block in which a sculpture waits, the piano keys in which a composition waits to be released, are probably more than metaphors for the task. The tasks bear their objective solution in themselves, at least within a certain variational range, though they do not have the univocity of equations. The act carried out by the artist is minimal, that of mediating between the problem that confronts him and is already determined, and the solution, which is itself similarly lodged in the material as a potential. (*Aesthetic Theory* 166)

The similarity between this passage and Schoenberg's exposition of his method is quite

striking, and this affinity helps us understand the crux of Adorno's "twelve-tone

philosophy" as an original form of philosophical writing.[16] In dealing with a block of

philosophical concepts or problems, Adorno does not make explicit or positive arguments

or judgments, much less conclusions, in the traditional sense of those words. In a fashion

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[15] In a dialectical way Adorno is also chary of too rigid a mechanization of musical composition. See his discussion in "The Aging of the New Music" (186).

[16] It is, among others, Jameson who theorizes Adorno's twelve-tone philosophy. My discussion here is greatly indebted to his exposition of Adorno and Schoenberg in *Late Marxism* (59-62). Jay also examines the inextricable connection between Adorno's thinking and Schoenberg's music and coins the word "atonal philosophy" (*Adorno* 28).

parallel to Schoenberg's permutation of tone rows, about which he writes, "One of the most outstanding characteristic of Schoenberg's later style is that it no longer permits conclusions" (*Philosophy of Modern Music* 65, n. 29), Adorno grapples with conceptual materials by arranging them in all possible ways, and a complete set of permutations of those materials itself constitutes his thematic content. A sense of repetition in Adorno's work that brings some critic's attention,[17] therefore, is attributable to his conceptual variations and permutations. Hinting at the possible connection between Adorno's philosophical *Darstellung* and Schoenberg's musical composition, Jameson points out that the last part of *Negative Dialectics* is divided into twelve numbered segments (*Late Marxism* 62). (In addition to this, it does not appear completely superfluous to mention that Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory* is also comprised of twelve parts or that Jameson's own exegesis of *Negative Dialectics*, too, has twelve sections.) Building on Schoenberg's system, in short, Adorno invents his own model of philosophizing, in which a certain problematic is not independent of its "solution" but at one with it, and in which content and form are indistinguishably united. As in Mallarmé's "white space," where the workings of language itself eclipse any subjective or personal expressions and intentionality, the role played by the philosopher is minimal in Adorno's twelve-tone philosophy: he has only to release the already determined logical "conclusion" out of the materials. In this sense it would not be entirely inappropriate to say of Adorno himself what he says as regards Schoenberg: "An artist, for whom the compositional procedure

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[17] For example, see Rose Rosengard Subotnik, "Why is Adorno's Music Criticism the Way It Is? Some Reflections on Twentieth-century Criticism of Nineteenth-century Music" (11).

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means everything—and the subject matter, on the other hand, nothing" (*Philosophy of Modern Music* 122).

History and the "Aging" of Philosophy

Besides the de-totalizing aspect of the dodecaphonic technique, Adorno's fascination therewith is also ascribable to the fact that Schoenberg's music of dissonance convincingly reflects and illustrates the disjointed relationship between part and whole, or what Adorno describes as "the dominance of the general over the particular, of society over its captive membership" ("Society" 148). Schoenberg's music denies that the part and the whole are reconciled in the modern world and expresses a sense of suffering and anxiety.[18] Similarly to the way Adorno attends to variegated contradictions in the administered world, Schoenberg lays bare ideological aspects of Western music, bringing to the forefront, in the process, the correspondence between the principles of tonal music and the closed and exclusive totalized structure of capitalist society. Among others, Schoenberg's Piano Concerto, op. 42, a monumental work composed two years earlier than *Minima Moralia* is a case in point. As a principal musical genre which is based on the tension and balance or "polarity and reciprocity" between solo instrument and orchestra (Kerman 12), and in which the soloist plays a pivotal role in the compositional subject's artistic production through the act of commission and/or dedication, the

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[18] This is the case even in Schoenberg's "expressionist" period, that is to say, before his embrace of atonality and serialism. For a lucid account of Schoenberg's "expressionism," see Charles Rosen, *Arnold Schoenberg* (1-22).

concerto form represents and dramatizes various social dimensions, such as the relationships between part and whole, subject and object, self and other, individual and group. If, as Adorno argues, the unresolved antagonisms of reality return in artworks as immanent problems of form (*Aesthetic Theory* 6), the concerto registers, through its very form, social contradictions more effectively than any other musical genre.

Of note in this respect is that, as the history of the concerto bears witness, the concerto form has been altered as various social relations have changed. For instance, concerti by Bach or Mozart in the Baroque and Classical periods are grounded in the ideal of peaceful and harmonious interpersonal and social relations, and those concerti in no way feature a domineering virtuoso instrumentalist. Nevertheless, as the character of society and the positionality of individuals in it change with the advance of what Adorno dubs "the reified monstrosity" (*Aesthetic Theory* 167), the concerto form begins to change drastically. It is none other than Beethoven who epitomizes such historical symptoms. In particular, his last two piano concerti superbly register his era's social and historical upheaval and exemplify fundamental shifts in the formal structure of the genre. What is notable about these works is that they diverge from the traditional form in that the expositional part of the first movement is introduced not by the orchestra but by the soloist, and that the dominant role of the latter is highlighted as never before. This quality manifests itself spectacularly in the opening passages of the Emperor Concerto, a work that is now considered by many "the prototype for the confrontational thrust of the nineteenth-century concerto" (Kerman 24). Arguably, this radical alteration in the musical form is inscribed in a larger sociopolitical condition: that is, the emergence and

predominance of bourgeois subjectivity and its totalizing vision of the world. Faithful to such a vision, Beethoven even constrains the soloist's role in his last piano concerto by writing the cadenza himself, thereby leaving no room for the individual player's improvisation. Like the reprise in his sonatas, the cadenza in the concerto requires the soloist to recapitulate the themes presented and developed so far and in so doing neutralize his bravura individuality. As a result, the dynamic and spontaneous force of the soloist is at once cancelled and sublated. As has been explained above, this totalizing and at times totalitarian vision leads Adorno to compare Beethoven with Hegel: "The will, the energy that sets form in motion in Beethoven, is always the *whole*, the Hegelian *World Spirit*" (*Beethoven* 10). In this regard, just as the Hegelian whole is the false for Adorno, so too the Beethovenian whole is the false for Schoenberg.

It is nothing less than Beethoven's reconciliation of part and whole "under duress" that Schoenberg dismantles through his twelve-tone technique.[19] Ironically, however, this reflects a historical condition of the modern musician's time in which such a Beethovenian unity and harmony has become impossible. That Schoenberg's piano concerto deals with the problem of the "false whole" can be glimpsed in the composer's note on the score:

> Life was so easy – Andante
> Suddenly hatred broke out – Molto allegro
> A grave situation was created – Adagio
> But life goes on – Rondo: Giocoso (qtd. in Roeder 370)

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[19] I am here echoing Adorno's critique of Lukács in his essay "Reconciliation under Duress."

Schoenberg characterizes the four movements of the concerto in this unprecedented

fashion. Corresponding in a curious way to what Adorno observes concerning "the

caricature of true life" (*Minima Moralia* 15), Schoenberg historicizes the devastation of

life in his time. (Or, since this concerto was composed during the composer's exile in

America, such a bleak picture of the world might be taken in one way or another as his

commentary on the social and cultural contours of the country during the time.)

Interestingly, the vaguely tonal atmosphere in the first movement and the dulcet opening

passages in the tempo of "Andante" attest to relatively harmonious and "easy" times in

the past and serve as a judgment on the present, in which life is shot through with

"hatred" and "a grave situation." The present condition is evocative of Adorno's

perspectives on "the ignominy of the ever-same" (*Aesthetic Theory* 22) in late capitalism

or of Samuel Beckett's grim portrayal in *Endgame*—"Why this farce, day after day?" (14,

32). In a condition where life goes on meaninglessly, no alternative to what is can be

found and the subject hardly recognizes a lamentable situation as such. In this light,

Schoenberg's structuring of the last section of the concerto as a rondo movement cannot

be more pertinent. Through his compositional form, Schoenberg thus undertakes his

critique of the monstrous whole, and that is, Adorno never tires of reminding us, what

constitutes the crux of authentic art: "Art today, insofar as it is at all deserving of

substantiality, reflects without concessions everything that society prefers to forget,

bringing it clearly thereby into conscious focus" (*Philosophy of Modern Music* 14). It is

solely through this determinate negation of a determinate society and through the

immanent movement against society that art can become "the unconscious writing of

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history, as anamnesis of the vanquished, of the repressed, and perhaps of what is possible" (*Aesthetic Theory* 259).

Unexpectedly, however, the twelve-tone technique is tainted with some inerasable trace of the very reification of the modern world which it is at such pains to negate. For all their importance as a social critique, the rigid principle of the technique according to which one tone cannot be repeated until the other eleven tones appear and the process of composition by which the compositional subject should have a total picture of the composition from the beginning bear resemblance to the totalization and repressiveness of the society from which the music springs. In "Adorno as the Devil," Lyotard pinpoints this unanticipated upshot of dodecaphonic composition and censoriously says,

> *The melodic detail degenerates into a simple consequence of the total*
> *construction without having any longer the least influence on it. It*
> *becomes the image of the sort of technical progress of which the world is*
> *full…*The dissonant chords cease then to be expressive of the suffering
> subjectivity, they are the sonorous effects of composition's bureaucratic
> power. (131)

To put this pointed statement another way, Schoenberg's critique of the "ever-same" or of the totalitarian reality of society contains within itself the seeds of identity and totality. While it is ironic that Schoenberg inadvertently reproduces the reality he sets out to condemn, this is not to be considered Schoenberg's failure. Rather, Adorno looks upon it as a textbook example of "musical dialectics" ("Vers une musique informelle" 284). Moreover, as Adorno brilliantly elaborates with his theory of homeopathy, it is an illusion to believe that a complete emancipation of art from identity or from an all-subjugating reified culture is possible. Only by designating itself as part of that culture

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and as a commodity in the Culture Industry can art escape such a despicable status. In

Adorno's own words,

> It is fraternizing with reification—against which it has been and still is the
> function of what is functionless, of art, to protest, however mute and
> reified that protest itself may be. ("The Essay as Form" 7)

> Art's asociality is the determinate negation of a determinate society…Art
> keeps itself alive through its social force of resistance; unless it reifies
> itself, it becomes a commodity. (*Aesthetic Theory* 226)

In this way, Schoenberg's music brings into the heart of its form irresolvable social

contradictions. In the process, "the irrationality of rational technique" (*Philosophy of

Modern Music* 104) in his music deconceals an irrational side of an allegedly rational

society. Hence, it is arguable that a formal and aesthetic element in Schoenberg's

concerto moves beyond the formal and aesthetic in the direction of the social and

historical.

If Schoenberg's music in general and his piano concerto in particular can thus

claim to be the "self-unconscious historiography" of his epoch (*Aesthetic Theory* 182), it

would not be unreasonable to try to detect in Schoenberg's modern form some

conspicuous historical symptoms of modernity. What merits our special attention is that

the twelve-tone technique as a closed structure in many ways resembles Saussure's

linguistic model. Unlike in conventional tonal music, Schoenberg's composition rids

individual tones of the "inherent" qualities and feelings that they were traditionally

thought to convey. What results is a composition with twelve notes only related to one

another ("Vers une musique informelle" 301). In such a structure each tone is caught in a

complex web of the tone-row system, and the signification of each tone is not determined

intrinsically in itself but in its relation to other tones. Furthermore, the individual *parole*

of each musical enunciation is determined in conjunction with the *langue* of the entire

twelve-tone system. This structure bears a striking resemblance to Saussure's

characterization of sign systems:

> Instead of pre-existing ideas then, we find in all the foregrounding
> examples values emanating from the system. When they are said to
> correspond to concepts, it is understood that the concepts are purely
> differential and defined not by their positive contents but negatively by
> their relations with the other terms of the system. Their most precise
> characteristic is in being what the others are not. (*Course in General
> Linguistics* 117)

Given this similarity Schoenberg's structure has with the Saussurean sign system in

which each element acquires significance in its differential relation to others *within* the

system, it may be claimed that in the twelve-tone system, too, there are only differences

without positive terms.

When it comes to Saussure's and Schoenberg's construction of confined

structures, what is of great consequence for the question of modernity is the way their

obsession with a systematic totality or autonomy could come into being in the first place.

In "The Aging of the New Music," Adorno mentions in passing the historical and

economic situation of Vienna wherein Alban Berg and Anton Webern (as well as

Schoenberg) lived:

> The daily existence of Webern and Berg was precarious even in their own
> time. They only got by thanks to the economic backwardness of their
> homeland, which in many ways was still pre-capitalist and offered
> loopholes for activities that had no exchange-value. ("The Aging of the
> New Music" 199)

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Similarly, we may say that it was the very existence of pre-capitalist remnants in Austria or Switzerland that made it possible for Schoenberg and Saussure to envisage their systems. That is to say, their intricate and highly technical craftsmanship, which dissects and combines small linguistic and musical sefgments, can be seen as an act of imagining some independent realm where commodity fetishism does not yet reign supreme. This conditionality is perhaps what determines and informs Saussure's and Schoenberg's will to structural autonomy and totality. As Jameson explains, such coexistence of different modes of production (as opposed to a tendential homogenization in postmodernity) is essential to the defining characteristics of the modern:

> Modern art, in this respect, drew its power and its possibilities from being a backwater and an archaic holdover within a modernizing economy: it glorified, celebrated, and dramatized older forms of individual production which the new mode of production was elsewhere on the point of displacing and blotting out…As a form of production, then, modernism (including the Great Artists and producers) gives off a message that has little to do with the content of the individual works: it is the aesthetic as sheer autonomy, as the satisfactions of handicraft transfigured. (*Postmodernism* 307)

If examined from this viewpoint, both Saussure's and Schoenberg's systems embody modern aesthetics. It is not just an aesthetic autonomy or totality alone, however, that depends for its conditions of possibility on this "uneven development." The very unevenness of capitalist progress in the modern world system is what constitutes a keen sense of time and temporality—"l'horrible fardeau du Temps qui brise vos épaules et vous penche vers la terre" (Baudelaire, "Enivrez-Vous" 286)—and an obsession with the New. The flow of time becomes more visible and recognizable when there coexist (whether inside or outside the viewer's mind) disparate modes of temporality and

sociality. This may be interpreted differently—or it amounts to the same thing in the end—when all this is seen from the perspective of Adorno, who holds that "[t]he cult of the new, and thus the idea of modernity, is a rebellion against the fact that there is no longer anything new" (*Minima Moralia* 235). In other words, for all its uneven development, modernity, especially in its later phase, is deeply embedded in the gradual incorporation of pre-capitalist spheres into the ever-intensifying capitalist system and in the gradual homogenization of temporality.

Schoenberg's twelve-tone technique deployed in the piano concerto exemplifies this temporal dimension of modernity. In that system, the *syntagmatic* dimension of a melodic development of the traditional kind is absorbed, if not entirely abolished, into differential, *associative* relations within the system, and one passage or one musical sentence is to be comprehended as only one of many possible permutations in a given tone-row structure. To put it differently, the dodecaphonic system, by foregrounding the differential and synchronic dimension of each tone row, neutralizes or weakens its diachronic dimensions. This results in a quite static system:

> The continuum of subjective time-experience is no longer entrusted with the power of collecting musical events, functioning as a unity, and thereby imparting meaning to them…Once again music subdues time, but no longer by substituting music in its perfection for time, but by negating time through the inhibition of all musical moments by means of an omnipresent construction. Nowhere does the secret agreement between incidental and progressive music prove itself more conclusively than here. Late Schoenberg shares with jazz—and moreover with Stravinsky—the dissociation of musical time. Music formulates a design of the world, which—for better or for worse—no longer recognizes history. (*Philosophy of Modern Music* 60)

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Adorno's analysis of the eclipse of temporality and history in twelve-tone music, itself an interesting historical reversal of Hegel's appraisal of music as a de-spatialized, primarily temporal genre (*Aesthetics* 87-88), is reminiscent of Jameson's symptomatic reading of ahistoricity in structuralism and Russian Formalism. This possible connection is hardly a mere coincidence because those diverse cultural forms are deeply rooted in more or less the same historical condition in which an individual element cannot express itself save in its relation to the totalizing whole and in which there is a gradually increasing degree of obliviousness to history. It seems possible, therefore, to apply to Schoenberg what Jameson says apropos of a structuralist semiotic system and to argue that Schoenberg's system cannot satisfactorily deal with history and time (*The Prison-House of Language* viii-ix).

Nonetheless, it is worth noting that instead of simply rebuking such historical amnesia, Jameson endeavors to learn from the phenomenon something about history itself:

> To say, in short, that synchronic systems cannot deal in any adequate conceptual way with temporal phenomena is not to say that we do not emerge from them with a heightened sense of the mystery of diachrony itself. We have tended to take temporality for granted; where everything is historical, the idea of history itself has seemed to empty of content. Perhaps that is, indeed, the ultimate propadeutic value of the linguistic model: to renew our fascination with the seeds of time. (xi)

In this light, the eclipse of historicity or temporality is not utterly meaningless as a historical symptom in the sense that it can help refresh our obtuse historical sensibility. Besides, it has another feature of prime importance. As is further explored in Jameson's later work on the spatiality of postmodern culture, the intricate synchronic relations of

parts to the whole and the resultant spatial construction of the system can help us understand the "spatial turn" in the postmodern. As far as Schoenberg's twelve-tone composition is concerned, his synchronic structuring of the diachronic flow of musical time both registers the gradual waning or "aging" of a modern obsession with temporality and anticipates what Foucault characterizes as the emergence of a postmodern preoccupation with spatiality ("Of Other Spaces" 23).[20] Hence, Schoenberg's system that replaces the dynamisms of Beethoven by a form of spatialized temporality may be seen as symptomatic of the approaching era.

Unlike Jameson or other contemporary thinkers, Adorno does not fully articulate the weakening of temporality or the spatial turn latent in the evolution of Schoenberg's modernist aesthetic. While he is vigilant against such regressive traits in the Schoenbergian compositional form, he nevertheless projects his Utopian desire into the latter. What is even more paradoxical is that for all his judicious assessment of Schoenberg's totalizing tendency, Adorno ends up developing a similar symptom. This inconsistency leads Susan Buck-Morss to ask whether his radical anti-system has not itself become a system (189-190). To a certain degree, as is the case with Le Corbusier's hygienic space and Adolf Loos's non-decorative architecture that strive to isolate themselves from the surrounding corrupted urban space, Adorno's philosophical system can be understood as a monadic bulwark designed to resist the increasingly reifying logic

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[20] Other contemporary thinkers have similarly argued that there is a sense in which modernity was obsessed with temporality in the time-space configuration whereas space has become a critical category in the postmodern world. See, for example, Edward W. Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London: Verso, 1989).

of capital. Yet, it is an irony of history that Adorno's twelve-tone philosophy cannot resist the administered world except by becoming more or less similar to the latter. Or it may be more correct to say that when seen as a historical symptom, Adorno's dodecaphonic system embraces this paradox to its heart, that his attempt to find a Utopian impulse in Schoenberg's music revolves around this historical contradiction of modernity. Perhaps only when Adorno's philosophy is evaluated against the backdrop of such a contradictory historical reality can we better understand that his negative dialectics, far from being merely incongruous, is indeed a truthful cartography of the verdict of history, wherein, as Adorno enigmatically puts it, "Only thoughts which cannot understand themselves are true" (*Negative Dialectics* 48).

Deleuze's Nomadic Philosophy of Nonidentity

Inasmuch as Adorno's *Minima Moralia* purposefully diverges from Aristotle's *Magna Moralia* and poignantly presents "melancholy science" as opposed to Nietzsche's gay science, Adorno's philosophy of negativity seems incompatible with Deleuze's philosophy which unearths in Nietzsche's multi-layered work an inexhaustible spring of creation and affirmation. In his early work, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, Deleuze reads Nietzsche's perspectives on philosophy and life as a means to make thought "the affirmative power of life" and life "the active force of thought" (101). As he puts forth his Nietzsche-inspired stance on philosophy and life, Deleuze succinctly remarks, "To think is to create: this is Nietzsche's greatest lesson" (xiv). In a comparable vein he

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observes on another occasion that "philosophy is the art of forming, inventing, and fabricating concepts" (*What Is Philosophy?* 2). In a grave historical situation where, as Adorno laments, the vocation of philosophy to teach the good life has been imperiled (*Minima Moralia* 15-18), Deleuze here sanguinely asserts that "there is no reason to believe that we can no longer think after Auschwitz" (106). Contrasted with Adorno's deep-seated skepticism about the possibility of "writing poetry after Auschwitz," the positive perspective espoused by Deleuze seems to vividly encapsulate the unbridgeable difference between *il penseroso* of Frankfurt and *l'allegro* of Paris.[21]

As is often the case with two extremes, however, Adorno's negative dialectics and Deleuze's affirmative philosophy, different and incommensurable though they may be in many respects, *do* converge and share some commonality.[22] As Deleuze comments in his

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[21] In *Valences of the Dialectic* Jameson pairs Adorno and Slavoj Žižek as "two of the most brilliant dialecticians in the history of philosophy." While Adorno is characterized as a votary of the "tragic muse," Žižek is viewed as that of the comic muse (51).

[22] Nick Nesbitt is one of the few commentators who examine Adorno and Deleuze together. Although his discussion also centers around these two thinker's "ethics of internal difference," his approach is different from mine in that he understands Adorno's negative dialectics as a kind of Derridean deconstruction and thinks that Deleuze's philosophy of affirmation falls prey to the lure of the metaphysics of presence. See his "The Expulsion of the Negative: Deleuze, Adorno, and the Ethics of Internal Difference" (75-97). I will take a position different from his, and argue that Adorno and Deleuze propound non-Derridean concepts of (non)identity. Moreover, whereas Nesbitt concedes that to compare Deleuze with another philosopher is "already to proceed in counterpoint to Deleuzian practice, to refuse at some level to follow Deleuze's own method" (75), I would like to invoke Deleuze's view of the history of philosophy as "a sort of buggery or (it comes to the same thing) immaculate conception" (*Negotiations* 6). I also contend that casting Adorno and Deleuze into mutual conflict and illuminating the differences (as well as similarities) between them can be a way to conduct a symptomatic reading of the movement of history from the modern to our globalized postmodern moment. My approach to Adorno's and Deleuze's philosophy-music is distinguished from Nesbitt's, as articulated in his article "Deleuze, Adorno, and the Composition of Musical Multiplicity" (54-75). Not only does Nesbitt leave unexplored the significance of Schoenberg's dodecaphonic composition for Adorno's philosophical model, but he also does not fully explain the constitutive role of Boulez's evolving music theory in Deleuze's philosophy. He *does* discuss Boulez, but in his brief discussion, Boulez is portrayed only as a structuralist advocate of total serialism (67). Nesbitt's inattention to the later phases of Boulez's music prevents him from analyzing a musical striated/smooth space, a Boulezian concept fundamental to Deleuze's rhizomatic thinking.

evaluation of Nietzsche and other philosophers, the "destruction of the known" and the

"creation of the unknown" are inseparable. Similarly, French composer and conductor

Pierre Boulez, whose critical impact on Deleuze's philosophy will be discussed at some

length shortly, shares a similar opinion and writes: "All creators are predators."[23] Need it

be added that at least *some*, if not all, predators are creators? In a philosophy worthy of

the name, negativity and creativity are oftentimes one and the same:

> Spinoza or Nietzsche are philosophers whose critical and destructive
> powers are without equal, but this power always springs from affirmation,
> from joy, from a cult of affirmation and joy, from the exigency of life
> against those who would mutilate and mortify it. For me, that is
> philosophy itself. (*Desert Islands and Other Texts* 144)

Adorno might not be a philosopher of joy like Spinoza or Nietzsche, and yet his

philosophy of negativity probes into the "damaged life" all the way, in hopes of coming

out at the other end and regaining the joyful life once thought of as lost. As Deleuze, the

foremost philosopher of affirmation, aptly comments, "The use of philosophy is to

sadden. A philosophy that saddens no one, that annoys no one, is not a philosophy"

(*Nietzsche and Philosophy* 106). Besides, inasmuch as Adorno's sad or "melancholy"

philosophy is an articulation of his Utopian longing, Adorno is closer to

Nietzsche/Deleuze than a cursory glance might suggest. Deleuze also hints at the affinity

Adorno's thinking possibly bears with Nietzschean thought when he mentions that the

only possible form of philosophical communication in the socially and spiritually

impoverished modern world of commodification is Adorno's "model of a message in a

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[23] Pierre Boulez, Eclats/Boulez, Direction de l'ouvrage et entretiens Claude Samuel, Editions du Centre Pompidou, 1986, p. 60; qtd in Mary Breatnach, *Boulez and Mallarmé: A Study in Poetic Influence* (8).

bottle" or Nietzsche's "model of an arrow shot by one thinker and picked up by another" (*Negotiations* 153-154).

If there is indeed some convergence and commonality between Adorno and Deleuze in which one's message in a bottle or one's arrow is picked up by the other, so to speak, it needs to be found, above all else, in their shared aversion to traditional philosophy. More specifically, if, as Michael Hardt cautions us, the guiding principle of poststructuralism is in opposition not so much to the traditional philosophy *tout court*, but rather to the Hegelian thinking (*Gilles Deleuze* x), the dialogue between Adorno and Deleuze can fruitfully revolve around their anti-Hegelianism. Just as Adorno rebukes Hegel's totalizing thought, Deleuze, too, reiterates his animosity toward Hegel throughout his work. In "A Letter to a Harsh Critic," for instance, Deleuze points out the repressive role of the history of philosophy and baldly states, "What I most detested was Hegelianism and dialectics" (6). In another context, he reproaches Hegel in such terms that echo Adorno's mournful dirge about the "damaged life":

> What is philosophically incarnated in Hegel is the enterprise to "burden"
> life, to overwhelm it with every burden, to reconcile life with the State and
> religion, to inscribe death in life—the monstrous enterprise to submit life
> to negativity, the enterprise of resentment and unhappy consciousness.
> (*Desert Islands and Other Texts* 144)

Deleuze's criticism of the Hegelian philosophical system is so unambiguously pronounced in his entire work that it would not be too much to say that one of his most prominent problematics pivots around how to overcome the Hegelian and identitarian tradition of philosophy, or that which he often dubs "a dogmatic image of thought." Therefore, it is probably in terms of non-identitarian thinking and anti-Hegelianism that

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the "dialogue" between Deleuze and Adorno can be most constructively staged. That is, while Adorno sends a message in a bottle as he seeks what cannot be subsumed into the sweeping logic of universality, unity, and totality, Deleuze picks up the bottle and tries to affirm what cannot be reduced to the Hegelian identity and contradiction.[24] In some comparable and distinctive ways, both thinkers strenuously aspire to find an anti-Hegelian alternative without rejecting the history of philosophy *in toto*.

Deleuze's exploration of nonidentity is pursued through his engagement with a series of iconoclastic philosophers, including such prominent figures as Lucretius, Spinoza, Nietzsche, and Bergson. By intensively studying these thinkers, Deleuze seeks a new mode of thinking *within* the history of philosophy that could deracinate philosophy from the Hegelian terrain of thought. Although Deleuze's anti-Hegelianism is interspersed throughout all his work in varying modes and intensities, it is in *Difference and Repetition* that his original philosophy of nonidentity begins to emerge full-blown. In this profoundly abstruse work, perhaps comparable to Adorno's *Negative Dialectics* in its critique of identity as well as its vast theoretical scope and formidable intellectual rigor, Deleuze places virtually the entire history of philosophy under the miscroscope. In his preface to the English translation of the book, he comments that after studying Hume, Spinoza, Nietzsche, and Proust, he tries here to "do philosophy" for the first time; and that everything he does afterwards (including his collaborations with Félix Guattari) is

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[24] Compare this approach to Jameson's intervention in his recent study *Valences of the Dialectic*, in which he calls for a new reading of Hegel's philosophy by reading the *Phenomenology* as a text that does not affirm any synthesis or *Aufhebung*. For my analysis of Jameson's reading of "Hegel without *Aufhebung*" as compared to Derrida's "Hegelianism without reserve," see Chapter 1, above.

based upon this work in one way or another (xv). If it may be recalled that for Deleuze,

doing philosophy is "to create concepts that are always new" (*What Is Philosophy?* 5), it

is notable that Deleuze brings the hitherto neglected conceptual pair, that is, difference

and repetition, to the forefront as a way to galvanize the asphyxiating practices of

metaphysical thinking.

Building upon his earlier study of internal difference and differentiating

repetition,[25] Deleuze in *Difference and Repetition* calls attention to how difference and

repetition have been repressed by and subordinated to something other than what they are.

He characterizes metaphysical, identitarian systems of thought in terms of

"representation," in which various hierarchized orders between self and other, origin and

copy, and identity and difference, underwrite our thought process. He believes that the

philosophy of representation is grounded in the principle of identity and therefore cannot

adequately conceptualize an "internal" or "pure" difference that is not appropriated back

into the identical, the same, or the universal.[26] Unsurprisingly, Hegel is the main target of

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[25] In "Bergson's Conception of Difference" (1956), for example, he delves into the concept of difference and repetition that cannot be reduced to, or sublated into, the Hegelian identity and contradiction. He praises Bergson more than anyone else for his theorization of what differs from itself or "internal difference," a difference that is neither derived from nor assimilated to something that it is not. In so emancipating the notion of difference from the totalizing grip of the Hegelian dialectics, Deleuze also comes up with a non-dogmatic notion of repetition that coninstead of meaninglessly replicating, the raucous monologue of self-sameness or identity. He insists on the production of difference as repetition and of repetition as difference by saying, "Repetition is thus a kind of difference; only, it's a difference always outside itself, a difference indifferent to itself. Conversely, difference is in turn a repetition" (47).
[26] This critique of identity is an extension and development of his argument in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, where he pits the Nietzschean affirmative negation and difference against the Hegelian opposition and contradiction as a means to rupture dogmatic systems of thought. Through such a reading of Nietzsche's philosophy as "an absolute anti-dialectics" (195), he argues that the dialectic cannot conceive of difference and affirmation save *negatively* as a form of negation; and that the substitution of the negation of the other for the affirmation of self makes the dialectic "the natural ideology of ressentiment and bad conscience" or "*the will to nothingness that expresses itself in the labour of the negative*" (159).

criticism in Deleuze's attempt to maximize the affirmative and differentiating dimensions

of philosophy. In the Hegelian dialectic, there is no doubt room for difference, and yet

that difference exists for the later moment of dialectical sublation or *Aufhebung*. For this

reason, Deleuze holds that difference in Hegel is nothing but an identity disguised as

difference:

> Thus, Hegelian contradiction appears to push difference to the limit, but
> this path is a dead end which brings it back to identity, making identity the
> sufficient condition for difference to exist and be thought. It is only in
> relation to the identical, as a function of the identical, that contradiction is
> the greatest difference. (263)

In a manner similar to Adorno's critique of "the all-subjugating identity principle" in

Hegelian metaphysics (*Negative Dialectics* 320), Deleuze brings to light the existence of

difference and nonidentity in the supposedly self-same, and contends that there is always

the repressed, destabilizing force of difference under the lofty façade of identity. His

emphasis on the presence of nonidentity and alterity within identity is encapsulated in the

phrase, "everywhere the Other in the repetition of the Same" (*Difference and Repetition*

24).

Difference and Repetition also effects its unrelenting criticism of identity along

the axis of repetition as well as that of difference. Deleuze impugns the traditional image

of thought for its unyielding inclination to see repetition solely as the repetition of the

same or of the identical. While difference is conventionally conceived of as something

that needs to be confined *within* philosophical concepts, repetition is often represented as

lying *outside* philosophical concepts (270). As long as repetition is thus seen as an always

identical and self-same concept or as nothing but a disorganized amalgam of things that

needs to be anchored in the identical concept, repetition cannot but become a negatively

charged principle. For that reason Deleuze argues that the regime of representational

philosophy unvaryingly misconceives difference and repetition alike (288). For Deleuze,

such misconception is ascribable to the way philosophy treats repetition as a mechanical

repetition. He takes great care to distinguish repetition from such a simplistic notion.

Whereas the mechanical repetition is a repetition of the same, Deleuze conceptualizes a

new form of repetition that includes difference and alterity in it. So he labels such a

differentiating repetition as "the heterogeneity of an 'a-presentation'" (24).

This arduous endeavor on Deleuze's part "to draw something new from repetition,

to draw difference from it" (76) leads him to maintain that repetition by no means merely

reproduces or multiplies the same, but instead puts the same outside itself and ruptures it

(271). Repetition at its most creative and positive, Deleuze expounds, has the maximum

of difference as its correlate (xxii). By thus correlating difference and repetition, Deleuze

claims that it is none other than this repressed pair or the "unconscious of representation"

(14) through which philosophical identity is in fact produced and sustained. As Deleuze

puts it,

> All identities are only simulated, produced as an optical "effect" by the
> more profound game of difference and repetition. We propose to think
> difference in itself independently of the forms of representation which
> reduce it to the Same, and the relation of different to different
> independently of those forms which make them pass through the negative.
> (xix)[27]

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[27] Later on in the text Deleuze reiterates a similar point: "So it is with difference in intensity, disparity in
the phantasm, dissemblance in the form of time, the differential in thought. *Opposition, resemblance,*

For all the constitutive and productive function of difference and repetition, however, the image of thought, or what Deleuze glosses as "the insipid monocentricity of the circles in the Hegelian dialectic" (263), reduces them to various tautological images of the identical and the negative. As a consequence of this Hegelian view, a dogmatic image of thought cannot think "*a pure difference and a complex repetition*" (xx).

To such a "dogmatic, orthodox or moral image" of thought (131) Deleuze opposes a generative and affirmative mode of thought, in which the concept of difference is irreducible to a conceptual difference that is soon to be subsumed under the higher plane of identity and affirmation; and in which the essence of repetition is irreducible to a mechanistic identity, similarity, or resemblance. After enumerating a number of postulates upon which the conventional image of thought is based, Deleuze comments,

> Together they form the dogmatic image of thought. They crush thought under an image which is that of the Same and the Similar in representation, but profoundly betrays what it means to think and alienates the two powers of difference and repetition, of philosophical commencement and recommencement. The thought which is born in thought, the act of thinking which is neither given by innateness nor presupposed by reminiscence but engendered in its genitality, is a thought without image. (167)

Here, it is not so difficult to notice the close affinity that Deleuze's philosophy of difference and repetition has with Adorno's philosophy of nonidentity. Both thinkers labor to come up with new ways to implode the identitarian mode of thinking *from within*. In so decentering the asserted self-sameness of philosophy in an immanent manner, they

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identity and even analogy are only effects produced by these presentations of difference, rather than being conditions which subordinate difference and make it something represented" (145).

invoke "the consistent sense of nonidentity" in identity (*Negative Dialectics* 5) and "the repetition of the Other in the Same" (*Difference and Repetition* 24).

Deleuze's philosophy of nonidentity is extended in such a way that critically interrogates the primacy of the contemplating or thinking subject that underlies and guarantees the principle of identity in philosophy. His charge is leveled chiefly at the Cogito, which, as Vincent Descombes describes, constitutes the inaugurating moment of modern philosophy (1). Deleuze observes that what Descartes saw as the original principle of thought is actually a fictional construct that derives its force from the fictitious identity and unity of the philosophizing subject. So he asserts that it is nothing but "the identity of the Self in the 'I think'" or "the unity of a thinking subject" (*Difference and Repetition* 133) that orchestrates the harmony of different human faculties and imposes a regulative form of sameness upon the surrounding external objects. In this sense, the Cogito is the foundational moment in philosophy that signals the annihilation of difference. Inasmuch as the identitarian tendency in philosophy is thus entangled with the purported identity of the cogitating subject, it is a philosophical as well as political imperative to disrupt that entanglement. Hence Deleuze writes, "To restore difference in thought is to untie the first knot which consists of representing difference through the identity of the concept and the thinking subject" (266).

Deleuze's insight into the structural entwinement between the philosophical principle of identity and the Cartesian subject leads him to depersonalize the centered subject and propose a "Cogito for a dissolved self" (xxi) for his "thought without image." He takes Antonin Artaud as one of the exemplary figures in the genealogy of

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disembodied thinking which through its disjointed and fractured structure resists the

centralizing mode of philosophy. This prefigures Deleuze and Guattari's later

collaborative work, *Anti-Oedipus*, in which they set out to deterritorialize the normative

institutionalization of psychoanalysis. For Deleuze and Guattari psychoanalysis grasps

the prolific and even perverse production of desire vis-à-vis rigidly triangulated

Oedipalization: papa-mommy-me. For this identitarian mode of thought in

psychoanalysis Deleuze and Guattari substitute what they call "schizoanalysis" and argue

for a proliferation and multiplication of desire:

> The schizoanalytic argument is simple: desire is a machine, a synthesis of
> machines, a machinic arrangement—desiring-machines. The order of
> desire is the order of *production*; all production is at once desiring-
> production and social production. We therefore reproach psychoanalysis
> for having stifled this order of production, for having shunted it into
> *representation*. (*Anti-Oedipus* 296)

From the viewpoint of schizoanalysis, psychoanalysis is of a piece with identitarian or

representational thought. In order to subvert such "identity" in psychoanalysis or "the

imperialism of the Oedipus complex" (23), it becomes pivotal to see desire as *production*.

Furthermore, in such a production of desiring-machines, the subject is no longer

produced as the unified Cartesian subject. The schizophrenic subject and the body

without organs are original variations on the great poststructuralist thematics of the death

of the subject. Apropos of their acephal or fragmented subjectivity Deleuze and Guattari

comment, "This subject itself is not at the center, which is occupied by the machine, but

on the periphery, with no fixed identity, forever decentered, *defined* by the states through

which it passes" (20).

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Far from an undifferentiated abyss, this acephalic philosophy is radically divorced

from philosophy of identity and representation. The latter lays emphasis on the

individuality and singularity couched solely in terms of "I" and "Self," and, therefore,

when there is no longer "I," individuation and singularization cannot but cease.

Accordingly, only an undifferentiated groundlessness ensues in which difference is not

sustainable. Deleuze's depersonalizing philosophy of nonideneity, by contrast, frees

individuality and singularity from the onerous fetters of "I," and turns the

"groundlessness" into a locus of spawning multiplicities. As he mentions in his own

explication of *Difference and Repetition*, what Deleuze seeks to uncover is no longer the

I, the Self, persons or characters, but rather "*impersonal individuations*" and "*pre-*

individual singularities" (*Desert Islands and Other Texts* 137). Once dethroned and

ungrounded from its former prerogative of the I, the self is now transformed into a

groundlessness that is nonetheless productively differentiated, into a pre-individual and

impersonal event that possesses the potential of becoming multiple. This philosophical

space emptied of the self-sameness of the thinking subject is now brimming with

multiplicities. This is the defining character of Deleuze's philosophy of nonidentity

which he contrasts with traditional philosophical systems in these terms:

> Ideas are not concepts; they are a form of eternally positive differential
> multiplicity, distinguished from the identity of concepts. Instead of
> representing difference by subordinating it to the identity of concepts, and
> thereby to the resemblance of perception, the opposition of predicates and
> the analogy of judgement, they liberate it and cause it to evolve in positive
> systems in which different is related to different, making divergence,
> disparity and decentring so many objects of affirmation which rupture the
> framework of conceptual representation. The powers of repetition include
> displacement and disguise, just as difference includes power of divergence

and decentring. The one no less than the other belongs to Ideas, for Ideas
no more have an inside than they do an outside. (*Differnce and Repetition*
288)

Deleuze's depersonalized philosophical space of Ideas in no way suppresses difference

and repetition. Nor does it synthesize them into the identical or the negative. Instead, this

ungrounded and deterritorialized mode of thinking is shot through with multiplying

differences and differentiating multiplicities.

Seen in this way, Deleuze's philosophy of difference and repetition seems to

stand quite close to Derrida's deconstruction. As Jameson recently notes, they are

"philosophers of Difference par excellence" (*Valences of the Dialectic* 114). Nonetheless,

Jameson is quick to add that unlike Derrida, Deleuze is ultimately an "ontologist" and

that his "ontology of difference" is not necessarily in line with the Derridean search for a

completely deontologized plane of thought. In this respect, one may observe that as is the

case with Adorno, Deleuze does not go so far as Derrida in refraining from any

philosophical assertions or propositions. As is suggested in Deleuze's assertion that the

creative power of the philosophers he admires, including particularly Spinoza and

Nietzsche, springs from "a cult of affirmation and joy" (*Desert Islands and Other Texts*

144), his philosophy of nonidentity does not confine itself to mere indeterminacy but

rather tends toward affirmation, creation, and becoming. It may also be observed that his

philosophy of affirmation and joy differs starkly from Adorno's melancholy science. Yet

Deleuze's and Adorno's philosophies of nonidentity are comparable when it comes to

their efforts to break open the metaphysical systems of thought without recourse to

aporetic indeterminacy. Also, what is important is whether or not these seemingly

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different modes of philosophy, when plugged into each other, can create some new

conceptual planes that shed light on each other's thought and on the historical conditions

in which their philosophies come into being. Keeping this in mind, the remainder of this

chapter juxtaposes Adorno and Deleuze in two ways. The next section discusses the way

Deleuze finds, as Adorno does, a non-identitarian form of philosophy in music. The final

sections examine how Adorno's and Deleuze's philosophies illuminate some of the

historically epochal phenomena pertaining to global culture in general and globalized

American culture in particular.

Deterritorializing Philosophy, or Constructing Smooth Space

There are not many instances where Deleuze comments directly on Adorno. In

one of his collaborations with Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* though, he talks about

Adorno's negative dialectics in relation to a "nonpropositional form" in which

"communication, exchange, consensus, and opinion vanish entirely" (99). This

commentary is notable because Deleuze is also in search of an innovative philosophical

form that suits his extensive critique of traditional philosophy. In the preface to

Difference and Repetition he declares, "[t]he time is coming when it will hardly be

possible to write a book of philosophy as it has been done for so long" (xxi). There is no

doubt that the dazzling virtuosity with which Deleuze enacts his far-reaching critique of

the history of philosophy is a true *tour de force*. Notwithstanding his urgent call for a new

form of philosophy, however, *Difference and Repetition* is hardly different from

traditional philosophical writings. As Deleuze later acknowledges, the form deployed in the book remains conventional and aspires toward a "classical height" and even an "archaic depth" (*Two Regimes of Madness* 65). Even though, as Foucault elucidates, *Difference and Repetition* is full of "decenterings, series that register the halting passage from presence to absence, from excess to deficiency" ("Theatrum Philosophicum" 165), Deleuze's philosophy of difference and repetition in the book does not yet completely cut ties with the identitarian mode of thinking at the level of form.

In his subsequent studies, however, Deleuze seeks out philosophical forms that suit his non-identitarian and non-dialectical thinking. In some sense, his later books, whether authored by himself or together with Guattari, can be seen as a series of formal experimentations designed to move beyond the rigidified or "propositional" modes of writing. Although Deleuze is interested in a wide variety of contemporary cultural forms, it is, as in the case of Adorno, music that seems to affords the most prominent model for his formal innovation. Given that Deleuze and Guattari repeatedly insist that music is a "cutting-edge deterritorialization" and take music for the supreme form of becoming (*A Thousand Plateaus* 348), it is hardly surprising that Deleuze engages with music in his quest for an acentral, nonhierarchized, nonsignifying assemblage of composition. Moreover, insofar as Deleuze regards music as a Proustian narrative that replaces "the organic play of identity and variation" with "the functional play of repetition and difference" ("Occupy without Counting" 302-303), it follows that he attempts to turn his philosophical composition into music. As in Adorno, Deleuze gives philosophy its line of escape beyond itself with the help of music; and it is by means of this becoming-music of

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philosophy that he tries to remove the age-old distinctions between content and form, between philosophical ideas and philosophical *Darstellung*, in one stroke.

The becoming-music of Deleuze's philosophy comes to fruition first in *The Logic of Sense*. As he expounds in his Note for the Italian edition, this book was a chief turning point for his thinking, in that for the first time Deleuze sought to come up with a compositional form that broke away from conventional philosophical forms (*Two Regimes of Madness* 63). In his polemical reading of Adorno's twelve-tone philosophy, Lyotard envisages a new type of music distinguishable from the Schoenbergian system and comments, "[w]e who are no longer there need a music-intensity, a sonorous machine without finality…a surface music, without depth, preventing representation" ("Adorno as the Devil" 132). Interestingly enough, it is this type of music—a music of intensity, surface, and non-representation—on which Deleuze draws for his reworking of the "depth" and "height" models still much in use in *Difference and Repetition*. As Deleuze says, the novelty of *The Logic of Sense* consists in its exploration of surfaces. In this text his primary concepts in previous studies—multiplicity, singularity, difference, intensity and the like—remain more or less unaltered, but they are restructured and reframed along the axis of surface. In the section on the three images of philosophers, for instance, he characterizes Platonic idealism as being obsessed with "height" and pre-Socratic philosophy as being predicated upon "depth." Deleuze then propounds a philosophy of surface that departs from those stratified modes of thought:

> The autonomy of the surface, independent of, and against depth and
> height; the discovery of incorporeal events, meanings, or effects, which
> are irreducible to "deep" bodies and to "lofty" Ideas—these are the

important Stoic discoveries against the pre-Socratics and Plato…What we are to call this new philosophical operation, insofar as it opposes at once Platonic conversion and pre-Socratic subversion? Perhaps we can call it "perversion," which at least befits the system of provocations of this new type of philosopher—if it is true that perversion implies an extraordinary art of surfaces. (*The Logic of Sense* 132-133)

Deleuze thus underlines the ex-centric and de-stratifying dimensions of his philosophy of surface. He makes most of this "perverse" and "provocative" art of surfaces in waging his dual battle against "height" and "depth."

What merits our attention here is that Deleuze employs serialism as a subversive philosophical form of surface. In one interview, he comments that "In *The Logic of Sense* I attempted a kind of serial composition" (*Negotiations* 141).[28] In contrast to *Difference and Repetition*, wherein the convoluted concatenation of his arguments ascends toward the "height" of the conclusion and descends into the "depth" of abstruse philosophical propositions, *The Logic of Sense* diverges from that well-worn practice of ascent and descent—a practice which Derrida in his intervention in Hegel's "semiology" similarly portrays as "the pit and the pyramid."[29] Befitting his serial form of composition, *The Logic of Sense* has neither an introduction nor a conclusion. Instead, its compositional space is spread out as a series of flat surfaces. All conceptual segments, permutated independently of one another, constitute and produce Deleuze's philosophy of singularity and multiplicity. Deleuze explains one of the most distinctive traits of his serial composition as follows:

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[28] See also *Two Regimes of Madness* (65).
[29] See his "The Pit and the Pyramid: Introduction to Hegel's Semiology" in *Margins of Philosophy*, pp. 69-108.

> This time we are confronted with a synthesis of the heterogeneous; *the serial form is necessarily realized in the simultaneity of at least two series.* Every unique series, whose homogeneous terms are distinguished only according to type or degree, necessarily subsumes under it two heterogeneous series, each one of which is constituted by terms of the same type or degree, although these terms differ in nature from those of the other series (they can of course differ also in degree). The serial form is thus essentially multi-serial. (36-37)

Series need not play the role of what they are not in order to move toward a higher or deeper plane of thought. Whereas Hegel's dialectics and Beethoven's composition move toward the "height" and "depth" of the philosophical and musical *Aufhebung*, Deleuze's serial form, analogous perhaps to Adorno's non-dialectical form of fragmentary essays in *Minima Moralia*, departs from dialectics which he says is "the art of *conjugation* (see the *confatalia* or series of events which depend on one another)" (8). Unlike dialectics, series are simply adjacent to one another without hinging on one another or without aspiring toward something higher or deeper. Therefore, those disjunctive series might be best described, to adapt one of Deleuze and Guattari's formulae in *Anti-Oedipus*, as "desiring machines" which function as *connective synthesis*: and…and…and… (*Anti-Oedipus* 5-8).

Seen from this perspective, Deleuze's critique of metaphysical baggage and paraphernalia in philosophical models of depth and height is enacted at the level of form as well. His philosophical serial composition ruptures the linear and developmental odyssey of the mind in the *Bildungsroman* of metaphysical philosophy. In such a serial form of writing, suggests Deleuze, the philosophizing subject should also be decentered and transfigured like Alice and other characters in Lewis Carroll's story who take constantly changing "schizoid" roles and positions instead of embodying the same and

identical archetypes. Each series in *The Logic of Sense* is constructed independently of

one another, and it appears to make little difference exactly where the book is entered or

left. Rather than representing a monolithic form of philosophy or embodying what

Karatani Kojin calls the "will to architecture" (*In'yu to shite no kenchiku* 24), Deleuze's

philosophical series form a "convoluted story" and "chaodyssey (*chao-errance*)," in

which each segment is always ex-centric to one another and draws a line of flight from

the "always decentered center" (xiv, 264).

Despite the subversive nature of the serial form used in *The Logic of Sense*, there

was something problematic about the book that Deleuze did not recognize as such at the

time. He later reflects on this unforeseen problem and states, "What is it that was just not

right in *Logic of Sense*? Apparently it still reflects a naïve and guilty sense of self-

satisfaction with respect to psychoanalysis…I was then trying, very timidly, to render

psychoanalysis *inoffensive*, presenting it as a surface art, one which deals with Events as

surface events" (*Two Regimes of Madness* 65). In other words, psychoanalytical concepts

remain intact in the text and Deleuze does not effectively reveal the *offensive* nature of

psychoanalysis as a depth/height model. Here, it is instructive to recall the extent to

which Schoenberg's serial form also militates against Adorno's twelve-tone philosophy

of nonidentity owing to its latent tendency toward excessive subjectivism and temporal

anamnesis, as well as its unexpected replication of the "identity" of the "administered

world." Similarly, as long as serialism resists the linear motivic-harmonic syntax of tonal

music, Deleuze's use of serial method for his non-identitarian thought can be constructive.

Since it forms a basically *static* system, however, the serial technique appropriated in *The Logic of Sense* is out of sync with Deleuze's vibrant philosophy of *becoming*.

Though *The Logic of Sense* is mired in the methodological paradox of serialism, his alliance with Guattari becomes a significant breakthrough for his philosophy in two ways. First and foremost, while he collaborates with Guattari, his effort to disclose the *offensive* nature of psychoanalysis gains full force. For example, their non-identitarian schizoanalysis in *Anti-Oedipus* challenges the "identity" and "representation" of the institution of psychoanalysis and takes to another level Deleuze's politics of difference and becoming.[30] Second, while his collaboration with Guattari fuels and further inspires his politics of nonidentity in terms of "content," it also marks a new phase in his search for a creative philosophical form. With reference to the form of *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze notes that it differs markedly from his earlier books in that it no longer has surface, still less height and depth. Everything in this book *happens* as becoming, event, and intensity. As Deleuze later explains, the central concern of this book is with how all these different intensities connect, create, and multiply *ad infinitum* like rhizomes (*Two Regimes of Madness* 65-66). Such an endeavor to uproot the identity and totality of thought and to deterritorialize long-trodden philosophical forms gives rise to the invention of a highly original representational form which Deleuze and Guattari compare to Mallarmé's *Livre*. "In particular, formal investigations concerning manual or printed writing," they write,

[30] In his foreword to *Nietzsche and Philosophy* Hardt holds that "Multiplicity, becoming, and affirmation open the path toward a politics of difference. In this book, however, the content of that politics is only alluded to, Deleuze's politics of difference is really only elaborated in his later work, especially his collaborations with Guattari" ("Foreword" xi-xii).

change their meaning according to whether the characteristics of the letters and the qualities of the words are in the service of a signifier, whose effects they express following exegetical rules; or whether, on the contrary, they break through this wall so as to set flows in motion, and establish breaks that overflow or rupture the sign's conditions of identity, and that cause books within "the book" to flow and to disintegrate, entering into multiple configurations whose possibilities were already the object of the typological exercises of Mallarmé—always passing underneath the signifier, filling through the wall: which again shows that the death of writing is infinite, so long as it arises and arrives from within. (*Anti-Oedipus* 243)

It is not difficult to see where Deleuze and Guattari's emphasis lies. As they decry the identity of the institutionalized Oedipalism in *Anti-Oedipus*, the textual form itself sets in constant motion a multiplicity of (over)flows that rapturously rupture the hierarchy between signifier and signified and enter into multiple connections with one another.

Deleuze's exploration of an original form for his philosophy of nonidentity is carried out more thoroughly in *A Thousand Plateaus*. Lyotard once mentions in passing how Deleuze and Guattari's *Thousand Plateaus* frustrates the reader who has a commonsensical idea of philosophical writing ("Answering the Question" 71). In their labyrinthine text Deleuze and Guattari blur the boundary between philosophy and non-philosophy, with the result that as varied disciplines as linguistics, ornithology, literature, geology, art, molecular biology, physics, psychoanalysis, economics are plugged into their peculiarly encyclopedic exposition. The textual form itself is no less extraordinary in that it is comprised of not chapters but plateaus, which the authors explain in their note can be read independently of one another or entered in any order (with the exception of the "conclusion"). Deleuze and Guattari pit subterranean shoots of a rhizome against the identity and unity of the tree-book and propose a concept of rhizomatic book:

A book has neither object nor subject; it is made of variously formed matters, and very different dates and speeds…In contrast to centered (even polycentric) systems with hierarchized modes of communication and preestablished paths, the rhizome is an acentered, nonhierarchical, nonsignifying system without a General and without an organizing memory or central automaton, defined solely by a circulation of states. What is at question in the rhizome is a relation to sexuality—but also to the animal, the vegetal, the world, politics, the book, things natural and artificial—that is totally different from the arborescent relation: all manner of "becomings." (3-21)

Concerning this type of rhizomatic book, Deleuze elsewhere remarks that "[t]his really was a book without subject, without beginning or end, but not without middle" (*Dialogues* xi). Not unlike Roland Barthes' "text" (as opped to "work) of which "the death of the author" and "a system with neither close nor center" (*Image Music Text* 159) constitute two conspicuous characteristics, the textual form of *A Thousand Plateaus* calls into question the "root-book" or "arborescent systems" (5) and brilliantly enacts Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy of nonidentity and becoming. This indissociable entwining of content and form is underlined when they suggestively hold that "There is no difference between what a book talks about and how it is made" (4).

Deleuze and Guattari's formal innovation in *A Thousand Plateaus* brings music to the forefront, and they state their intention unequivocally from the beginning. They open their first plateau on rhizome with something that looks like a puerile scribble on a musical score. Unimportant though it may appear, this image, like other graphic images that populate the diverse planes of this text, functions as a flung-open window through which the reader can constantly come and go and through which the cosmic forces generated inside and outside the textual space move and travel. Incidentally, this

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seemingly infantile image is an actual music score for *5 Piano Pieces for David Tudor* by contemporary Italian composer Sylvano Bussoti. This is indeed an exceptionally atypical way to begin a philosophical text. Nevertheless, in view of Deleuze's recommendation that the readers should read a book as they would listen to a record (*Dialogues II* 3), the apparently quizzical opening can be seen as an overture devised to usher the reader into the philosophy-music that is to unfold at the same time as it signals a creative dialogue between philosophy and nonphilosophy.

I would like to argue that with such an eccentric gesture, Deleuze and Guattari turn their philosophical writing into a musical composition. Deleuze and Guattari's idea of the becoming-music of philosophy is conceptualized in detail in the plateau entitled "Of the Refrain." The importance of the refrain in their philosophy-music was such that when asked if Guattari and he had created any philosophical concept, Deleuze replied, "How about the ritornello? We formulated a concept of the ritornello in philosophy" ("We formulated Ritornello" 385). The refrain or the ritornello in classical music refers to a recurring passage for orchestra in the first or third movement of a Baroque-style concerto. In a traditional concerto, the orchestral tutti introduces a theme, and while the orchestra "converses" with a soloist, this theme is repeated and developed in varied keys and styles throughout the movement (Roeder 48-51). Deleuze and Guattari detect the "compartmentalized, centralized, and hierarchized" nature in the binaristic structure of the refrain, and observe that music in the Classical period proceeds with "a One-Two" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 338). Here as elsewhere they call into question a rigid binarism or hierarchization as embodied in the refrain and, by extension, in the thematic-motivic

development of Western musical composition. This bears resemblance to Adorno's critique of Beethoven's sonata form or to Schoenberg's disruption of tonal music. This cursory resemblance becomes more than a mere coincidence when it is considered that during the Classical period the ritornello is incorporated into the sonata form and then into the rondo form, two primary forms of "identity" which Adorno associates with excessive subjectivism and the stasis of the ever-same. In some sense, it can be argued that the ritornello contains in embryonic form a series of structural problems which Adorno finds in later Western music. This is why we can interrogate Deleuze and Guattari's analysis of the refrain and Adorno's critique of the sonata form within interrelated frameworks.

As in Adorno's philosophy-music, Deleuze and Guattari's intent is to de-stratify and de-arborify the refrain. For Deleuze and Guattari, the refrain is the foremost expression of identity and territoriality and thus needs to be differentiated and deterritorialized. They assert that music has the highest coefficient of deterritorialization, or in their own words, "Music is a creative, active operation that consists in deterritorializing the refrain. Whereas the refrain is essentially territorial, territorializing, or reterritorializing, music makes it a deterritorialized content for a deterritorializing form of expression" (300). Accordingly, when Deleuze and Guattari transfigure their philosophy into music, they require their philosophy to constantly deterritorialize its territorial motifs and landscapes. In doing so, their philosophy-music recreates the refrain as a form of deterritorialization; and as they make the refrain draw a line of flight out of its habitual and identitarian territory, they endow it with anti-metaphysical qualities of

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Nietzsche's "eternal return." In conformity with his previous studies such as *Nietzsche and Philosophy* and *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze refuses to see the refrain as the return of the same. Instead, he reasseses the refrain as a creative force that unceasingly generates internal differences and deterritorializes the terrain of identity and representation. As he says, "Let us recall Nietzsche's idea of the eternal return as a little ditty, a refrain, but which captures the mute and unthinkable forces of the Cosmos" (343). Deleuze's philosophy-music, in short, aspires to establish a productive and creative relationship between the refrain and the eternal return as a way to deterritorialize the identitarian terrains of conventional thought.

Such an effort to deterritorialize the refrain and its deep-rooted liaison with an arborescent system is pursued along multiple axes. In stark contrast to Adorno, who models his twelve-tone philosophy upon Schoenberg's music, Deleuze makes use of post-Schoenbergian music in his exploration of an innovative philosophical form. Most important for Deleuze's deterritorialized philosophical form is Pierre Boulez's music theory. Boulez's early composition was under the influence of the second Viennese School (Schoenberg, Webern, and Berg). Although Boulez initially embraced serialism and wrote that "since the Viennese discovery, every composer outside the serial experiments has been *useless*," he later in his anti-Oedipal essay, "Schoenberg Is Dead," overtly impugned his musical father for limiting serialization to pitch alone (274-275). Elsewhere Boulez also pointedly criticized the predominant status of a single series in Schoenberg's dodecaphonic system (*Boulez on Music Today* 100). Such a critique is accompanied by the composition of *Structures I* for two pianos (1952), a work in which

he extends the process of serialization to other musical dimensions such as rhythm, timber, duration, intensity, and register, thus inaugurating what is later to be known as post-Weberian serialism or total serialism. As he later explains, he attempted through such an experimental work to enact "what Barthes might call a reduction of style to the degree zero" (*Conversations with Célestin Deliège* 55).

In order to bring into perspective the historical significance of Boulez's music both in its own specificity and in contrast to Schoenberg's serialism, it is helpful to juxtapose Deleuze's view on total serialism with Adorno's. Deleuze's attitude toward Boulez is unambiguous: he sees Boulez's compositional practice favorably and states, "[t]he extension of the series into durations, intensities, and timbres is not an act of closure but, on the contrary, an opening of what is closed in the series of pitches [*hauteurs*]" (*What Is Philosophy?* 232, n. 30). In diametric opposition to Deleuze, Adorno gives Boulez a wary look even while praising his genius. For Adorno, Boulez's total serialism is nothing but a complete schematization and mechanization of music. In his contemplations on post-Schoenbergian music or what he labels as a "musique informelle," Adorno mentions that whereas the objective totality of Schoenberg's compositional system never completely purges itself of subjective expressions, the new music as espoused by Boulez destabilizes the balance between subject and object and tends exorbitantly toward objectivity ("Vers une musique informelle" 279). Adorno detects in such an excessive form of mechanization and abstraction an unmistakable sign of "aging." He holds that

> [Boulez] and his disciples aspire to dispose of every "compositional freedom" as pure caprice, along with every vestige of traditional musical idiom: in fact, every subjective impulse is in music at the same time an impulse of musical language. These composers have above all attempted to bring rhythm under the strict domination of twelve-tone procedure, and ultimately to replace composition altogether with an objective-calculatory ordering of intervals, pitches, long and short durations, degrees of loudness; and integral rationalization such as has never before been envisaged in music. ("The Aging of the New Music" 187)

Boulez's total or "integral" serialism accelerates and intensifies the proclivity toward objectivization latent in Schoenberg's twelve-tone serialism, to the point that the subjective is tendentially liquidated altogether. Critically urgent though it may be to bid farewell to the kind of subjectivism passed down from neo-Romanticism to Expressionism, Adorno adds, it is impossible to conceive of a music completely excised of subjective elements ("Vers une musique informelle" 280). In a dialogue with Boulez, Foucault touches on the way music has always been more sensitive to technical changes of the time than any other arts (with the possible exception of cinema) ("Contemporary Music and the Public" 6). Adorno moves in a different direction than Foucault and asks whether the mechanization of total serialism does not mirror "the contraction of freedom, the collapse of individuality that helpless and disintegrated individuals confirm, approve, and do once again to themselves" ("The Aging of the New Music" 198-199). Lyotard concurs with Adorno on this point and discerningly points out the correspondence between the "universalization of the principle of including all the dimensions of sound" in total serialism and the process of abstraction and reification in capitalism ("Adorno as the Devil" 134).

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In the year when Adorno publishes "The Aging of the New Music," Boulez premiers one of his most critically acclaimed works, *Le marteau sans maître.* Rejuvenating his prematurely "aging" musical rationalism, Boulez now experiments with a less rigid musical form. Based on Réne Char's surrealist poem, this composition for contralto voice and a small ensemble of instrumentalists seeks a way out of the totalizing serialism in his earlier works, say, *Structures I*, by means of its flexible employment of varied musical materials (sound vs. word, sound vs. silence, pulsed rhythm vs. free rhythm, solo vs. ensemble, etc.). Non-Western features such as Balinese and African music are also incorporated into this diversified musical space. Furthermore, this work also resists a fixed and complete form: as with Boulez's other works, this work was said to be work "in progress" even after it was premiered. Boulez reworked it over and again, developing the concept of flexible and open form, something close to what Adorno calls a "musique informelle." Boulez's contingent form thus manages to find a middle way between a serial composition so totalizing that the composer's freedom is considerably minimized and the inexorbitant free play of the composer's imagination which often leads to musical incoherence and anarchy (Griffiths 171). Boulez takes his formal innovation to another level in his *Pli selon pli*, a piece he names a "portrait of Mallarmé himself" (*Orientations* 176). In this work he aims to explore "a musical equivalent, both poetic and formal, to Mallarmé's poetry" (*Conversations with Célestin Deliège* 94). Thus he tries to decenter the composer's total control over music and to "bleach" the compositional space with the notion of chance or aleatory music. Just as Mallarmé's sketches for the *Livre* provide reciters with multiple and open-ended possibilities and

connections, so too does Boulez's *Pli selon pli* develop a mobile form that allows the

conductor and performers alike to assemble and dissemble musical passages in the score

in different ways and thereby multiply musical narratives. Boulez's deterritorialization of

music continues later on as he seeks to break open the monadic enclosure of traditional

classical music by bringing "nonmusical" electronic sounds into his musical terrain.

The kind of nomadic mobility and flexibility detectable in Boulez's compositional

forms explains why Deleuze takes such a keen interest in his music. Among Boulez's

formal innovations, however, the theory of striated and smooth space is most influential

for Deleuze's philosophical form. A "striated space" refers to a wide array of rigid and

hierarchized musical structures commonly found in conventional music, whereas a

"smooth space" is a decentralized and de-subjectified musical space of deterritorialization.

As has already been discussed in the earlier section of this chapter, Schoenberg's twelve-

tone music neutralizes a diachronic-horizontal line in a musical composition by way of its

heavy recourse to synchronic-vertical relationality. Boulez reframes such a musical

syntax in yet another direction so that his "smooth space" confounds both diachronic

linearity and synchronic relationality in musical narrative. Thus Deleuze defines "smooth

space" in terms of the "diagonal":

> The unity of the voyage is not in the vertical roads of the landscape, which
> are like harmonic cuts, nor is it in the melodic line of the route. It is in the
> diagonal, "from one window to another," that allows the succession of
> points of view and the movement of the point of view to be joined in a
> block of transformation or duration. (*Two Regimes of Madness* 299)

> The diagonal frees itself, breaks or twists. The line no longer forms a
> contour, and instead passes *between* things, *between* points. It belongs to a
> smooth space. It draws a plane that has no more dimensions than that

which crosses it; therefore the multiplicity it constitutes is no longer subordinated to the One, but takes on a consistency of its own. These are multiplicities of masses or packs, not of classes; anomalous and nomadic multiplicities, not normal or legal ones; multiplicities of becoming, or transformational multiplicities, not countable elements and ordered relations; fuzzy, not exact aggregates, etc. (*A Thousand Plateaus* 505-506)

Neither vertical nor horizontal, Boulez's smooth space seeks to fundamentally restructure beyond recognition both Beethovenian and Schoenbergian compositional methods. While breaking away from those musical models of "depth" and "height," Boulez now wends his way through the diagonal—which, as Deleuze elucidates in *Difference and Repetition*, is populated by "differences without negation" (267)—and creates a deterritorialized smooth space of music.

When seen thus, Boulez's deterritorialization of compositional space in music can be said to break open the closure of Schoenberg's modernist poetics. When Deleuze comments on Boulez's "spiraling" that moves beyond both the vertical cliffs of harmony and the horizontal landscapes of melody (*A Thousand Plateaus* 478), he likens such a movement to a voyage "from one window to another" (*Two Regimes of Madness* 299). If Schoenberg's serialism was a "windowless monad" as Adorno poetically puts it, Boulez's music creates manifold windows with a view to opening and drawing multiple nomadic lines of flight. Deleuze also characterizes Schoenberg's musical form as a striated space in contrast to Boulez's smooth space. Expounding on the difference between striated space and smooth space, Deleuze invokes monadology and nomadology: "Although the 'monads' are no longer thought to be closed upon themselves, and are postulated to entertain direct, step-by-step local relations, the purely monadological point of view

proves inadequate and should be superseded by a 'nomadology' (the ideality of striated space versus the realism of smooth space)" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 574, n. 27). Arguably, this call for a turn from a *monadological* striated space to a *nomadological* smooth space is the guiding principle that underlies and underwrites Deleuze's journey from the serial composition of *The Logic of Sense* to the deterritorialized rhizomatic smooth space of *A Thousand Plateaus*.

The differences between Schoenberg's and Boulez's musical practices (from which Adorno and Deleuze garner invaluable inspiration for their respective philosophical forms) mark a historically and theoretically rich site in which the Frankfurt School's retention of some form of autonomous subjectivity and totality collides head-on with de-subjectivity and non-totality in poststructuralism and postmodernism. Such a topic will need another substantive study in its own right. Here suffice it to mention that Deleuze, while he draws on Boulez's music theory as well as other radical efforts to revolutionize musical form, enacts a deterritorialization of philosophy; and that such a philosophical smooth space moves toward a kind of zero-degree writing. His primary concern is always with transforming and deterritorializing philosophy and finding an exemplary form of such transformative power in music. As in a musical smooth space, the essential thing in his philosophy is not "forms and matters, or themes" any longer, but "forces, densities, intensities" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 343). In this respect, it is arguable that Deleuze's philosophical writing has neither central themes nor matters to be proposed in an argumentative manner, nor coherent forms into which the "content" is to be inserted. For this reason, when he defines philosophy, he writes: "Philosophy is no

longer synthetic judgment; it is like a thought synthesizer functioning to make thought travel, make it mobile, make it a force of the Cosmos (in the same way as one makes sound travel)" (343).

Insofar as Deleuze likens philosophy to a synthesizer (as in electronic music) and constantly underlines the significance of becoming-music, *A Thousand Plateaus* can be regarded as a musical assemblage in more than a metaphorical or figurative sense of the word. Just as Adorno's philosophy in general and his *Negative Dialectics* in particular can be considered to be a twelve-tone philosophy-music, so *A Thousand Plateaus* can also be taken as an enormous and complex musical refrain, in which a vast amount of materials and a ceaseless flow of forces are multiplied and deterritorialized. As numerous philosophical concepts are plugged into, and unplugged from, non-philosophical elements, these seemingly incompatible forces create varying speeds, densities, and intensities all the while deterritorializing the traditional terrains of thought. Ruminating on such a compositional form, Deleuze and Guattari say,

> In a book, as in all things, there are lines of articulation or segmentarity, strata and territories; but also lines of flight, movements of deterritorialization and destratification. Comparative rates of flow on those lines produce phenomena of relative slowness and viscosity, or, on the contrary, of acceleration and rupture. All this, lines and measurable speeds, constitutes an *assemblage*. A book is an assemblage of this kind, and as such is unattributable. It is a multiplicity. (3-4)

As a book of "Cosmos philosophy" (342), *A Thousand Plateaus* neither synthesizes all materials, philosophical or non-philosophical, into some thematic cores nor prioritizes any elements over others. Instead, the text creates a philosophical smooth space in which philosophical concepts or theoretical problematics open themselves to their exterior and

in the process draw multiple nomadic lines of flight. For this reason, as Deleuze and

Guattari whisper to us before we navigate through their plateaus, these plateaus may be

approached or entered at any point and experienced independently of one another. As in

Boulez's music, their philosophical exposition is best grasped not so much as a signifying

chain of coherent thinking but rather as an ever-increasing set of rhizomes or intensities

that has vivacious cosmic energies, uneven pulsations, and irregular speeds.

Globalization as Identity—Philosophy as the Untimely

In evaluating Deleuze's philosophical refrain or smooth space in relation to the

historical conditions in which it comes into existence, it is helpful to take into

consideration the key symptoms registered in contemporary music in general and

Boulez's composition in particular. To begin with, the phase of Boulez's total serialism

typifies Jameson's reading of postmodernity as a state of more complete modernization

than modernity—"postmodernism is more modern than modernism itself"

(*Postmodernism* 310). Boulez's music is more rationalized, and thus in some sense more

"modern," than Schoenberg's properly modern music. By the same token, it is of prime

importance that Boulez's musical form also pushes a step further the spatializing

tendency latent in Schoenberg's serialism and attests to the so-called "spatial turn" in

postmodernity. In "Musical Space," one of the crucial sections in his theoretical writings,

Boulez contends that contemporary music should concern itself with space. "It seems to

me," he states, "that one of the most urgent objectives of present-day musical thought is

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the conception and realisation of a relativity of the various musical spaces in use" (*Boulez on Music Today* 83). An extremely remarkable historical reversal of Hegel's appraisal of music as a de-spatialized, primarily temporal genre (*Aesthetics* 87-88),[31] Boulez's restructuring of music turns on "the variability of space," that is, a multiplicity of spaces ranging from straight and curved space to regular space and irregular space, to homogeneous space and heterogeneous space (*Boulez on Music Today* 84-98). That is to say, if the "negation of space" was a conspicuous attribute in conventional music, least of all, music in the romantic period (Inwood 193, n. 2), Boulez's postmodern music seems to exemplify its dialectical reversal, that is, a negation of time, a salient process already at work in Schoenberg's modern music.

It is crucial to note that it is none other than this type of *spatial* music that affords Deleuze a powerful conceptual hammer with which to destroy age-old philosophical forms. It can be argued in this regard that Deleuze's philosophy, too, constructs a *spatial* form of thinking. As is often the case in contemporary spatialized music or what Adorno wittily characterizes as a "music that can only be understood with the aid of diagrams" ("Vers une musique informelle" 269), the waning of temporal linearity or developmental narrative in Deleuze's philosophical composition—"without beginning or ending," he says—is interlinked to its opposite number, namely the emergence of the spatial. As his major concepts, such as territory, deterritorialization, reterritorialization, smooth space, nomadism, and plane of consistency, attest, perhaps no other contemporary philosopher is

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[31] In his commentary on Hegel's aesthetic theory, Michael Inwood summarizes Hegel's understanding of music as a despatialized art form and explains as follows: "The negation of space is an attribute of music" ("Commentary" 193, n. 2).

more concerned with spatial features of thought than Deleuze. In *What Is Philosophy?* Deleuze traces the evolution of philosophy from Plato to Nietzsche and Heidegger and interrogates the close tie between philosophy and space. For Deleuze, philosophy has more to do with contingency than necessity, a milieu than an origin, a becoming than a history, a geography than a historiography (96-97). For him philosophy is not the temporal adventure of either the subject or the object. Rather, he says, "thinking takes place in the relationship of territory and the earth" (85). Hence, he characterizes nomadic thinking as a form of "geophilosophy." Brian Massumi's observation, namely that Deleuze aims to create a smooth space of philosophy in *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (*A User's Guide* 6), rightly points the philosopher's inclination toward "geophilosophy." As early as in *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze himself emphasizes that the Nietzsche-inspired search for a new philosophical form must be taken up again in conjunction with spatial forms—not just music but also the theatre or cinema (xxi). In some sense, *A Thousand Plateaus* can be seen as a philosophical theatre in which Deleuze transfigures the developmental Bildungsroman of metaphysical philosophy into a "*geo*philosophy" or into a "*Buildings*roman"[32] by drawing on Boulez's spatialization of the Beethovenian musical Bildungsroman. In this sense Foucault's following remarks about *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense* seem more applicable to *A Thousand Plateaus*: "This is philosophy not as thought, but as theater: a theater of mime with multiple, fugitive, and

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[32] Jameson uses this term in his review of Koolhaas's *S, M, L, XL*. See "XXL: Rem Koolhaas's Great Big *Buildings*roman," pp. 17-19.

instantaneous scenes in which blind gestures signal to each other" ("Theatrum

Philosophicum" 196).

A comparison with Adorno's philosophy-music also brings to new light the

historicity of Deleuze's thought. As has been already suggested, Adorno's twelve-tone

philosophy can be seen as an anemoscope that detects the historical transition from the

modern to the postmodern. Deleuze's philosophy, by contrast, more directly registers the

contemporary globalized postmodern world. His description of nomadology (as opposed

to Adorno's monadology) is a case in point. When he proposes a decentering and non-

representational mode of thought, he calls it a system of simulacra. "Simulacra," he

explains,

> are those systems in which different relates to different *by means of*
> difference itself. What is essential is that we find in these systems no *prior*
> *identity*, no *internal resemblance*. It is all a matter of difference in the
> series, and of differences of difference in the communication between
> series. What is displaced and disguised in the series cannot and must not
> be identified, but exists and acts as the differenciator of difference.
> (*Difference and Repetition* 299-300)

While invoking simulacra as a foremost principle of nonidentity and as a productive

locus of differentiation, Deleuze strives to replace the philosophy of representation with

that of simulacra. In so doing, he goes so far as to argue,

> The primacy of identity, however conceived, defines the world of
> representation. But modern thought is born of the failure of representation,
> of the loss of identities, and of the discovery of all the forces that act under
> the representation of the identical. The modern world is one of simulacra.
> (xix)

If we compare Deleuze's nomadological philosophy of simulacra to Adorno's

monadology, if it is understood that Deleuze's loosely-used term "modern" designates

what is now called "postmodern," we can get a sense of how far we have come along the

historical path of decentralization and depersonalization. In the postmodern condition, in

which Hegel's dictum "the whole is the true" and Adorno's adage "the whole is the false"

find their most unexpected avatar in Jean Baudrillard's statement "the simulacra are

true,"[33] it is hardly surprising that the Lukácsian model of the social totality is

demystified or that simulacra are appealed to as a way to abolish the traditional dogmatic

modes of thinking. If, as Foucault elliptically prognosticates, the contemporary age

should someday be known as Deleuzian ("Theatrum Philosphicum" 165), it is in part

because Deleuze's philosophical apparatus of simulacra and schizophrenic subjectivity

registers such salient historical phenomena of postmodernity.

    This is not to say, however, that Deleuze's philosophy is ahistorical or oblivious

to time. To the contrary, like Adorno's melancholy science, Deleuze's Nietzschean gay

science defines philosophy as something that creatively intervenes in history and always

functions as the *untimely*. Deleuze briefly touches on philosophy's role of running

counter to the present in *Difference and Repetition* (xxi), and yet a more elaborate

exposition is found in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*:

> This is why philosophy has an essential relation to time: it is always
> against its time, critique of the present world. The philosopher creates
> concepts that are neither eternal nor historical but untimely and not of the
> present. The opposition in terms of which philosophy is realised is that of
> present and non-present, of our time and the untimely…And in the
> untimely there are truths that are more durable than all historical and
> eternal truths put together: truths of times to come. Thinking actively is

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[33] For these different formulae proposed by Hegel, Adorno, and Baudrillard, see the Adorno section of this chapter.

'acting in a non-present fashion, therefore against time and even on time,
in favour (I hope) of a time to come. (107)

By defining philosophy as being always untimely, Deleuze extricates himself from the

ahistorical problematics often discernible in some poststructural and postmodern theories.

Hardt's contention that Deleuze goes the furthest in distancing himself from the

poststructuralist problems of anti-Hegelianism and in exploring a new terrain of thought

can be understood in this context (xi).

No less worthy of note in Deleuze's line of flight from poststructuralist

problematics is that, as Jameson points out, Deleuze is the only great thinker emerging

from poststructuralism that accords Marx a fundamental role ("Marxism and Dualism in

Deleuze" 395). When it comes to Deleuze's interest in Marx, his perspectives on the

totalizing process of globalization are especially compelling. In *Anti-Oedipus* Deleuze

and Guattari provide a penetrating insight into the existence of "identity" in capitalism

(as well as in psychoanalysis). To be more precise, they analyze contemporary capitalism

as an axiomatic that operates by means of centralization and decentralization and by

means of (re)coding and decoding. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, such a view is maintained as

a means to examine global capital as a complex and internally contradictory process that

operates through territorialization and deterritorialization and creates both "striated" and

"smooth" spaces. Deleuze and Guattari's attention to this antinomy of globalization—the

simultaneous production of identity and difference—is underpinned by their

understanding of the totalizing system of the contemporary world. In *What Is*

Philosophy? they offer a very perceptive observation when they say, "the death of

metaphysics or the overcoming of philosophy has never been a problem for us: it is just

tiresome, idle chatter. Today it is said that systems are bankrupt, but it is only the concept

of system that has changed" (9). This highly nuanced approach to system enables them to

conceptualize a "fragmentary whole" or "fragmentary totalities" (16, 23). Even if

Deleuze and Guattari obviously object to the Hegelian system of totality, their perception

of a disjointed and non-totalizing totality keeps them from disregarding the seemingly de-

totalizing yet also totalizing movement of contemporary global capital. Such an insight

into the complex mechanism of globalization, comparable to Adorno's penetrating view

on the Culture Industry, Jameson's conceptualization of the antinomies of globalization,

and Hardt and Negri's theory on the contradictory inner logic of Empire, makes

Deleuze's unrealized plan to write a book on Marx all the more lamentable. Insofar as

globalization was of such an abiding interest for Deleuze, however, one can argue that his

effort to challenge and deterritorialize the "identity" of what he calls "the single world

market" (*Negotiations* 152) or "universal capitalism" (*What Is Philosophy?* 12)

constitutes another integral, albeit often unacknowledged, aspect of his philosophy of

nonidentity.

The critical stance Deleuze's philosophy of nonidentity takes on the "identity" of

the contemporary globalized world is explicitly presented when he describes the

condition in which the process of standardization colonizes philosophy. Somewhat

redolent of Adorno's diagnosis of the position of philosophy under the Culture Industry,

Deleuze explicates,

> Finally, the most shameful moment came when computer science, marketing, design, and advertising, all the disciplines of communication, seized hold of the word concept itself…The only events are exhibitions, and the only concepts are products that can be sold. Philosophy has not remained unaffected by the general movement that replaced Critique with sales promotion. (*What Is Philosophy?* 10)

In such a situation in which the logic of commodification penetrates in its gigantic stride into the last syllable of human thought, the role of philosophy as the untimely must confront such historical and social conditions. In a surprisingly lucid manner Deleuze pinpoints what philosophy should challenge and subvert:

> The current political situation is very muddled. People tend to confuse the quest for freedom with the embrace of capitalism. It seems doubtful that the joys of capitalism are enough to liberate a people. The bloody failure of socialism is on everybody's lips, but no one sees capitalist globalization as a failure, in spite of the bloody inequalities that condition the market, and the populations who are excluded from it. (*Two Regimes of Madness* 283)

When the globalizing process has become virtually omnipresent and omnipotent after the fall of socialism, and when the entire globe is under the influence of the Culture Industry or *société de consommation*, a philosophy of nonidentity, whatever else it does, should also intervene in such a historical reality and envisage a new world to come. Through such an intervention Deleuze's nomadic thought as a philosophy of the untimely strives to debunk capitalist globalization as a failure and dismantle the monadic closure of the present historical conjuncture.

To denounce the current state of globalization as a failure, to show that this worldwide system of identity, since it a historical construct, can therefore be transformed again into a new social configuration—this constitutes one of the key features of

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Deleuze's philosophy of nonidentity. Just as Adorno's negative dialectics is at such pains

to subvert "the capitalist system's increasingly integrative trend" (*Negative Dialectics*

166), so too does Deleuze's philosophy of difference/repetition labors to challenge

"*integrated (or rather integrating) world capitalism*" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 492). It is

perhaps in terms of this utopian dimension of nonidentity that Deleuze's and Adorno's

disparate philosophies come closest to each other. It is no surprise, then, that Deleuze

invokes Adorno's negative dialectics as he dwells on the imperiled situation of

philosophy in the age of globalization:

> Philosophy takes the relative deterritorialization of capital to the absolute;
> it makes it pass over the plane of immanence as movement of the infinite
> and suppresses it as internal limit, turns it back against itself so as to
> summon forth a new earth, a new people. But in this way it arrives at the
> nonpropositional form of the concept in which communication, exchange,
> consensus, and opinion vanish entirely. It is therefore closer to what
> Adorno called "negative dialectics" and to what the Frankfurt School
> called "utopia." (*What Is Philosophy?* 99)

Here as elsewhere, Deleuze is insistent upon philosophy's role of opposing identity and

of becoming "heterogenesis" (198-199). In such a manner philosophy should of necessity

serve as an untimely antidote or corrective to the present. Such an *untimely* thought, as it

celebrates and creates differences and repetitions, contests and disturbs the world of

identity and envisages a new world and a new people to come. Insofar as Deleuze thus

dismantle not just a *metaphysics of presence* in Western thought but also a *metaphysics of*

the present or what he himself terms "the *cogito* of the market place" (*Negotiations* 136),

his philosophy of nonidentity proves to bear a striking resemblance to Adorno's negative

dialectics. Just as Adorno is, as Edward Said describes, "an untimely, scandalous, even

catastrophic commentator on the present" (*On Late Style* 14), so Deleuze's philosophy of the untimely seeks to rupture the identity and homogeneity of the present historical juncture and to propose a new world of nonidentity still to come.

American Culture as (Non)Identity

In light of Adorno's and Deleuze's comparable interventions into the contemporary world, it is striking that they should hold opposing views on American culture: whereas Adorno sees America in relation to the Culture Industry, Deleuze often eulogizes American literature and culture as a remarkable instance of deterritorialization. Adorno notoriously portrays America as a social space in which everything, from art and philosophy to entertainment and human psychology, is subordinated to, and subsumed under, the totality and identity of the Culture Industry. He goes so far as to assert that the ever accelerating tempo and rhythm of cultural and social production in the Culture Industry are deceiving because they conceal the fact that nothing really changes under the total system of closure, that there is nothing but a "constant reproduction of the same thing" (*Dialectic of the Enlightenment* 134). Conversely, Deleuze finds the characteristics of American culture in its deterritorialization of identity and totality. For instance, he sees the greatness of English and American literature in its rhizomatic multiplication, that is, its production of "Multiplicities…made up of becomings without history, of individuation without subject" (*Dialogues II* viii-ix). Likewise, he reproaches the principle of identity inherent in the copula ("IS") and maintains that only the English and

Americans have been freed from such a metaphysical principle (56) and also endowed

with a gift for "intensities, flows, machine-books, tool-books, schizo-books"

(*Negotiations* 23). Apropos of American culture specifically, Deleuze lauds its de-

totalized and deterritorialized cultural terrains. Commenting on Whitman's literary

achievement, for example, he observes that what defines America is the spontaneity and

vitality of the fragmentary and the multiple ("Whitman" 56). Elsewhere Deleuze praises

the American language for its "extraordinary capacity for being twisted and shattered and

for secretly putting itself in the service of minorities" (*Dialogues II* 58).

Although Adorno's and Deleuze's perspectives on American culture are

seemingly conflicting and incompatible, both of them have something perceptive to tell

us about American culture. It is therefore possible to hold the opposing views

simultaneously and take them as an indicator of the inner contradictions of American

cultural production. That is to say, as in our earlier discussion of postmodern antinomies

in Chapter 1, we can regard American culture as being crisscrossed and overdetermined

by the different and conflictual attributes and dimensions. Alternatively, Deleuze's

favorable leaning towards American culture can be supplemented by his critique of the

integrated and integrating process of global capitalism. Given that the U.S. globalization

apparatus and its military war on terrorism hold sway over the entire globe after 9/11,

Deleuze's acerbic criticism of the "identity" and "totality" of global capitalism needs to

be extended to contemporary global American culture. In that case, Deleuze's view can

be more fruitfully engagedwith Adorno's analysis. If we thus place Adorno's and

Deleuze's philosophies of nonidentity in dialogue and grasp America through the

dialectic of the Culture Industry and rhizomatic deterritorialization, that will help us to critically map the convoluted and contradictory contours of contemporary global American culture.

In *The Age of the World Target* Rey Chow recently claims that if contemporary theory practices a tortuous and incessant deconstruction of "the Western logos," such a deconstruction should also intervene in "the consequences of the United States' ascendancy as superpower" and its "success to and advance of Europe and European imperialist intentions and tendencies over the course of modern history" (14). I argue that that is precisely what Adorno's and Deleuze's philosophies of nonidentity are gesturing toward. Not only do these thinkers critique the identitarian metaphysics in Western philosophy, but they also cast a fresh light on the "metaphysics" and "identity" of U.S. culture in the context of the globalizing world. However, their insistence on nonidentity does not only help us to tackle what Rob Wilson calls "the US-led Empire of neo-liberal globalization and its huge security-state apparatus-cum-liberalist complacency" ("Afterword: *Worlding* as Future Tactic" 211). Their intervention in the "identity" and "totality" of postwar American social and cultural production also urges us to envision a New World of nonidentity. Their *untimely* philosophies of nonidentity constantly strive to deconstruct the identity and totality of the present configuration of American culture. In

doing so, they send something like a message of hope from the shipwrecked and sow the

seeds of a new time to come.[34]

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[34] These metaphors are taken from *Philosophy of Modern Music* (133) and *A Thousand Plateaus* (345), respectively.

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CHAPTER THREE

"SIMULATED PASTS RESURRECTED IN MEMORIAM"
The New Media(tion) of History in Nam June Paik's and Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's Postmodern Art Forms

Postmodernism and its Repressed

In an interview with Nam June Paik, Nicholas Zurbrugg tries to engage the Korean

American video artist in a dialogue with Fredric Jameson's critical reading of postmodern

video art. When his perplexed interviewee demands more specific information, Zurbrugg

recapitulates Jameson's critique of ahistoricity and depthlessness in postmodernism in

general and video art in particular ("Nam June Paik: An Interview" 125).[1] Called upon to

respond to Jameson's unfavorable view on video art, Paik wittily answers, "Yes—the so-

called semiotic people, you know, they don't like video," and then goes on to express his

discomfort with "semiotics":

> I don't really know. I don't understand semiotics…For some reason
> semiotic people like to be very manneristic—they hang on to very little
> things. They're basically sort of French-based people who kind of missed
> the bus of revolution, and who want to make a rear-guard critique about it.
> I respect theory when it is bold and something new. Cybernetics I respect,
> because you can learn something about it. I think I read one book by
> Foucault and then one book by Barthes, and one by one more guy. But
> when I study how much time I spent, I didn't get too much out of it. So I
> thought I would keep a respectful distance from it, and then I will use my

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[1] What is under attack here is Jameson's catalogue essay, "Postmodernism and Utopia," for the Boston Institute of Contemporary Art's "Utopia" exhibition. Jameson's essay is reprinted as "Space: Utopianism after the End of Utopia" in *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, pp. 154-180.

time more productively, that is, making video-tapes and computer-tapes and computer programming. (126)

Paik's identification of Jameson with such "semiotic people" as Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault is misleading. Nor does it seem to do justice to the Marxist thinker who hangs on to "very big things" like late capitalism and the global totality and thereby works to jumpstart the moribund "bus of revolution" in the contemporary world.[2]

Such a misrepresentation on Paik's part is to some extent attributable to Zurbrugg's reductive characterization of Jameson's stance on postmodern video, which will make its reappearance in the interviewer's later essay "Jameson's Complaint: Video-Art and the Intertextual 'Time-Wall.'"[3] According to Zurbrugg's account Jameson sees nothing but the decline of culture at the present and thus dismisses postmodernism as "post-mortem culture" (232). A proper and evenhanded assessment of creativity and vitality germane to contemporary culture, Zurbrugg is quick to add, is possible only when we get out of the "time-wall of Barthesian and Baudrillardian overstatement" (by which Jameson is ensnared) and take into consideration the present in a broader context of the historical *longue durée*. A critically informed reader of Jameson's intervention in (post)structuralism in books such as *The Prison-House of Language* or *The Political*

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[2] Incidentally, in his review of Rem Koolhaas Jameson speculates that "The problem is then how to locate radical difference; how to *jumpstart* the sense of history so that it begins again to transmit feeble signals of time, of otherness, of change, of Utopia. The problem to be solved is that of breaking out of the windless present of the postmodern back into real historical time, and a history made by human beings" ("Future City" 76; emphasis mine).

[3] As has been discussed in Chapter 1, above, postmodernism for Jameson is not just a style or trend, but also a historicizing concept that one cannot simply dismiss or oppose. If this basic principle is understood, it becomes less difficult to realize that Jameson's analysis of postmodernism is in no way confined within a poststructuralist, myopic "wall," but instead constantly situates the present moment within the larger framework of history and opens both his object of study and his analytic process "to all the winds of history" (*The Prison-House of Language* 216).

Unconscious would not, as Zurbrugg does, see Jameson's theoretical discourse as being entrapped within the prison-wall of semiotics and poststructuralism.[4] For the moment, suffice it to say that albeit triggered and mediated by a far from disinterested interlocutor, the "dialogue" between the pioneer of video art and the foremost theorist of postmodernity stages the now all-too-familiar, yet still thorny, problem of the relationship between postmodernism and history.

This already vexed question of postmodernism and history that Paik's art form foregrounds becomes even more complicated when we take into account his positionality as a postcolonial diasporic subject and his tensional relationship with Western modernism and postmodernism. In his espousal of Paik's postmodern video art as a vehicle for dealing with history, Zurbrugg does not touch on those key issues. Nor does general scholarship about Paik interpret his artistic practice in relation to his postcolonial subjectivity or to the complex relationship he has with modern and postmodern art in the West. One might find this omission peculiar insofar as history as such, or the question of rewriting history is placed at the heart of any postcolonial discourse and praxis. Now, with the postcoloniality of Paik's video art introduced to our discussion, the central question to be addressed is not simply whether postmodernism is capable of adequately grappling with history, much less whether postmodernism constitutes a complete break with modernism. Rather, in order to do justice to Paik's innovative art form and its commitment to history, we should give close attention to the overdetermined terrains of

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[4] For my discussion of Jameson's intervention in structuralism and poststructuralism, see Chapter 1, above.

modernism, postmodernism, colonialism, and postcolonialism. In other words, any meaningful discussion of Paik's "postmodern" art practice needs to address not just the schism between modernism and postmodernism but also the postcolonial artist's strategic appropriation of both. In addition, if Paik's postcolonial concern with history is conflictual and incompatible with the postmodern art media he opts for, then we should also attend to the ways in which that *antinomy* within the very form of Paik's video art gives expression to the structural contradictions of the globalizing world that gives rise to such an art form. That is to say, insofar as modernism has a constitutive relationship with imperialism as many commentators have reasoned,[5] we need to address the extent to which Paik's video art gives expression to postmodernism and postcolonialism as structurally entwined historical symptoms of contemporary global cultural production.

It may be observed that Jameson's discussion does not interrogate the question of postcoloniality in Paik's video art either. Yet this is not because he is oblivious to the possible connection between postmodernism and postcolonialism. Quite the opposite: the advantage of Jameson's theory for our reevaluation of Paik's art work consists precisely in his mapping of the convoluted contours of the various force fields that define the present historical juncture. In his essay "Periodizing the 60s" (1984), for example, Jameson elucidates that the advent of postmodern consumer society in the First World during the 1960s is coterminous with the movement of decolonization in the Third World.

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[5] See, for instance, the articles by Edward Said, Terry Eagleton, and Fredric Jameson, collected in *Modernism and Imperialism*. Walter D. Mignolo contends, from a somewhat different vantage point, that the modern world system is constituted by its colonial apparatus and thus that modernity and colonialism are the two sides of the same geohistorical configuration. See his *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Sualtern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

He compellingly links both postmodern and postcolonial movements to the reconfiguration of global capitalism and its worldwide restructuring and deterritorialization (180-186).[6] In doing so, Jameson demonstrates that as modernism is a cultural expression of the increasingly disjunctive correlation between the West and its colonies in the imperial world system, in a similar fashion postmodernism is inscribed in the structural mutation of the global world system that is coordinated and crisscrossed by the more radically disjointed and deterritorialized transnational network of cultural exchange among multiple nations. A similar position is maintained in "The End of Temporality," in which he writes, "the momentous event of decolonization…is a fundamental determinant of postmodernity" (700).[7] In this respect I understand Jameson's theory of postmodernism and video art as an insistence that any study of postmodernism should also be attentive to its structural correlation with postcolonialism; and that any critical assessment of Paik's video as an original contemporary art form necessarily has to map out and navigate through the complex and overdetermined relationships the video artist has with (post)modernism and (post)colonialism. Additionally, if Paik's video art is indeed "postmodernism's most distinctive new

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[6] In his introduction to the special issue on "Postmodernism: Center and Periphery" in *The Southern Atlantic Quarterly* Jameson turns to the connection between postmodernism and postcolonialism and remarks: "Yet there is another version to be told of this same story, and it involves the way in which it was precisely the concept of the postmodern which had seemed, in the third world, to authorize the end of a Eurocentrism now primarily mediated by the United States itself…Postmodernity thus comes as something like the declaration of independence of hitherto subordinated (third world) cultures, and their acknowledgement as mature forms and styles in their own right." See "Introduction" in *The Southern Atlantic Quarterly* 92:3 (Summer 1993), pp. 420-421.
[7] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri remark, "To a certain extent postmodernist and postcolonialist theories are important effects that reflect or trace the expansion of the world market and the passage of the form of sovereignty" (*Empire* 138-139).

medium" as Jameson claims (*Postmodernism* xv), then it is due to its embeddedness in such complicated and even contradictory historical, social, and cultural terrains.

Taking a cue from Jameson's intricate cartography of contemporary global culture, the following discussion examines Paik's postmodern video art in conjunction with his cultural and geographical displacement as a postcolonial diasporic subject. After briefly outlining the complex relationships Paik's video art form has with (post)modernism and (post)colonialism, the second part of this chapter conducts an in-depth study of another Korean American artist Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's postmodern multimedia artwork using a similar framework. In so dealing with Paik's and Cha's pioneering experiments with various modern and postmodern cultural forms, I discuss not just their now more or less canonized artistic practices—Paik's video art and Cha's literary narrative *Dictée*—but also their relatively unexplored formal exercises—Paik's musical composition and Cha's multimedia and performance art. As I look at the ways in which their constant "translation" of one art medium into another itself reflects the complex and tensional relationships they bear with modern and postmodern cultural formations, I aim to cast a new light on how their "postmodern" artistic practices cope with the colonial and postcolonial history of Korea with which their diasporic history is entangled; and how their postcolonial thematization of history via postmodern art media registers some structural contradictions inherent in contemporary global cultural production.

Nam June Paik, the Postcolonial Musician

Nam June Paik indisputably occupies a preeminent place in the pantheon of contemporary art. Paradoxical though it might seem, especially given that "semiotic people" like Barthes have popularized such depersonalizing catchphrases as the "death of the author" and "from work to text" in contemporary cultural production, Paik has been accorded the honorary epithet, the "father of video art," and is often said to have expanded the whole concept of what art is and what art can be (Stooss 9). The pioneering role he played in the inception and evolution of video art is such that Edith Decker-Phillips baldly asserts, "For a profile of the development of video art today, we need look no further than to the work of Nam June Paik, as no one has contributed more to it than he" (15). A renowned American video artist, Bill Viola, also sees the indissociable relationship between Paik's video art and the postmodern world when he remarks, "The world we are living in right now is his world. He visualized that. He was the pioneer."[8]

Notwithstanding all eulogies and paeans conferred on Paik's trailblazing artistic innovation, little attention has been given to his career as a composer. As is suggested in his close friend and mentor John Cage's comments that "I find myself wanting to say that I have never thought of Nam June Paik as a composer" ("On the Work of Nam June Paik" 21), Paik's commitment to music has oftentimes been belittled. Even when acknowledged, the structural and formal influences of his engagement with music on his later "invention" of video art have not been sufficiently explained. John G. Hanhardt's

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[8] Viola's comments at Paik's funeral appear in Skip Blumberg's video work *Nam June Paik: Lessons from the Video Master*.

highly informative and well-documented book *The Worlds of Nam June Paik* is a case in

point. In his lucid exegesis of Paik's kaleidoscopic artistic practices, the Senior Curator

for Film and Media Arts at Guggenheim claims that Paik's prolific and dazzling career is

built upon his earlier interests in music and performance (11). Yet he does not address the

specific way that Paik's new media art evolves out of his interest in and eventual

dissatisfaction with Schoenberg's modern music and its later postmodern developments.

The same may be said of Michael Nyman's essay "Nam June Paik, Composer." Written

with poetic clarity and beauty reminiscent of his musical pieces for Jane Campion's film

The Piano, this enormously popular composer's peer view, possibly by virtue of its focus

on only a couple of arresting musical pieces, does not explain the structural and formal

coupure involved in Paik's turn from music to TV and video.

Insofar as our discussion turns on the location of history in Paik's postmodern art,

many commentators' inattention to his earlier experiment with music is peculiar, to say

the least. For music is first and foremost a temporal genre, and as Theodor Adorno's and

Edward Said's work on music illustrates, a compositional practice often reflects the way

a composer sculpts temporal raw material and, by extension, allegorizes the way his

epoch conceives of time and history.[9] My contention is that Paik's laborious search for

his own musical language vis-à-vis Western modern and postmodern music was crucial

for the inception of video art and that the evolution of his art forms is inseparable from

his experience of cultural displacement and transnational migration as a postcolonial

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[9] See Chapter 2, above.

diasporic subject. In this respect, any discussion of Paik's concern with history or of the

antinomy of postmodernism and postcolonialism sedimented in his art form has, of

necessity, to deal with music and its significance for video art in his artistic

peregrinations.

That music was fundamental to Paik's artistic production is unmistakable. As he

writes in his reflections on his earlier life in Korea, he "discovered" Schoenberg in 1947,

when he was only fourteen, in the newly liberated yet "information-starved" Korea, and

Schoenberg's music (as well as Marx's vision of Utopia) has played a shaping role in his

"spiritual landscape" ("'Pensées' at 59" 17).[10] When Paik later fled the impending

Korean War and went to Japan to attend the University of Tokyo, the postcolonial

composer-to-be assiduously studied Schoenberg and went on to write his graduation

thesis on Schoenberg's music theory in 1956.[11] He also practiced diverse musical

compositional techniques at that time, composing Korean folk-flavored pieces, serial

works for solo violin, and the non-serial *String Quartet*. During this early period of his

career as musician, it was his central concern to give expression to East Asian philosophy

and music by employing Western compositional techniques.

One might find it curious that Paik studied Western music at Japan's most

prestigious university which was founded by the Meiji government in 1877 as part of the

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[10] In his interlocution with David Ross, Paik also claims that he became a Marxist in 1945 calling himself a "thirteen-year-old Communist" ("A Conversation with Nam June Paik" 59). Although it is beyond the purview of the present discussion, the relation between Paik's "ahistorical" art medium and the Marxian or Utopian dimension of his art world is an interesting topic to be explored in future scholarship.
[11] Paik's graduation thesis on Schoenberg is currently at the Sohm-Archiv in the Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, Germany.

country's modernization project. Although, as Naoki Sakai illustrates in "Modernity and

Its Critique," Imperial Japan's relationship with the West and modernity was always

complicated and often double-edged,[12] modernization by and large meant a process of

Westernization for Japan (and for its colonies as well). That is superbly encapsulated in

the so-called "Datsu-A Ron" (Good-bye Asia) editorial, an influential treatise Fukuzawa

Yukichi wrote in the wake of the 1885 failed *coup d'état* of the Korean reformist Kim

Okgyun whom he had supported and mentored. In the opening sentence of the editorial,

the spiritual leader and theorist of Japan's modernization metaphorically writes, "once the

wind of Western civilization blows to the East, every blade of grass and every tree in the

East follow what the Western wind brings" (351). In the light of the predominance of

Western culture in East Asian modernization and of Japan's domineering role in East

Asia it is no surprise that people like Paik, or even the great Chinese writer Lu Xun went

to Tokyo in order to follow the "Western wind" and study Western science and culture.

The following episode Paik recounts points to such a cultural milieu in which the West

took the dominant position in its cultural traffic with East Asia:

> In Tokyo University, with strict academism soaked with admiration of
> Western culture, our job was not to judge but to learn the Western music.
> Therefore if we would encounter a piece which would not impress us, both
> teacher and students would rather say "I don't understand this one," than
> to say "This is a bad piece." (qtd. in Nyman 83)

Paik expresses a similar viewpoint in an interview with David Ross. Devaluing Asia as a

whole, he comments:

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[12] For a set of representative discourses on "overcoming Western modernity" see Naoki Sakai, "Modernity
and Its Critique: The Problem of Universalism and Particularism" in *Postmodernism and Japan* (Durham
and London: Duke University Press, 1989), pp. 93-122.

> As an Asian, I give credit to Western civilization, which has the dialectic power to regenerate itself constantly, whereas Asia's history is yoked with stagnation. Despite economic and technological advances, Asian psychology has not changed too much and this causes tension in Asian society. (Ross 58)

In light of the veneration Imperial Japan (or Asia more generally) reserved for Western culture, it would not be too much to say that what Ngugi wa Thion'go terms the "decolonizing of the mind" is always a double process for people like Paik who are colonized, through the mediation of their colonizer Japan, by the West. At any rate, not unlike Lu Xun who went to Japan's imperial metropole to study Western medicine but eventually decided to devote his life to revolutionizing China's backward culture via literature, Paik finds his "call to arms" in Schoenberg's modern music.[13]

One of the defining characteristics of Schoenberg's twelve-tone composition as a modernist art form is, it will be recalled,[14] its injunction against repeating one tone until the other eleven tones are enunciated. By revolutionizing a traditional linear form of musical narrative, as superbly exemplified in Beethoven's sonata form, Schoenberg seeks to construct a new musical grammar based on relationality and difference. In such a musical grammar, individual tones are excised of their "inherent" qualities and feelings that they were customarily thought to convey, while the signification of each tonal *parole*, having been deprived of its traditional signification value, is determined not in itself but in its relation to other tones and in its positionality within the *langue* of the tonal system. Schoenberg thus proposes to develop a universal language of music in a manner similar

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[13] "Call to Arms" is the title Lu Xun gives to his collection of short stories. See his preface to the collection in *Selected Stories of Lu Hsun*, pp. 1-6.

[14] See Chapter 2, above.

to Saussure's formulation of a universal sign system. This impulse toward universalization and rationalization in modern linguistic and musical grammars is detectable in a similar form in painting as well, as witness French impressionist George Braque's comment that "I do not believe in things; I believe in relationships" (qtd. in Culler, *Ferdinade de Sassure* 148).

It is important to note that it was such a universal language of modernism by means of which Paik, the postcolonial composer, first aimed to radicalize traditional Korean music in the newly-independent Korea and during his stay in post-war Japan. Notwithstanding the appeal and merit of such a universalizing and rationalizing tendency latent in Schoenberg music, Paik soon realized that it did not perfectly suit his purpose to recuperate Korean musical tradition. Paik's series of attempts to integrate Western modern music into his own particular cultural heritage was not successful and his admiration for Schoenberg and his "heavy minority complex of Asian composers" (Nyman 83) took a new turn as he went to Germany in 1957 and regularly attended the Darmstadt International Summer Courses for New Music. There he interacted with prominent contemporary musicians such as John Cage, Pierre Boulez, and Karlheinz Stockhausen, who opened his eyes to some of the latest developments in Western music. Isang Yun, another Korean composer and political exile in Germany, meets Paik in Darmstadt in 1958 and documents an encounter with his compatriot in a letter to his wife. Already at this time, Yun writes, Schoenberg or Alban Berg had grown as "old-fashioned" as Beethoven (Yi 154). Faced with "the deadlock of modern music," he discusses with Paik two diverging possibilities available for Korean composers—either

joining the radical avant-garde composers such as Boulez, Stockhausen, and Luigi Nono

or parting ways with them in order to graft up-to-date compositional techniques onto East

Asian music (Yi 159-161). The formal dilemma these two postcolonial composers

encounter is reiterated when Yun poses the same question in his interviews with Luise

Rinser, later published as *Der verwundete Drache. Dialog über Leben und Werk des*

Komponisten Isang Yun. He talks to Rinser about his frustrating search for his own

musical style thus: "Where do I stand right now? Which is the better path for me? Do I

need to solidify my position by composing radical works like those people? Or do I have

to embark on my own solitary journey in connection with rich musical traditions in the

East?" (Rinser and Yun 82) That the two Korean composers opted for rather different

paths is implicitly suggested in their takes on Cage's musical work performed in

Darmstadt. While regarding Cage's chance music as being a novel "eccentricity" (Yi

154-155) and "noise, not music any longer" (Rinser and Yun 82), Yun makes clear that

he, himself, would never practice such a musical grammar. By contrast, in his report sent

to a Korean daily called the *Jayu Shinmun* in 1959, Paik extols Cage's composition as

"not so much an avoidance of responsibility but rather an attempt to approximate the

heavenly will by means of turning away from egoistic obstinacy and following the laws

of nature" ("Music of Chancing: A Lesson from Darmstadt").[15]

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[15] This article was published in *The Jayu Shinmun*. January 7, 1959. Translation is mine. In this report Paik uses the word "chance" as a verb, an unusual or even ungrammatical usage in the Korean language. One might think that it is possibly because he sees Cage's chance music as a dynamic and creative musical process rather than an immobile stasis.

Although Yun's and Paik's specific tactics and strategies for crafting new musical styles are different, it cannot be overemphasized that their goals were not to aimlessly replicate the then-fashionable trends in Western music, but to simultaneously appropriate and radically break away from the parameters and protocols of modern music and its later developments in what Adorno terms the "New Music." In the case of Paik, he intended to push Western music to its limit and thereby deconstruct even the term "music." The implosion of conventional musical terrains Paik calls for is crystallized at his first solo exhibition, "Exposition of Music—Electronic Television," held in Galerie Parnass, Wuppertal, Germany in 1963. The significance of this historic exhibition is that it is here that Paik's deterritorialization of music prefigures the advent of video as a new art medium. Jameson is right in locating the provenance of video art in Paik's experiment in 1963 (71). In view of its historical importance in the genealogy of Paik's video art, it repays our attention to examine the exhibition in more detail in terms of how his deconstruction of music gives rise to a new art medium and how the question of time is broached in his exposition of "music—electronic television."

Video Art as a "New Ontology of Music"

"I am tired of renewing the form of music—serial or aleatoric, graphic or five lines, instrumental or bellcanto, screaming or action, tape or live…I must renew the ontological form of music" (*Videa 'n' Videology* 3). So writes Paik in his essay "New Ontology of Music" in the year the Wuppertal exhibition was held. Departing from

dominant modes of Western music, he envisions what he calls "postmusic." Befittingly

for such a goal, Paik's "exposition of music" at the exhibition concretizes his persistent

will to implode music from within. To take one salient example, Paik's prepared piano

Klavier Integral showcases, quite paradoxically, a *disintegrated* piano which is jammed

and covered with a jumble of everyday commodities and small objects, including alarm

clock, telephone, brazier, egg shells, toys, dolls, and barbed wires. In addition, the

keyboards of the piano are connected to fan-heaters, radios, film projectors, and

electronic bulbs, and function as switches for those devices (Figure 3.1). As in his earlier

piece *One for Violin Solo* which enacts a literal destruction of the violin, *Klavier Integral*

symbolizes the disintegration of another central instrument in the institution of music.

From a different angle, it also amounts to saying that *Klavier Integral* integrates non-

musical materials and events into music and expands the latter's boundary, thereby

gesturing toward what Paik calls a "new ontology of music." When Cage somewhat

disapprovingly remarks that *Klavier Integral* is not heard but seen, and therefore should

be in a museum, rather than in a concert hall ("On the Work of Nam June Paik" 24), he

touches, albeit unwittingly, the core of Paik's endeavor to break the ontological ground of

music. Such a disintegration of music of which *Klavier Integral* or *One for Violin Solo* is

a symbolic expression, reaches an uproarious climax when Paik has his friend Joseph

Beuys literally dismantle one of the displayed pianos with an ax during the exhibition.

What is worthy of special attention here is that Paik's search for a new

(post)musical ontology goes in tandem with his experiment with another important, if

seemingly irrelevant, medium—electronic television. *TV Room*, in particular, is a

compelling example that attests to the creative way electronic television is put to use in the hands of Paik. In this work Paik places twelve black-and-white televisions on the floor in a seemingly random style. Divided into three groups, those televisions feature visual or aural images manipulated and distorted by sine-wave vibrations, radio receivers, or other devices. In thus altering and distorting the broadcast TV images, Paik also encourages the viewers and visitors to modify the shown images on the TV sets (Decker-Phillips 36-39). He thereby develops a concept of television as an apparatus that invites direct audience participation as well as artistic creation. Such an approach to TV goes against the then customary assumptions about the medium. Jean Baudrillard, for instance, pointedly critiques how TV imposes a form of passivity and promotes a one-way channel of social communication when he observes, "TV is watching us, TV alienates us, TV manipulates us, TV informs us" (*Simulacra and Simulation* 30). On a similar note he elsewhere writes, "TV, by virtue of its mere presence, is a social control in itself…it is the certainty that people are no longer speaking to each other, that they are definitely isolated in the fact of a speech without response" ("Requiem for the Media" 130). While working to debunk such ideological functions of TV, Paik tries to turn the medium into a site of artistic creativity and social critique.

   As Paik thus brings electronic television into the heart of his artistic experiment in *TV Room*, it should be emphasized, he reconfigures the medium as part of his search for a new ontology of music. In some sense the entire 1963 exhibition can be regarded as an exploration of new post-musical terrains. As Nyman perceptively reasons, it is plausible that the entire exhibition is modeled upon Paik's earlier experimental musical work,

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Sinfonie for 20 Rooms (1961) (87). The resemblance between the Wuppertal exhibition and the *Sinfonie for 20 Rooms* is striking in terms of their spatial organization of various art media and their call for audience participation and, more importantly. More importantly, both of them brilliantly show how Paik incorporates non-musical elements into his new musical exploration and how he redefines what music is and what music can be. Foreshadowing the overall layout of the exhibition, the "musical score" of the *Sinfonie* painstakingly outlines a specific floor plan for each room and the listener's possible activities in that room (Figure 3.2). Each room is given singular visual and musical characters, different degrees of brightness and color (e.g. "normal: 1000 W," "red lamp," "completely dark," "strong blue," etc.), as well as distinctive smells (e.g. "vinegar smell" for the "fortissimo" room). Eight rooms have one or more tape-replay machines that play a sundry of sounds—such as a TV commercial, laughter from a quiz show, an announcement at an airport, "faint car horn from far away," the ticking of a watch, a "Japanese exotic and sexy song," a "sweet American song," a "French poetry reading (sad)," musical pieces by Bach, Cage, and Stockhausen, and Paik's earlier Korean folksong-style composition. In addition, as in *TV Room*, three rooms are assigned especially for "audience participation." One room has miscellaneous objects such as lumps of wood, metal sheets, and stones so that the audience can "kick around many objects and enjoy sounds and tactile feeling." Another room has a prepared piano for the audience to play. Similarly, one of the three "fortissimo cellars" is designed for a "free orchestra made up of bad players" and offers 100 toys and 100 whistles as well as traditional musical instruments which the audience can choose to play.

In this highly eccentric fashion, Paik willfully distances the *Sinfonie for 20 Rooms* and his other postmusical pieces from conventional Western classical music. In a traditional musical setting, writes Paik in "New Ontology of Music," the audiences are inertly seating on their seats all the while musical sounds travel around them. In contradistinction to such a tradition, Paik's postmusic is geared to transform a one-way structure of aesthetic production and consumption in a way reminiscent of Bertolt Brecht's demand that the radio be an apparatus of communication rather than that of social control and manipulation (53).[16] Paik further elaborates on this:

> In the "Symphony for 20 rooms,"
> the sounds, etc., move, the audience moves also.
> In my "Omnibus music No. 1" (1961)
> the sounds sit down, the audience visit them.
> In the Music Exposition,
> the sounds sit, the audience plays or attacks them.
> In the "Moving Theatre" in the street,
> the sounds move in the street, the audience meets or encounters them
> "unexpectedly" in the street.
> The beauty of moving theatre lies in this "Surprise a priori," because
> almost all of the audience is uninvited, not knowing what it is, why it is,
> who is the composer, the player, organizer—or better speaking—organizer,
> composer, player. (*Videa 'n' Videology* 3)

While Paik pits his postmusic against conventional music, he bitingly faults Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 for the "heroism of romantic free-bourgeois" (3) and the resultant ideological class satisfaction. In contrast to such a conceited and priggish kind of music,

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[16] In "Radio as an Apparatus of Communication" Brecht writes, "But quite apart from the dubiousness of its functions, radio is one-sided when it should be two-. It is purely an apparatus for distribution, for mere sharing out. So here is a positive suggestion: change this apparatus over from distribution to communication." Following Brecht's lead, Paik envisions "two-sided" video art. For instance, he comments in his later essay, "Who Is Afraid of Jonas Mekas?," that "the next stage of video art competition is who makes the best/most intelligent *two-way* videodisc. I have thought about it for over two decades" (284; original emphasis).

he hopes to transfigure his music into a "Moving Theater," in which everyone encounters

and interacts with all kinds of aural and visual events and happenings. It is true that, as he

acknowledges in his 1963 essay, "To the 'Symphony for 20 Rooms,'" such a concept of

musical deterritorialization owes a great deal to Cage's chance music and Stockhausen's

spatial music. At the same time, however, he defies these composers' musical practices

and envisions his postmusic as "a bastard the parents of which we do not know" (no

pagination) and characterizes it in these terms: "without apparent cause, announcing

neither from nor to where" ("New Ontology of Music" 3). By means of "bastarding," he

seeks to challenge the Beethovenian musical narrative, Schoenberg's dodecaphonic

composition, and the postwar avant-garde music, all the while striving very hard to create

his own art world.

Of prime importance here is that Paik's experimental television and his later video

art should be seen as part of his postmusical practice of "bastarding." In "Afterlude," an

essay written just following the Wuppertal Exposition, he makes clear that the TVs

displayed at the exhibition function as a kind of "physical music" (*Videa 'n' Videology* 5).

Furthermore, he stresses the connection between electronic television and music by

commenting that "It is the historical necessity, if there is a historical necessity in history,

that a new decade of electronic television should follow to [*sic*] the past decade of

electronic music" (11). These remarks give some clue in explanation of the unusual

coupling of the two different media at the exhibition. Hanhardt points out the significance

of the exhibition as a watershed event in Paik's career and suggests that it marks "Paik's

transition from composer and performance artist to the inventor of a new art form" (*The*

World of Nam June Paik 37). Like many other commentators, however, Hanhardt still tends to see music and TV separately and hence stops short of addressing the underlying implications of Paik's pairing of the two seemingly unrelated art forms. Departing from such a position, I argue that the historical significance of Paik's first solo exhibition lies in the very fact that the two art media are handled as *one and the same medium* of what Paik dubs "postmusic." Or, better still, I suggest that one medium is constantly in the process of being translated into the other as music draws a line of flight from its conventional terrains and configurations. In some unambiguous manner, the Wuppertal Exhibition demonstrates the way in which Paik enacts something like a becoming-TV of music and a becoming-music of TV. Whence the pairing of the two art media in the title of the exhibition, "Exposition of Music—Electronic Television." (This translational process at work is exemplified by the two extraordinary works discussed above—while *Klavier Integral* turns music into a visual spectacle, *TV Room* incorporates the visual medium of electronic television into music.) It is this simultaneous translation mechanism of becoming-visual of the musical and becoming-musical of the visual that paves the way for Paik's new ontology of postmusic and his later "invention" video art.

Postmusical Video and Its Chronotope

If Paik's "Exposition of Music—Electronic Television" vehiculates the formal process of translating the musical into the visual and the visual into the musical, and if we consider that music is first and foremost a temporal art form and visual art a spatial one,

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the watershed exhibition becomes a locus in which a peculiarly complex form of spatio-temporality is presented. The characteristic chronotope of Paik's postmusical art work is discernable when it is compared to Schoenberg's music, for the development of Paik's art form is indissociable from his changing attitudes toward the great German composer. When it comes to discussing the relationship Paik's art form bears with Schoenberg, Decker-Phillips's observation can be useful. In her study of Paik's *TV Room* she meticulously documents the fact that he initially had in mind thirteen televisions but actually exhibited only twelve (Figure 3.3). As arbitrary as this number may be, she suggests, there is a correspondence between Paik's twelve live TVs and Cage's twelve live radios in *Imaginary Landscape No. 4* (58, n. 117). I will go further than Decker-Phillips and maintain that more importantly, there is an unmistakable consonance between Paik's layout of twelve televisions and Schonberg's the twelve-tone technique.

It has already been demonstrated in Chapter 2 that the evolution of Schoenberg's compositional practice exemplifies a spatialization of musical temporality. The twelve-tone technique undoes older modes of tonal composition and places all musical tones in *differential* relation with one another. This relational structure of music or what Adorno calls "a composition with twelve notes only related to one another" ("Vers une musique informelle" 301) tends to privilege the synchronic and the syntagmatic over the diachronic and the paradigmatic. In consequence, Schoenberg's dodecaphonic system tendentially enfeebles a temporal flow of musical enunciation and points toward a spatialization of temporality. Because of this atemporalizing tendency, Adorno chides Schoenberg's later music for being "the dissociation of time" and for "no longer

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[recognizing] history" (*Philosophy of Modern Music* 60). If we recall here Georg

Lukács's argument in *The Historical Novel* that a bourgeois historiography promulgates a

particular form of historical development as the only course open to the mankind (27), or

if we consider Adorno's deft analysis of how Beethoven's sonata form typifies the

bourgeois compositional subject's construction of historical necessity—*things could have*

been no other way—then, Schoenberg's compositional practice can be regarded as the

symptom of the crisis of such a historical consciousness that has underpinned the

Enlightenment belief in progress.[17]

If Schoenberg's music thus displays a spatializing tendency, it is of great

significance to note that Paik pushes such a tendency to its limit in works like *TV Room*

all the while attempting to renew the ontological form of music. Music is no longer

confined to its traditional parameters in the hands of Paik as television sets are brought

into his all-inclusive medium of postmusic. And while twelve-TV rows are spatially

permutated and distributed, the diachronic dimension of music is virtually absorbed into

the synchronic dimension. In light of the preponderance of the synchronic in Paik's

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[17] One exemplary case of a progressive and developmental vision of universal history in the Enlightenment tradition is Immanuel Kant's "What Is Enlightenment?" In this treatise he defines enlightenment as "man's emergence from his self-imposed immaturity" and views the essence of human destiny as progress. He writes, "One age cannot bind itself, and thus conspire, to place a succeeding one in a condition whereby it would be impossible for the later age to expand its knowledge (particularly where it is so very important), to rid itself of errors, and generally to increase its enlightenment. That would be a crime against human nature, whose essential destiny lies precisely in such progress" (43-44). Regarding what such progress might be, another essay of his, entitled "Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Intent," gives some glimpse: he argues for a "universal cosmopolitan state" which functions as a "womb in which all of the human species' original capacities will be developed" (38). Whether or not such an enlightenment vision of historical progress is an "unfinished project" as Habermas might put it, it is of importance to observe, especially in considering Paik's postcolonial sense of history, that the universal notion of history is under attack in modern and contemporary historiographies. My point here is that Schonberg's and Paik's modifications of musical temporality can be seen as *allegories* of such altered historical sensibilities in modernity and postmodernity.

postmusical art form, it is illuminating that Akira Asada, a scholar whom Paik considers

to be "Number-One brain in Japan in semiotics," leaves the following comment (though

in a different context):

> In any case, in Nam June Paik's work, the paradigmatic and
> multidimensional accumulation of signs and images far outweighs
> syntagmatic and linear integration. He piles up signs and images, takes
> accumulation to its most extreme point, and when it has reached a
> kaleidoscopic climax, paradoxically, one becomes aware of a kind of
> void—a void full of images or the silence full of sounds. And I think this
> experience is the very kernel of Nam June Paik's art. (126)

Here Asada opines that whereas alphabetic signs are written linearly, ideographic signs

such as Chinese characters can be a lot more flexibly "piled up" in two- or three-

dimensional space. Paik's distinctive art form, Asada goes on to say, benefits from, and

bears a striking resemblance to, the grouping of the Chinese characters. Asada's remark

is comparable to Sergei Eisenstein's reflections on the similarity between the filmic

apparatus and the Chinese characters ("The Cinematographic Principle and the

Ideogram" 28-30). It remains unclear, at best, to what extent the layout of the Chinese

characters informs Paik's art form. Yet Asada's observation on Paik's prioritization of

the paradigmatic over the syntagmatic can be seen as pointing to some of the most

distinctive characteristics of Paik's visual apparatus, namely the privileged role of the

synchronic (as opposed to the diachronic) as well as the spatializing tendency.

Indeed, Paik's formal experiment with postmusic at the "Exposition of Music—

Electronic Television" exhibition becomes a matter of spatial organization to an even

greater degree than Schoenberg's composition, considerably subduing and even negating

a diachronic musical temporality. In Paik's video art, the interlocking relations of time

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and space are the crux of the medium, true, yet the basic formal structure of his visual

work seems to exemplify a spatialization of the temporal in a much more intensified form.

The most illustrative video work would be *TV Clock* (1963), a visual study of temporal

phenomena, in which time becomes predominantly a matter of spatial arrangement and

permutation of two sets of twelve televisions (Figure 3.4). Paik slightly modifies the

work later on: while the 1981 version has twelve manipulated black-and-white televisions

and twelve manipulated color televisions, the 1991 version has twenty-four manipulated

black-and-white televisions. Despite these modifications, it remains clear that the

permutation of two sets of twelve televisions, while it corresponds to twelve daytime

hours and twelve nighttime hours, also marks an interesting variation on dodecaphonic

composition. *Moon is the Oldest TV* is another example closely associated with *TV Clock*

in terms of its thematic and formal elements. In this work Paik portray various phases of

the moon by displaying twelve black-and-white televisions that contain manipulated

cathode-ray tubes in them (Figure 3.5). In addition to the fact that Paik's visual

representation of the moon corresponds to twelve months, we may quite plausibly

hypothesize the possible connection between *Moon is the Oldest TV* and the twelve-tone

technique. In this work as well as in *TV Room* and *TV Clock*, the compositional technique

of permutating twelve-tone rows becomes the fundamental *modus operandi* of Paik's

postmusic. In so building on Schoenberg's compositional method, however, Paik's

postmusic also deviates from it in search of a new ontology of music. Now the visual is

brought into the new terrain of music, while music becomes visual and therefore even

more spatial. In an interview with Japanese architect Arata Isozaki, Paik once

distinguished his concern with musical time sharply from the architect's experiment with space and said, "[music] is temporary and temporal. We have different jobs to do" (125). In some unexpected ways, however, Paik's postmusic becomes a highly *spatial* art form and his job as a "postmusician" becomes not altogether different than Isozaki's.

In as much as Paik's postmusical video texts such as *TV Room*, *TV Clock*, and *Moon is the Oldest TV* betoken an intensification of the spatializing and atemporalizing tendency already perceptible in Schoenberg's music, just to that degree he is susceptible to the kind of criticism Adorno levels at Schoenberg's "regressive" late music and the subsequent development of the so-called New Music, a criticism that those musical trends are not capable of grappling with history.[18] In some sense Jameson's critique of ahistoricity in Paik's video art can be said to resonate with such an Adornian intervention. That is to say, if both Schoenberg's dodecaphonic composition and Saussure's sign system are regarded as relational and differential structures that potentially give precedence to synchrony over diachrony, Adorno's methodical criticism of the "aging" of Schoenberg's music parallels Jameson's critique of ahistorical dimensions in linguistic models (such as Russian Formalism, structuralism, and poststructuralism) in *The Prison-House of Language*.[19] Important for our discussion of Paik's video is that Jameson's

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[18] When censuring Schoenberg's late music, Adorno puts it, "Music formulates a design of the world, which—for better or for worse—no longer recognizes history" (*Philosophy of Music* 60). Adorno's similar criticism of ahistoricity in music is rehearsed when he calls into question post-Schoenbergian compositional practices as developed in the hands of Boulez, Cage, and Stockhausen. See "The Aging of the New Music" in *Essays on Music*.
[19] In this study Jameson demonstrates that Saussure's bias for the synchronic and against the diachronic prohibits his system from developing a theory of temporal mutations or historical changes implicit in his diachronic model (38-39). For more details, see Chapter 1, above.

historical and historicizing inquiry into the resolutely unhistorical modes of synchronic

thinking prefigures his later discussion of postmodern culture. In *The Prison-House of*

Language Jameson already sounds an urgent call to the unmistakable consonance

between synchronic systems of thought and the "world saturated with messages and

information, whose intricate commodity network may be seen as the prototype of a

system of signs" (ix). In view of Paik's engagement with Schoenberg's twelve-tone

composition, and in light of the undeniable affinity between Schoenberg's compositional

system and Saussure's linguistic system, it is telling and even logical that Jameson, after

calling to task much of theoretical discourse locked up in the "prison-house of language,"

goes on to take issue with ahistoricity in Paik's video and the "waning of our sense of

history" in postmodernism more generally (*Postmodernism* 405). If combined together,

therefore, Adorno's intervention into Schoenberg and Jameson's interrogation of

postmodernism shed light on the ahistorical dimensions of Paik's postmodern art form

that has evolved out of his engagement with the German composer. It is also worth

mentioning that these two eminent dialectical thinkers' historical diagnosis dovetails with

Guy Debord's contention that contemporary postmodern visual culture fabricates a "false

consciousness of time" by paralyzing any notion of history deeply rooted in historical

time (90).

There is no denying that Paik's postmusical visual art gives expression to the

ahistorical thrust of the society of the spectacle through its atemporalizing structure or its

thematization of disjunctive and fragmentary temporality. To be sure, it is such

distinctive traits that make video art one of the most symptomatic cultural media of

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postmodernism. As has been mentioned above, however, the inimitable significance of

Paik's video as a cultural form does not issue from its postmodern features alone.

Another hitherto underexplored yet equally important side of his video art, that is, an

articulation of his *postcolonial* sense of history, should also be factored into our

evaluation of his art form. For, to repeat my earlier argument, Paik's video art is

historically noteworthy not least because the seeming contradiction of the postmodern

and the postcolonial is sedimented in the form itself and because his art form provides us

with an intricate cartography of the overdetermined configurations of the contemporary

world. Such formal complexity demands that the aforementioned the ahistorical tendency

be approached from a different angle in such a way that Paik's historical sense is taken

into consideration.

Now, as I thus complicate our view of Paik's art form, I would also like to

complicate our understanding of Jameson's critique of video art. Earlier I have mentioned

that Jameson's theoretical discourse on postmodernism in general and video art in

particular should be understood as an insistence that any meaningful study of

postmodernism should also address the latter's structural correlation with postcolonialism

in the context of globalization. In his interview with Anders Stephanson, Jameson offers

such a compelling view when he touches upon what he calls "third-worldism." As he

underlines the urgency of contesting the depersonalized and ahistorical postmodern

culture of the West, he tries to find in non-Western culture the possibility "to undo

postmodernism homeopathically by the methods of postmodernism: to work at dissolving

the pastiche by using all the instruments of pastiche itself, to reconquer some genuine

historical sense by using the instruments of what I have called substitutes for history"

(*Jameson on Jameson* 59).[20] This is far from essentializing non-Western culture; rather, it

is to be understood against the backdrop of his insistence on "the need for a *relational*

way of thinking global culture (such that we cannot henceforth think 'first-world'

literature in isolation from that of other global spaces)" ("A Brief Response" 27).

Building upon these observations on the *relationality* of the postmodern and the

postcolonial, I argue that Paik's art form, due to its *interstitial* position, not only displays

an ahistoricity germane to postmodernism, but homeopathically appropriates ahistorical

postmodern art media as a way to retrieve some genuine historical sensibility. But some

questions arise. What kind of historical sensibility does Paik's postmusical video art

produce and promote? What does that historical sensibility have to do with the

contemporary globalizing world? In order to address these questions, the following

section proposes to read the atemporalizing and spatializing tendency in Paik's art form

in connection with globalization and the emergent spatial world system in which his

transnational migration and cultural dislocation are deeply embedded.

Space as History; or, Toward a Spatial Historiography

As unhistorical as video art may be due to its atemporalizing nature, the

historicity of Paik's art form can be sought paradoxically in its obverse side, namely its

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[20] The reader for whom these "essentialist" remarks on the Third World might become a wake-up call is advised to patiently read Jameson's interview along until two pages later he discusses E.L. Doctorow's "third-worldism" (61).

spatializing tendency. In a kind of dialectical reversal, in other words, the seemingly

unhistorical characteristics of his formal innovation become *historical* through and

through as he foregrounds space as a locus where his postcolonial or transnational sense

of history is inscribed. As many spatial theorists and geographers demonstrate, there is a

sense in which space has become a predominant feature in global social and cultural

production.[21] In "Of Other Spaces" Michel Foucault chimes in, "In any case I believe that

the anxiety of our era has to do fundamentally with space, no doubt a great deal more

than with time. Time probably appears to us only as one of the various distributive

operations that are possible for the elements that are spread out in space" (23). Paik's

artistic innovation is no doubt grounded in this so-called "spatial turn" and reflects the

increased significance of space in contemporary cultural production. At the same time,

though, Paik's art work demands that such a "spatial turn" in postmodernity should be

examined in conjun ction with the spatial dimension of postcolonial movements—it

being understood that diverse postcolonial phenomena such as attempts to reclaim the

once colonized territories as well as post-independence migration and diasporic

displacement are, among many other things, first and foremost *spatial* issues. This

amounts to saying that Paik's art form insists that those ostensibly unconnected spatial

phenomena of postmodernity and postcoloniality should be grasped against the backdrop

of globalization and the resultant emergence of the new spatial world system.

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[21] On the so-called "spatial turn," see Chapter 1, above, in which I discuss Jameson's theorization of the
ascendance of space as a cultural dominant in globalization.

While Paik's thus registers and works out the antinomies of postmodernity and postcoloniality as constitutive features or symptoms of the new spatial production of globalization, much of Paik scholarship focuses on the postmodern and ahistorical aspects of his art form, thus overlooking his postcolonial "bastarding" of both modern and postmodern strands in Western music on one hand and his historical thematization of global social space on the other. This typical inattention to, and even repression of, the postcolonial dimension of Paik's video art is evidenced when commentators invariably discuss Paik's Wuppertal Exhibition solely as a landmark event that signals the coming of postmodern culture. What deserves our attention in this regard, however, is that Paik designed the exhibition poster to be printed on a Korean newspaper dated May 11th, 4293. Seemingly preposterous, the year 4293 actually refers to 1960 BC according to the traditional Korean calendar system that originates from the mythical foundation of the nation in 2333 BC by King Dangun. With this gesture, Paik challenges the imposition of Western-oriented temporality and, by implication, the various ideologies that colonize Korea. In addition, he does not forget to articulate his nationality and place of origin: "NAM JUNE PAIK (Seoul, Korea)." He thus inscribes his keen sense of and pride in the long history of his country into the announcement of his first solo exhibition, in which he enacts his subaltern project of "bastarding" Western music.

Although the palimpsestic structure of this announcement poster indicates that his search for a new ontology of postmusic/video is entangled with his postcolonial self-consciousness, that fact has not garnered much critical attention. A reputable connoisseur of Paik's art world, Hanhardt does take note of the non-Western writing on the poster and

explains the announcement is printed "on a different page from a Japanese newspaper" (42). Regardless of on what ground Hanhardt identifies in so assured a manner the combination of exotic alphabets and Chinese characters as being "Japanese," this may stand as a barometer of how Paik's postcolonial desire has been obliterated or repressed in general scholarship.

With regard to the repressed side of Paik's "postmodern" art, it should also be mentioned that, while his decontextualized and dehistoricized works have gained critical acclaim and public popularity, those that bring to the fore Korean history and culture have more or less been neglected. Leaving aside his thematization of East Asian cultural elements in works like *TV Buddha*, *Zen for Film*, and *Zen for Head* or in his contributions to the opening and closing ceremonies of such major national events as the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games and the 2002 Korea-Japan World Cup Games, many of his works reflect his perennial interest in the history of Korea as well as his diasporic nostalgia for his home country. Particularly remarkable in terms of his postcolonial sense of history is his representation of Dangun, whose mythical foundation of Korea, then called Gojosun, was central to the formation or "imagination" of the nation. Dangun's symbolic meaning in Korean history was such that the Japanese colonial rule strove to extirpate his existence from Koreans' collective consciousness. Given that a series of systematic attempts was made during the Japan colonial rule to deny and distort the earlier part of Korean history that preceded the foundation of Japan or showed Japan's cultural debt to Korea, it is anything but surprising that Dangun becomes the target of Paik's postcolonial rewriting of history. Reacting to Japan's historical distortions, Paik reaffirms, as he does in the

Wuppertal exhibition poster, Dangun's significance in Korean history. In *Dangun as a Scythian King*, for example, Paik associates the legendary figure with one of the most glorious historical moments in Korean history, during which the country's geographical territory and national imaginary were expanded into Manchuria (Figure 3.6). (Since Manchuria was the center of Korean independence movements during the Japanese colonial rule, Paik's relinking Korea to the region is all the more significant.) In doing so, Paik appropriates postmodern multimedia art as a way to rewrite the magnificent historical past of his now impoverished, postcolonial country.

In one interview Paik similarly locates Korea's origin in the "horse-back riding people" of Mongolia and Manchuria and remarks that his video art deals with such "nomadic times" (*Nam June Paik: Video Time—Video Space* 18). By thus insisting on Korea's collective imaginary and its origin in "nomadic times," he historically contextualizes a fragmentary and disjunctive sense of temporality often attributed to his art form. In that sense his artistic practices should not be explained through recourse only to the postmodernist or poststructuralist idea of nomadic or schizophrenic temporality. By the same token, the "aesthetics of narcissism" as well as the "leveling out of the effects of temporality," which critics like Rosalind Krauss detect in video art in general (180, 182), need to be reconsidered in such a way that accounts for Paik's postcolonial concern with collectivity and history.

Paik once complained that people usually paid attention only to his eccentric and idiosyncratic actions on stage which he intended as a mere accompaniment to his intricately contrived musical works (Nyman 82). Something similar seems at work when

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it comes to his position as a postcolonial artist: just as critical attention to the visual in Paik's art often turns a deaf ear to the (post)musical orientations of his video work, in a parallel manner the predominant emphasis on the postmodern side of his original art form purges his works of any postcolonial intervention into history. In some sense it may be not Paik's work as such so much as this de-historicizing and de-contextualizing inclination in Paik scholarship—the prioritization of the postmodern over the postcolonial, alongside the prioritization of the visual and spatial over the aural and temporal—that needs to be historicized as a symptom of the obtuse, if not altogether paralyzed, historical sensibility of contemporary society.

Another more important sense in which Paik's video art deals with history has to do with the way that Paik thematizes temporal disjunction and schizophrenic subjectivity within the historical context of spatial disjunction, disorientation, and displacement in the world today. If we, instead of defining Paik's video only as a postmodern art form, factor in his postcolonial and diasporic consciousness of global social space as well, his predominantly spatial and seemingly ahistorical poetics is not a sign of ahistoricity but another mode of historical sensibility which derives its affective force and significance from his transnational mobility and transcultural dislocation. In this sense Paik's spatializing art form can be said to assert space as the essential parameter of our historical imagination in the contemporary globalized world. To put it differently, Paik's postmusical visual art insists that we develop a new concept of space *qua* history, and that we see space as the site wherein the historical dynamic of the contemporary world is inscribed and negotiated. This proposition makes sense to the degree to which the

contemporary stage of capitalism increasingly exercises its domination through its

expansive and extensive global spatial network which connects and disconnects all parts

of the world.

Viewed in this way, Paik's conceptualization of satellite video art can be read

afresh as the postcolonial artist's endeavor to grasp the simultaneously integrative and

disjunctive global space underpinned by cybernetics and information technology. In

works such as *Global Groove* (1973), *Good Morning, Mr. Orwell* (1984), *Bye Bye*

Kipling (1986) and *Wrap Around the World* (1988), Paik comes up with an all-inclusive

art form in which a dazzling array of art forms such as music, painting, dancing, film,

Korean shamanist ritual, TV commercial, and literature are incorporated in a way that

connects diverse cultures and peoples from different times and places. Commenting on

the way in which those satellite video works simultaneously link many different parts of

the globe, Paik puts it,

> The first step for a *ninja* is learning how to shorten distances by shrinking
> the earth, that is, how to transcend the law of gravity. For the satellite, this
> is a piece of cake. So, just as Mozart mastered the newly-invented clarinet,
> the satellite artist must compose his art from the beginning suitable to
> physical conditions and grammar. The satellite art in the superior sense
> does not merely transmit existing symphonies and operas to other lands. It
> must consider how to achieve a two-way connection between opposite
> sides of the earth; how to give a conversational structures to the art; how
> to master the differences in time; how to play with improvisation, in
> determinism, echoes, feedbacks, and empty spaces in the Cagean sense;
> and how to instantaneously manage the differences in culture,
> preconceptions, and common sense that exist various nations. Satellite art
> must make the most of these elements (for they can become strengths or
> weaknesses) creating a multitemporal, multispatial symphony ("La Vie,
> Satellites, One Meeting—One Life" 219)

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Paik's satellite video art portrays the integrative process of globalization while at the same time bring into focus unbridgeable differences among cultures on the globe.[22] Through such an arduous endeavor Paik works to represent the "multitemporal and multispatial symphony" of globalization. As he composes such a global "symphony" comprised of multiple spatio-temporalities, he makes skillful use of information technology and cybernetics. Given that those informational and cybernetic apparatuses are what underpin the spatial network of globalization, his art form can be said to be at one with its content. His satellite video art, in other words, grapples with, on both thematic and formal levels, globalization and its spatial apparatus.

Paik writes in a letter to Cage that his satellite art is conceived as a "'whole art' in the meaning of Mr. R. Wagner" (Cage, *A Year from Monday 90*). Paik's allusion to the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk* is interesting because such a comprehensive or grand vision of art seems no longer prized in postmodern artistic practices which are often considered to be an expression of fragmentation, contingency, and ephemerality. Paik's holistic or totalizing art form and its global vision stand in a somewhat tensional relationship with such postmodern practices. Nevertheless, Paik's art form does not uncritically embrace Wagnerian musical modernism either. Quite to the contrary; as he explains in his interview with Korean cultural critic O-ryong Lee, the concept of "wrapping around the world" is derived not from the Wagnerian spirit, but from Korean culture. Paik remarks, "My video art work which is to be relayed worldwide via satellite on September 11, 1988,

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[22] Anja Oswald's shot-to-shot formal analysis of *Global Groove* gives an indication of how complexly Paik's satellite art is permeated by an enormous amount of images, voice-over, music, special-effects and captions from all over the world (36-41).

is entitled *Wrap Around the World*, or *Wrap the World Around*. Literally, softly wrapping

the five oceans and six continents in a bajani [sic]—a "wrapping cloth" (128). *Bojagi* is a

traditional Korean wrapping cloth which, having no fixed form, can contain disparate

items. By linking his satellite video art to *bojagi*, an art form which combines different

items and elements into one symphonic chorus without imposing any uniformity or order

on them,[23] Paik aims to appropriate both modern and postmodern art protocols and create

his own artistic medium. With the help of such a double-edged postcolonial strategy, he

maps the complex contours of globalization at the present historical conjuncture without

necessarily falling to the lure of Wagnerian "whole art" or postmodern fragmentation.

In view of Paik's critical distance from Western art forms, it is neither sufficient

nor adequate to consider his formal innovation in terms of ahistorical postmodernism

alone. As has been argued so far, the idiosyncrasy of Paik's art form results from its

inscription, into its form itself, of the overdetermined relation between postmodernity and

postcoloniality. Put otherwise, his form-problem evolves around the question of how he

is to appropriate ahistorical postmodern art media as a means to articulate a postcolonial

[23] Elaine H. Kim and Eui-Young Lee invoke the unique function of *bojagi*, often spelled as *pojagi*, in their introduction to *East to America: Korean American Life Stories*, a collection of thirty-eight stories. They write, "We decided to gather materials for a book that might intervene in the discussion from the flanks instead of head on, by brining forth a variety of viewpoints to demonstrate how Korean American lives are linked but at the same time are multiple, layered, and non-equivalent. We thought that a collection of stories would show that there can be no real spokesperson, that no one can tell the 'whole story,' and that there can be no typology of Korean American identity, family, or community, since a collection of perspectives would insistently point to the absence of thousands of other stories that remain as yet untold. We wanted to bring forth something that would recall the traditional Korean *pojagi*, or wrapping cloth, which was constructed of fabric scraps made into artistic designs by anonymous women for everyday use. Beautiful and functional, the *pojagi* was used to contain and carry ordinary household items as well as to wrap gifts. We wanted this collection to be a gift to our readers and an intervention into the misunderstanding of Korean Americans" (xvii-xviii). Paik's mention of *bojagi* can likewise be seen as an insistence on the inclusive yet multilayered nature of his satellite art.

sense of history, and roughly speaking, it is such incommensurability that gives rise to his

distinctive art form. This formal complexity therefore demands a reexamination of the

allegedly ahistorical dimensions of his art world. Although his works display an

atemporalizing and spatializing tendency and thus embody the postmodern "spatial turn,"

such a feature need to be analyzed not simply as a sign of ahistoricity but rather as the

historical site of the postcolonial artist's global migration and geographical dislocation. In

this regard it is arguable that Paik's postmusical/visual art form articulates the apparently

incongruous historical and spatial phenomena of postmodernity and postcoloniality as

intimately entwined, constitutive features of the contemporary world. In doing so, Paik

underscores *space* as a lens through which to examine the *history* of the development of

globalization and its intricate spatial network. Regarding Paik's pioneering artistic

practice, Bill Viola remarks, "He really had a vision of the artist being part of the

worldwide cultural network. It was totally before the web. The world we are living in

right now is his world. He visualized that. He was the pioneer" (Blumberg). Indeed,

Paik's artistic practice visualizes the complex and even contradictory spatial

configurations of globalization as *history* thereby calling for a spatial historiography. A

critically informed reevaluation of Paik should address his art form as a spatial

historiography. As I thus emphasize the historical impulse running through Paik's

postmodern art form, I move to another Korean American artist Theresa Hak Kyung Cha

to look at how she handles the question of history through her formal experiment with

postmodern multimedia art.

Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's Postmodern Multimedia Art and Writing History

Since its publication in 1982 Korean American artist and writer Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's captivating, if cryptic, narrative *Dictée* has garnered much critical attention from postmodern and postcolonial/ethnic studies camps. In the 1980s Cha's multi-genre text was read primarily as an "apparently postmodern…ahistorical and dislocated *récit*" (Cheng 120) and many were attracted to her exquisite use of postmodern thematics such as indeterminacy, multiple subjectivities, anti-foundationalism, and narrative fragmentation (Lewallen "Introduction" 11). Almost a decade after Cha's untimely death in 1982,[24] however, a group of Asian American feminist scholars, Elaine H. Kim and Lisa Lowe chief among them, presented papers at the 1991 Association for Asian American Studies annual meeting, in hopes of changing the direction of Cha scholarship and redressing "the absence of interpretations of her text both in terms of the specific histories it represents and the material histories out of which it emerges" (Kim "Preface" ix). Following on the heel of this landmark event, the publication of the papers presented at the conference under the title *Writing Self, Writing Nation* once again called wide attention to the *liaison dangereuse* between postmodernism and history.

There have since been a number of significant attempts to contextualize *Dictée* in an historical and historicizing framework and to tackle the thorny problem of postmodernism and history in Cha's work. Many commentators have hailed her narrative as an inventive mode of writing history. The editors of *Postmodern American Fiction: A*

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[24] A few days after the original publication of *Dictée* Cha was murdered by a stranger in New York City.

Norton Anthology, for instance, group the "Clio: History" section in *Dictée* together with

Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* and Norman Mailer's *The Armies of the Night* under the

heading of "Fact Meets Fiction." An inquiry into the blurred relation between fact and

fiction, the editors point out, has become the vital element of literary innovation in

postmodernity; and one of the fundamental achievements of *Dictée* consists of its

undoing of the fact-fiction barrier and its probe into what Cha calls "the parts false the

parts real" (Geyh et al. 126; qtd in *Dictée* 28).

      Squarely in line with such an effort to re-examine Cha's narrative production in

the context of a new historical sensibility burgeoning in the postmodern global world,

many critics have invariably attended to her original textual form. Readers of *Dictée*

quickly recognize the formal anomaly of the book: a vast array of cultural forms such as

photographs, filmic stills, calligraphy, diagrams, maps and anatomical charts (both

Western and Eastern) as well as literary narratives, personal letters (handwritten and

typewritten), political and historical documents, F. A. McKenzie's book on Korean

history, and grammar/translation exercises, are jumbled together in her labyrinthine

textual space. Without forming an integrative narrative whole, all these different forms of

narratives are ingeniously arranged in a way that brings to light a convoluted

constellation of historical realities imposed upon the diasporic subject. The complexity of

Dictée's textual form is such that it has long thwarted many people's efforts to pin down

its genere. The text has been characterized variously as autobiography (Wilson, "Falling

into the Korean Uncanny" 281), "modernist epic" (Josephine Park 129), "poetic text"

(Sakai, "Distinguishing Literature" 26), "poetic montage" (Ball 162), "talking story" and

"recitative" (Stephens 186, 191), "experimental novel" (Sue J. Kim "Apparatus" 143), and non-developmental *Bildungsroman* (Wong 106). Meanwhile, some critics suggest, and rightly so, that a certain part of the book is written as a film script (Rinder, *The Theme of Displacement* 27; Minh-Ha, "White Spring" 48; Stephens 203).[25]

While these scholars' diverging perspectives serve to attest to the formal richness and heterogeneity of *Dictée*, it is noteworthy that far less attention has been given to Cha's engagement with other cultural forms—her multimedia art work such as video and film on the one hand, and her interest in (post)structuralist semiotics and film theory on the other. Although the welcomed publication of *Exilée and Temps Morts: Selected Works* in late August, 2009 makes available some important writings and visual images housed at the Theresa Hak Kyung Cha Archive at UC Berkeley, it will likely take some time before her exceptionally versatile command of multiple art forms is evaluated in a meaningful way. Noting this gap in the body of work on Cha in the past and present, and, more tacitly, suggesting a new direction for future scholarship, the following discussion interrogates her engagement with various theoretical and cultural forms with a goal of casting a fresh light on how her mediation and *translation* of different art forms itself is interlaced with her foray into the meaning of *transcultural* and *transnational* displacement and dislocation. To that end, I discuss how Cha critically appropriates (post)modern cultural forms and (post)structuralism as a means of articulating her concern with (post)colonial history and time; and how her filmic and video texts grapple

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[25] The chapter "Erato: Love Poetry," in particular, is obviously written as a film script.

with such intricate, and even overdetermined, relationships among disparate art forms and theoretical agendas. In the final section I read *Dictée* in conjunction with her multimedia artwork and illustrate the way that her exploration of filmic time in visual art media informs and underwrites her thematization of diasporic history in *Dictée*.

Récit as Re Citing/Re Sighting/Re Insighting

Cha took an immense interest in "semiotic people," including Saussure, Roland Barthes, and Michel Foucault, as well as her teachers at Berkeley and the Centre d'Études Américain du Cinéma à Paris—Jean-Louis Baudry, Christian Metz, and Thierry Kuntzel, among others. It is no surprise then that language should appear time and again as a predominant theme in Cha's art work. In "Summary of Work" (1981), for example, which was prepared as part of her application for the National Endowment for the Arts Grants, she unequivocally states: "The main body of my work is with Language, 'looking for the roots of the language before it is born on the tip of the tongue.' Since having been forced to learn foreign languages more 'consciously' at a later age, there has existed a different perception and orientation toward language."[26] In a moment I shall discuss at some length a contradiction inherent in such a statement, namely how and to what extent

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[26] Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, Summary of Work (No pagination), Individual Grant Application, National Endowment for the Arts, 1981. UC Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha Archive.

Cha's *particular* experience of "forced" language acquisition in a diasporic setting[27] is

explainable through recourse to the Saussurean inquiry into the abstracted "roots of the

language" or into the *universal* system of the sign, which, like Husserl's

phenomenological *epoché* or bracketing, radically dissociates itself from the referent and

the lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*). For the moment it would be sufficient to note that Cha's

statement resonates with Frantz Fanon's observation that speaking a language is not just a

matter of acquiring a certain syntax or morphology in the language, but, more

significantly, a matter of assuming and internalizing a culture; and that "the phenomenon

of language" is therefore always of prime importance for colonized people (*Black Skin,*

White Masks 17-18).

In view of Cha's self-conscious concern with language acquisition and cultural

displacement, it is hardly inadvertent that *Dictée* opens with a description of a "woman

from a far" who suffers unspeakable pains to speak (1). As Cha vividly portrays the

difficulty the woman has in expressing herself, she seems to foreground the situation in

which the woman is "forced to learn foreign languages more 'consciously' at a later age."

Moreover, while echoing the Lacanian insight that it is language which speaks us, rather

than the other way round, Cha characterizes the woman as "dictée," thereby connoting

both the dictated subject and the act of dictation. In this sense Anne Anlin Cheng is right

to observe that Cha's central political message in the opening section is that "language is

occupation, *and* it is coercive" (126). Interestingly enough, Cha calls this stuttering and

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[27] Cha was born in South Korea in 1951, but her experience of "being forced to learn foreign languages" begins when her family migrated to Hawaii in 1962. Two year s later Cha's family moved to San Francisco, where she attended Convent of the Sacred Heart and first learned French.

suffering dictée "diseuse," a highly skilled and usually professional female reciter. Notwithstanding such a role as reciter, however, the diseuse's command of language is seriously marred by grammatically incorrect expressions, fragmented sentences, and other linguistic irregularities. Her use of language is, as Cha puts it, nothing but "Semblance of noise. Broken speech…Cracked tongue. Broken tongue. Pidgeon. Semblance of speech" (75).[28] Further on Cha even describes the diseuse's existence in terms of "the apprenticeship to silence…Speech less ness" (106).

If the opening pages of *Dictée* sketch the diseuse's grueling enunciatory efforts and dramatize the difficulty and pain involved in learning and speaking a foreign language, Cha's *Mouth to Mouth* (1975) traces a related, though perhaps opposite, process. This eight-minute single-channel video begins with eight Korean vowel graphemes, which are followed by a series of close-up shots of the mouth that silently enunciates each vowel in a slow and laborious manner. As the act of articulating each vowel is foregrounded, a gurgling sound of water is heard at the background. Meanwhile, the mouth is gradually erased by and dissolves into what looks like an undulatory and disorderly motion of water bubbles. If, as Lawrence R. Rinder suggests, the flow of water is read as the symbol of how the river of time swirls down into oblivion ("The Plurality of Entrances" 18), this video text can be said to represent one's gradual loss of language

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[28] One of the principal "themes" of Cha's work is the process of learning and de-learning languages, and incorrect and ungrammatical phrases and misspellings are therefore to be looked upon as part of her thematization of linguistic and cultural displacement. For this reason I will leave all of her "incorrect" or "wrong" expressions intact and abstain from using "[*sic*]" unless they are obvious typographical errors. In a sense it is arguable that Cha's textual production aims to resist the kind of normative and orthographic thinking underlying such an arbitrary sign as "sic."

over time. When juxtaposed side by side, therefore, *Dictée* and *Mouth to Mouth* exemplify the entwined predicament awaiting the diasporic subject: while the former text stresses the *diseuse*'s difficulty in acquiring a foreign language, the latter text visualizes the no less troubling experience of losing her native language from *disuse*: "Dead tongue. From disuse" (*Dictée* 133).

The question of language for culturally and geographically displaced subaltern people—"the labor of tongues…the labor of voice" (161)—surfaces again when the diseuse's struggle with the dictated language is likened, in a later section entitled "Calliope/Epic Poetry," to another diasporic subject's situation, in this case Cha's mother's suffering in Manchuria during the Japanese occupation of Korea (1910-1945). Cha poignantly describes her mother's trials and tribulations:

> Still, you speak the tongue the mandatory language like the others. It is not your own. Even if it is not you know you must. You are Bi-lingual. You are Tri-lingual. The tongue that is forbidden is your own mother tongue. You speak in the dark. In the secret. […] Mother tongue is your refuge. It is being home. Being who you are. Truly. To speak makes you sad. Yearning. To utter each word is a privilege you risk by death. Not only for you but for all. All of you who are one, who by law tongue tied forbidden of tongue. (45-46)

Cha's mother, Hyung Soon Huo, bears witness to this excruciating pain of being dispossessed of her native language when she writes in her own book, *Nae ka tugo on chagŭn hŭkchŏm* (A Small Black Spot I Left Behind), that "being a Korean was in itself a sin" (17).[29] In this collection of essays written in the United States and published in

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[29] In *Dictée* her name appears as Hyung Soon Huo whereas in her Korean book she curiously uses an "American" name, Hyung Soon Cha, adopting her husband's last name. In order to avoid confusion between the Chas, she is referred to as Huo.

Korea in 1997, Huo details, now in the Korean language that was once taken away from her and her nation, her fitful diasporic displacement from colonial Korea to Manchuria, then back to the liberated Korea and finally to the United States. That Huo could finally find a "refuge" or "home" in her own mother tongue distances her widely from Cha, in that "returning home" could never be so easy an option for 1.5 or later generations like Cha. (As will be discussed in a later section, Cha's central concern is with undoing such notions as "home" and "native language" in the first place.) Despite the apparent differences in their diasporic conditions of life, however, their narratives share some commonality of which the opening parts of their texts seves as telling indice. The frontispiece of *Dictée* has an inscription made on the walls of a coal mine by a Korean laborer forced to work in Japan during the Second World War, and the only Korean sentences to appear in the entire text read as follows: "Mother, I miss you, I'm hungry, I want to go home to my native place."[30] Huo similarly opens her first essay with a famous Korean poem, "I Want to Go Back Home," written by patriotic poet Eunsang Lee who himself led a diasporic life in Japan (9-14). In such a comparable way both Cha's and Huo's texts effectively stress the pain of having to leave one's homeland and of being forbidden to speak one's mother tongue.

If language thus plays a pivotal role for Cha and the diasporic subject, it is ironical that she chooses as her reciter the dictée who is "forced to learn foreign languages" and suffers from "the pain of speech the pain to say." To put it somewhat

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[30] For a different take on the "author" and authenticity of this inscription, see L. Hyun Yi Kang, "The 'Liberating Voice' of Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictée*," p. 99, n. 7. See also Elaine Kim, "Poised on the In-between," p. 25, n. 9.

mechanically, this paradoxical situation also allegorizes the immigrant artist Cha's struggle within the system of Western art languages, and her idiosyncratic multimedia art forms in that sense can be regarded as iridescent variations on this theme of contradictions between the immigrant artist's yearning to speak as the *diseuse* and her subaltern positionality as the *dictée*. Thus seen, the eccentric narrative segments in the first part of *Dictée*—such as a series of exercises of dictation, grammar, and translation— powerfully attest to a situation in which Cha (as well as the dictée-diseuse) tries to come to terms with the seemingly irresolvable contradiction between the longing to tell stories and the reality of being unable to speak.

Inscribing such a contradictory situation in the textual form itself, Cha invokes Sappho's poem in the epigraph and expresses her yearning to "write words more naked than flesh/ stronger than bone, more resilient than/ sinew, sensitive than nerve." To see whether the diseuse-dictée is up to such a task, now let us listen to her story:

> Aller à la ligne C'était le premier jour point Elle venait de loin point
> ce soir au diner virgule les familles demanderaient virgule ouvre les
> guillemets Ça c'est bien passé le premier jour point d'interrogation
> ferme les guillemets au moins virgule dire le moins possible virgule la
> réponse serait virgule ouvre les guillmets Il n'ya q'une chose point
> ferme les guillemets ouvre les guillemets Il y a quelqu'une point loin
> point ferme les guillemets

> Open paragraph It was the first day period She had come from a far
> period tonight at dinner comma the families would ask comma open
> quotation marks How was the first day interrogation mark close
> quotation marks at least to say the least of it possible comma the answer
> would be open quotation marks there is but one thing period There is
> someone period From a far period close quotation marks (*Dictée* 1)

This peculiar opening of the text touches on two crucial and interrelated activities in language learning: translation and dictation. Both translation and dictation are typically predicated upon the deep-seated belief that a transparent transfer of signs and their meaning is possible, be it within one language or between languages. Accordingly, every "good" translation or dictation is supposed to point toward an identical equivalence with the original.

Such a notion of translation and dictation, which situates those linguistic practices in a value-free vacuum and papers over any power imbalance at work, has been demystified by many contemporary thinkers. In "The Task of the Translator," to take an oft-cited example, Walter Benjamin speculates that "no translation would be possible if in its ultimate essence it strove for likeness to the original" (73), a proposition taken up and further elaborated by Derrida in "Les Tours de Babel," and whose applicability to a postcolonial "translation" of colonial discourse is examined by Homi K. Bhabha, especially in his essay "DisseminNation."[31] Or we can also think of Claude Lévi-Strauss, who, commenting on the will to power inherent in "writing lesson" in the context of Western anthropologists' encounter with the "wretched" parts of the world, asserts that "the primary function of written communication is to facilitate slavery" (*Tristes Tropiques* 299). In staging her postcolonial or Calibanesque version of language learning—"You taught me language; and my profit on't Is, I know how to curse," says Caliban to Prospero in *The Tempest* (I.ii)—Cha disrupts the allegedly transparent

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[31] See Chapter 4, below, for my discussion of Derrida's "Les Tours de Babel." For Bhabha's commentary on Benjamin, see "DissemiNation," especially pp. 163-164.

transactions of meaning and communication by pushing both dictation and translation to

a parodic extreme. As is the case with too faithful depiction in photorealist painting or in

the hyperreal Japanese *anime* or *manga*, Cha's excessively meticulous copying of given

sentences and even their punctuation marks works to derealize the language and has the

merit of highlighting the forceful imposition of the language upon the dictée. That is to

say, what seems to be a passive and scrupulous reproduction and repetition actually

estranges what is being dictated and ruptures the supposed "identity" and "self-presence"

of the dictated language. As Cha writes, "*She would take on their punctuation. She waits*

to service this. Theirs. Punctuation. She would become, herself, demarcations. Absorb it.

Spill it. Seize upon the punctuation" (*Dictée* 4). Through such a contestatory act of

defamiliarization (whose affinity with Bhabha's concepts of "sly civility" and "mimicry"

or Derrida's fine phrase "unfaithful *out of* faithfulness"[32] is striking), Cha turns dictation

and translation into strategic loci in which the "dictated" and "translated" subject

problematizes the one-to-one correspondence or, to use Cha's own words, the "uni-

directional correspondance" (33), between languages and, by extension, between cultures.

Due to the rich and provocative nature of Cha's "writing lesson," enough has been

written on its possible political import. Many have rightly pointed out the way in which

Cha's too accurate copying lays bare "the fact of dictation, the commands of dictating"

imposed on the woman from far afield (Josephine Park 133) as well as "the disciplinary

artifice of the dictation" (Cheng 127). In a similar vein Lisa Lowe reads the English and

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[32] See Bhabha's "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse" and "Sly Civility" in *The Location of Culture*. Derrida's phrase is taken from "Marx & Sons," p. 219.

French dictation and translation exercises in conjunction with Cha's training in the U.S. and France, her girlhood education in French Catholicism,[33] and American and French influences on (post)colonial Korea (*Immigrant Acts* 128-129). Lowe further argues that the narrator of *Dictée* determines herself to accomplish "an aesthetic of infidelity" by being "unfaithful to the original" and by resisting the "imperative of identical reproduction" (130, 132, 133). Elaine Kim, too, describes how Cha's treacherous dictation and translation transfigure "the passive and receptive" into "the active and explosive" ("Poised on the In-between" 18). In much the same manner, Shelley Sunn Wong takes note of Cha's enactment of "cleaving"—the concomitant adherence to and separation from the "identical"—and reads *Dictée* in terms of a "poetics of cleaving" (112-113).

With respect to Cha's strategic appropriation of the imposed languages, her short piece of writing entitled "récit" in the newly published *Exilée and Temps* Morts deserves our attention. Displaying her characteristic interest in disassembling phonetic and phonemic components in words, she reflects on the meaning of "récit" like so:

> récit
>
> reciting a poem
> re   citing   a poem
> re   sighting a poem
> re   insighting a poem
>   citing……………..to move to action, instigate, rouse (133)

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[33] The recently published book, *Exilée and Temps Morts: Selected Writings*, contains Cha's photo-essay on various topics, one of which is her experience at her high school. Dwelling on the Catholic school she attended from September 1965 to June 1969, she mentions "the rigid obsessive order" (106).

For Cha, reciting a *récit* is not learning it by heart, still less simply repeating it. It involves on the contrary the act of "re citing," "re sighting," and "re insighting," which is at the same time to "move to action, instigate, rouse." Inasmuch as the diseuse is defined as a professional woman reciter in *Dictée*, therefore, her task should be seen as that of "re citing," "re sighting" and "re insighting." Moreover, as will become clear in the following discussions, this problematic of *récit*-ing as "re citing/re sighting/re insighitng" runs right through Cha's entire oeuvre. Since much has been written on Cha's strategic recitation of colonial, nationalist, and patriarchal languages,[34] I will not examine them in detail here. My focus will be placed instead upon another crucial variation of the same problematic that many commentators have left unexamined, namely, the complex ways in which Cha "re cites" and "re sights" the "dictation" of semiotic and filmic languages on the one hand, and postmodern and poststructuralist theories on the other; and in which she "re insights" such theoretical languages as she recites her personal story and Korea's (post)colonial history.

The Closure of Filmic Time and Its *Hors-Texte*

Apropos of Cha's "re citing" of semiotics and film theory as a means of writing the interwoven narrative of her transnational dislocation and the (post)colonial history of Korea, her video work *Permutations* (1976) offers an intriguing point of reference.

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[34] Virtually all previous studies of *Dictée* somehow or other touch on Cha's dictation/translation dialectic. Especially, *Writing Self, Writing Nation* contains a good sample of essays that deal with the imposition of colonial or patriarchal languages upon women and their "translation."

Compared with her other video or filmic works such as *Exilée* and *Passages Paysages*, this text has received little critical attention. However, this video is of great significance in that it splendidly illuminates the convergence of Cha's interest in language and her investigation of the cinematographic apparatus, specifically as they pertain to the question of time and history. Thus a discussion of *Permutationis* is in order before we turn to Cha's well-known visual and literary *récits*.

In the above mentioned "Summary of Work" Cha characterizes her narrative production by explaining that "The narrative structure attempts to be free from the more traditional linear progression." Consonant with the postmodernist injunction against teleological or longitudinal narratives that was popularized, if not initiated, by Jean-Francois Lyotard's attack on *grand récits*,[35] Cha's incredulity toward a "traditional linear progression" in narrative is expressed, at times explicitly and at others implicitly, in her entire oeuvre. Nevertheless, it is perhaps in her edited anthology on film, entitled *APPARATUS: Cinematographic Apparatus*, that her antipathy toward *grand récits* is most assertively put forward. Containing critical essays by influential film theorists such as Vertov, Barthes, Maya Deren, Jean-Louis Baudry, Christian Metz, and Thierry Kuntzel, this book is designed to demystify the realist or linear concept of cinematographic narrative. Baudry's "The Apparatus," for example, relies on Freud's

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[35] In his controversial treatise on postmodernity Lyotard writes, "I define *postmodern* as incredulity toward metanarratives (*grand récits*)" (*The Postmodern Condition* xxiv). A similar position is reiterated in "Answering the Question: What Is Postmodernism?" in which he responds to Jürgen Habermas' repudiation of postmodernists as neo-conservatives and calls for a war against a totalizing grand narrative (82). Chapter 1, above, examines Lyotard's antipathy toward totality as an articulation of the postmodern political unconscious.

metapsychological analysis of dream-work to explain how the cinematographic apparatus

creates the unbroken illusion of reality—"this more-than-real of the impression of

reality" (57)—by repressing the discontinuity of filmed shots; while Deren's "An

Anagram of Ideas on Art, Form and Film" denunciates traditional forms of representation

in film and writing and experiments with a new narrative form as a means to underscore

"the problem of compressing into a linear organization an idea which was stimulating

precisely because it extended into two or three different, but not contradictory directions

at once" (94-95). A similar position is presented by Kuntzel who claims that a filmic

narrative construction, or "*le défilement*" as he calls it, plays the ideological role of

providing the audience with a narrative continuity by concealing and repressing

difference and discontinuity ("Le Défilement: A View in Closeup" 233-244).

Following the lead of these film theorists, some of them being her teachers, Cha

adroitly puts to work an anti-linear compositional principle in *Permutations*. This video

contains no linear or progressive storytelling; it is instead made up of a series of

permutations of six shots, four of which are bust shots of the artist's younger sister

Bernadette Hak Eun Cha, and two of which are black and white blank shots (Figure 3.7).

In an unpublished outline for this work Cha assigns a numerical variable to each shot in

the following way:

0. Back / closed	Head [back to] the camera with eyes closed[36]
1. Front / closed	Head facing the camera with eyes closed

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[36] In the final version of the text this phrase is written as "Head facing the camera with eyes closed," which is the same as the description for the next shot. However, in her work-in-progress version of the same text, she designated it as "head turned back to the camera with eyes closed." For this reason, I have slightly corrected the original text so that her permutational system makes more sense.

2. White	The background wall
3. Black	Filmed with the lense [*sic*] closed[37]
4. Front / open	Head facing the camera with eyes open
5. Back / open	Head back to the camera with eyes open

<div align="right">("Ellipses"; no pagination)</div>

While drawing from her teacher Christian Metz's semiotic film theory, among others, Cha here constructs a compelling cinematographic narrative by modeling her visual narrative upon the structure of binary oppositions—white and black, front and back, open and closed, and so forth. Devoid of any substantive story (*fabula*) or narrative semes, the *sjuzet* of the text is little more than a series of permutations of six shots filmed at one-second interval. Approaching as it were a zero degree of plot, Cha's narrative unfolds in accordance with the rigid relational structure of permutations. She meticulously specifies the order in which her narrative progresses: "0. Back cl. 1. closed 2. white 3. black 4. open 5. Back op. 1. closed 2. white 3. black. 4. open. 5 Back op. 0. Back cl. 2. white 3. black 4. open 5. Back op. 0. Back cl. 1. closed 3. black 4. open 5. Back op. 0. Back cl. 1. closed 2. white 4. open 5. Back op. 0. Back cl. 1. closed 2. white. 3. black…" ("Ellipses"). This permutating scheme of Cha's narrativization—0-1-2-3-4-5; 1-2-3-4-5-0; 2-3-4-5-0-1…—continues until as many as thirty-seven sets of six shots unfold, spanning about 3 minutes 42 seconds.

Methodologically not without some kinship with Schoenberg's twelve-tone technique (in which the linear or motivic development of a musical narrative is replaced

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[37] In the finalized text there is one description—"The background Wall"—for both "2. White" and "3. Black." In another version of the text Cha plans to make the shot "3. Black" by filming it "with the lense closed." So I have inserted into the original text the information "Filmed with the lense closed."

with a permutation of twelve tones[38]) or even with the depersonalized combinatory

practice of the *nouveau roman*, such a non-substantialistic permutation system disrupts

and cancels what Cha dubs "the more traditional linear progression" in narrative.

Expounding on the permutational narrative structure deployed in *Permutations*, Cha

writes:

> The shots are not random arrangement, the numerical variables [0-5][39]
> have a large range of possible combinations which I have worked out
> horizontally and vertically following a closed system…I am interested in
> Film Time and Film Space, the interaction of the two in Film Processes.
> By isolating elements that are incorporated into film and emphasizing only
> those elements perhaps would allow more learning about Film process.
> ("Ellipses")

This permutation or *combinatoire* scheme generates a "closed system" with horizontal-

diachronic and vertical-synchronic axes, in which any narrative linearity or causality

gives precedence to differential relationality. As Metz draws extensively on Saussure and

other semioticians to formulate a "semiotics of cinema,"[40] so too does Cha envision here

a semiotic mapping of filmic time and space.

Quite aside from the questions of how effectively this temporal and spatial closure

can function as a lens through which to delve into cinematographic time and space, one

may raise a no less important question as to how such an abstract semiotic structure deals

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[38] A classical study of this revolutionary aspect of Schoenberg's dodecaphonic composition is Adorno's *Philosophy of Modern Music*, especially the section "Schoenberg and Progress," pp. 29-133. For my study of Adorno's incorporation of Schoenberg's non-linear and anti-totalizing compositional practice into his negative dialectics, see Chapter 2, above, as well as my "'Time is Out of Joint': Totality, History, and Utopian Form in Adorno's Twelve-Tone Philosophy."
[39] In the manuscript I quote here, Cha writes "0-6," which, given her numbering of six shots from 0 to 5, is incorrect. Thus, I have changed "0-6" to "0-5."
[40] See two of his books on the relation of language and the cinematic apparatus, *Language and Cinema* and *Film Language: A Semiotics of Cinema*.

with its *hors-texte*, that is, a concrete diasporic history and space lying *outside* it. What is represented in *Permutation* is after all Cha's sister Bernadette, an immigrant woman of color. While, as I have mentioned parenthetically earlier, it is worth interrogating to what extent Cha's engagement with the Saussurean system of universal language can help her to articulate her experience of "having been forced to learn foreign languages," it is equally worthwhile to ask how the structuralist or semiotic *combinatoire* in *Permutations* can bring into representation the diasporic experience of temporal and spatial dislocation and displacement; and whether the filmic time, thus bracketed, has any significance for exploring the subaltern's diasporic history.

If, according to J. Dudley Andrew, Metz's and his followers' film semiotics tends to ignore the "externals of film" owing to their prioritization of the internal study of the cinematographic apparatus and its signification (217), one of the central problems in semiotics or structuralism—how the sign system, constructed by its dissociation from the referent and the outside world, can relate back to the latter—seems to return with a vengeance in Cha's semiotic investigation. Now the crux of Cha's innovative narrative in *Permutations* turns on how the permutational system, formulated by a kind of filmic *epoché* or, in her own words, by "*isolating* elements that are incorporated into film and emphasizing *only* those elements" ("Ellipses"; emphasis added), can find a way out of such a closure and relate itself back to a concrete time and space in diasporic history.

The representation of the diasporic female subject by means of the structuralist system in *Permutations* thus raises the Spivakian question of whether the transnational subaltern subject can speak inside the "prison-house of language" or the "empire of

signs"[41]; and whether History can speak by means of a filmic temporality so skillfully

flattened into a static two-dimensionality. Those are the nagging questions Bernadette

Cha's own writing demands—in her poetic work of mourning written after the tragic

death of her sister Theresa, Bernadette Cha insists upon the power of recalling and

remembering their diasporic histories and says: "I am told. Told to recall. Recall the

memory of a memory. I recall. This is what I am told. So I have heard. From a reliable

source…My memory. My memory recalls" (52). If history and its memory thus haunt

like a long, unforgettable nightmare and cannot be easily done away with, how is Theresa

Cha to "re cite" and "re sight" a semiotic or structuralist system in order to give

expression to the diasporic subject's *Erlebnis* or lived experience (*expérience vécue*) of

history and memory?

In this way, Cha's cinematographic experiment in *Permutations* powerfully brings

to the fore the contradiction between her interest in semiotics and film theory and her

concern with diasporic or postcolonial history. It is this contradiction that she strenuously

tries to engage with and work out in her subsequent works, including most notably *Exilée*

and *Dictée*. Before moving on to Cha's luminous literary achievement in *Dictée*, the next

section turns to *Exilée* and examines how Cha transfigures a static or even ahistorical

semiotic model in the cinematographic apparatus, as fully explored in *Permutations*, into

a vibrant locus of history; and how she "re cites"/"re sights" her earlier investigation of

filmic time for the purpose of writing on diasporic history.

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[41] These phrases are, of course, taken from the titles of Jameson's *The Prison-House of Language* and
Roland Barthes' *Empire of Signs*. Spivak's discourse alluded to here is "Can the Subaltern Speak?".

"Temps Morts" and the Poetics of the Stills in *Exilée*

      Exilée is a video and film installation which was premiered at the San Francisco

Art Institute in 1980, one year prior to the publication of *Dictée*. Simultaneously building

upon and departing from her earlier practice in *Permutations*, *Exilée* probes into the

concrete reality of diaspora. At the opening of the text Cha dissects and reassembles the

semantic components of the word "exilée":

<div align="center">

E X I L

E X I L E

   I L E

    É

    É E [42]

</div>

Deploying the technique of anagramming, Cha ponders about what it means to be an

exile, to be exiled, and to live in exile. Both before and after this linguistic and visual

anatomy of the word "exilée," Cha intones: "Before name. No name. None other. None

other than given…A no name. No name. Between name. Named" (139). Through this

voice-over Cha characterizes the the exiled subject, or the exilée, as being suspended

between "no name" and "named." Similar to the dictée's identity, which Cha describes as

"Almost a name. Half a name" (*Dictée* 149), the exilée's identity is visualized with such

vividness when the text supplies a copy of her passport, in which all the sections

including name, sex, birthplace, and birth date are left blank. As is the case with the

dictated subject in *Dictée*, the exiled subject in this video work too is either brutally

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[42] The voice-over in the original film-video *Exilée* is separately published as a written text, "Exilée," in *Hotel* (New York: Tanam Press, 1980). The anagramming of EXILÉ E appears on page 138. Subsequent reference to the voice-over of *Exilée* is made from this written text. "Exilée" is recently reprinted in *Exilee and Temps Morts*, pp. 31-57.

reduced to "no name" or arbitrarily defined in her transplanted culture. While undergoing

geographical and cultural displacement, in other words, the exilée as well as the dictée is

"Re Named/ u tt e r ly by chance by luck by hazard otherwise" ("Exilée" 160).

With reference to the exilée's existential conditions the text stresses that she is

suspended in two or more incommensurable temporalities. The filmic temporality

examined in its static one-dimensionality in *Permutations* is now placed into perspective

as Cha seeks to relate it to the concrete realities of the diasporic subject's temporal

displacement and disjuncture. Cha's thematization of disjunctive temporalities in

diaspora is highlighted by her use of a formal device that features one video monitor

embedded in a large film screen. While the video images are played on the monitor, the

filmic images are projected onto the film screen and the surface of the video monitor

alike. A similar formal technique is put to use in Cha's another work *Passages Paysages*.

As the title suggests, this video studies the entwinement of the "passages" of time and the

changing "landscapes" (*paysages*) that pertains to diasporic displacement. As Cha

investigates the entwined spatio-temporal disjuncture of diaspora, she juxtaposes three

monitors that play different images taken from different times and spaces (Figure 3.8).

Regarding this formal technique we may well repeat what Jameson says apropos Nam

June Paik's multi-channel video art, namely that "you cannot simply follow one video

image and ignore the others, nor can you watch them all at once…something like the

impossible synthesis of both those perspectives is what the text demands and withholds"

(*Jameson on Jameson* 29). To put it somewhat differently, the overdetermined

chronotope of Cha's multimedia texts, structured through the superimposition and

interference of different media and temporalities/spatialities, accentuates the exiled

subject's existence caught between irreconcilable temporalities and spatialities without

being able to synthesize them.[43] Cha thus makes use of multiple art media for the purpose

of casting a new light on the exilic condition of life, and to that degree the very form of

her art practice is itself inextricably related to her foray into *transcultural* and

transnational displacement and dislocation. By inscribing in her art form the exilée's

convoluted experience of time and space, she demands that the viewer, too, experience

such a disjunctive temporal and spatial affect.

The exilée's experience of disjointed and fractured chronotope is vividly depicted

when her journey back to her "home country" is narrated. On the airplane crossing the

Pacific Ocean, the narrator scrupulously counts the remaining time of her journey "back

home" and constantly reminds herself of the time difference between California and

Korea: "ten hours twenty three minuits/ sixteen hours ahead of this time/ ten hours twenty

two minuits/ sixteen hours ahead of this time/ ten hours twenty one minuit/ sixteen hours

ahead of this time" ("Exilée" 141). Her hyperconscious awareness of the intertwined

time-space configuration is given another powerful illustration in when she carefully

charts the chronotopology of "time here" and "time there":

> if it is twelve midnight here, it is four a.m.
> there the next day.

---

[43] In his pioneering study *The Dialogic Imagination* M. M. Bakhtin explains the "chronotope" as follows: "We will give the name *chronotope* [literally, 'time space'] to the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" (84). Though Bakhtin defines the chronotope as a "formally constitutive category of literature" and does not discuss other cultural realms, I use the concept here to analyze the interrelated temporal and spatial configurations of the multimedia art as well.

```
        if it is seven a.m. here it is eleven p.m. there
        the next day seven or seven thirty
                        eight thirty          -1
                        nine thirty           -2
                        ten thirty            -3
                        eleven thirty         -4
                        twelve thirty         -5
                        one thirty            -6
                        two thirty            -7
                        three thirty          -8
                        four thirty           -9
                        five thirty           -10
                        six thirty            -11
                        seven thirty          -12
                        eight thirty          -13
                        nine thirty           -14
                        ten thirty            -15
                        eleven thirty         -16
```

("Temps Morts" 174)

In a manner not dissimilar to Nam June Paik's spatial articulation of time in *TV Clock* or

Moon is the Oldest TV, Cha visually demonstrates the diasporic subject's

hyperconsciousness of temporality. Here, the unbridgeable gulf that separates the two

locales and cultures (U.S. and Korea) is expressed through the insurmountable time

difference of sixteen hours.

In some ways Cha seems to suggest that to live in exile is, among many other

things, to be exiled in a spatial-temporal disjuncture and displacement. The exilée

experiences such a disjunctive temporality and spatiality without necessarily being able

to coordinate them. Cha refers to this temporal-spatial displacement as "the double

estrangement" and "the doubling of identity" (169). Doubly or even multiply alienated by

ruptured temporalities and spatialities, the diasporic subject has difficulty in connecting

and coordinating "time there," "time here," and "time where?" Since she is incapable of

translating into an intelligible narrative her past, present, and future, on one hand, and her

"there," "here," and "where," on the other, the exilée experiences, so to speak, a

chronotopical schizophrenia. The following passage exemplifies in a memorable way

such a fractured chain of signification in Cha's diasporic narrative, in which the exilée is

left only with fragmentary temporal signifiers which she cannot put together:

> change are chang
> -ing changed have changed have been changing have
> had been changing had changed will change will have
> changed will have had changed live are living lived
> have lived have been living have had been living had
> lived will live will have lived will have had lived (178)

This eccentric sentence production exquisitely testifies to the exile's sense of temporal

disjuncture by showing how she struggles to grasp fundamentally temporal phenomena

such as "changing" and "living" by means of permutating or conjugating verbs. As she

desperately enumerates different forms of verbs, she strains to conjure, through such

static images of grammatical tenses, a temporality that cannot be otherwise constructed.

Here, the exilée's experiential or deep phenomenological temporalities are "replaced with

tenses with conjugations," to borrow Cha's own words (148); and her schizophrenic

experience of temporal and spatial disjuncture is starkly underscored by the disrupted

flow of sentential signification.

Given that the exilée is thus suspended in the disjointed and punctuated chain of

temporal and linguistic signification, it should hardly be surprising that a somber sense of

amnesia and oblivion permeates through Cha's representation of diaspora. Cha evokes

the loss of time and memory and says, "Drink oblivion of their former lives…Having had

the remembrance of their former lives/ effectually washed away by the waters of

lethe…memory less   image less" (190). In an earlier section of *Exilée* Cha likens such an

experience to the abolition and effacement of time:

> Backwards. from backwards from the back way back.
> to This   This phantom image/non-images
> almost non-images   without images. each ante-
> moment   moment no more. no more a moment
> a moment no duration.   no time.   phantom no visible
> no name no duration no memory no reflection no echo (144)

These sentences, while functioning as verbal and visual still images, effectively convey a

sense of temporal discontinuity and displacement in which the exiled subject can claim as

hers neither the "time here" in the U.S. nor the "time there" in Korea. Not only is she

denied a name, but she is also granted no time, no memory, no history—whence the

exilée's acute sense of "no time." Thus is her condition of being "memory less" and

"image less" correlated to the similar state of being "time less." In this light, it is quite

suggestive and pertinent that when Cha published "Exilée" as a written text, she chose as

its companion piece none other than "Temps Morts."

Evocative of French filmmaker René Laloux's acrimonious satire about human

history in the short film *Les Temps Morts* (1964), Cha's "Temps Morts" paints a bleak, if

captivating, picture of diaspora comparing the latter to "dead times." This theme of

"temps morts" is taken up in *Exilée* and developed further into an investigation of dead

times in diaspora. What cannot be overemphasized here is that Cha's thematization in

Exilée of the abysmal realities of dead times in diaspora goes in tandem with her

dexterous use of the stills, a cinematographic technique that brings filmic temporality to a standstill. In other words, in order to throw into relief her sense of "temps morts" Cha ingeniously minimizes a continuous succession in her filmic narrative and avails herself of the photographic stills alone. In this regard Lawrence Rinder is right to observe that Cha's filmic or video work lacks what is most characteristic of those visual media and approximates a stasis (*The Theme of Displacement* 33, 26). Trinh T. Minh-Ha, too, points out that Cha delivers a sense of "subtle suspension" and a feeling of "undefined loss" through her art form itself ("White Spring" 44). To these commentators' perceptive views we may add that the sense of stasis or suspension they allude to is effectuated by, and entwined with, Cha's aesthetics of the stills.

Cha's deployment of the stills as a locus of "temps morts" by no means remains in thrall to the static temporal model explored in *Permutations*. On the contrary, she "re cites"/"re sights" the seemingly inert structure of the photographic stills as a vitalizing means of rewriting her diasporic story as well as the (post)colonial history of Korea with which her existence as an exilée-dictée is entangled. In other words, if, as Roland Barthes asserts, photography as an art medium tends to block our memory and even promote a counter-memory (*Camera Lucida* 91), or if, as Masao Miyoshi puts it, "a photograph can be evidence, but never history" (8), *Exilée* is an attempt to use such a static and unhistorical medium in an original way so as to grapple with history and memory.

In addressing Cha's *récit*-ing of the static and ahistorical film language, a comparison with Eisenstein's film theory can be fruitful. Although some critics have looked upon Cha's artistic practice as "an aesthetics of the montage" (Cheng 125; Sakai

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"Distinguishing Literature" 25) in the loose sense of the term, I would argue that it is rather the marked divergence from the Eisensteinian montage that constitutes the crux of Cha's inimitable filmic narrative.

In "A Dialectical Approach to Film Form," Eisenstein asserts that art incorporates incompatible elements into its very form—"art is always conflict" (46)—and explores the film form in terms of the dialectic of stasis and motion, continuity and discontinuity, and part and whole, among others. His montage technique, too, can be understood against the backdrop of this filmic dialectic. As is implied in Lukács' somewhat disapproving description of the montage as "the sticking together of disconnected facts" (*The Historical Novel* 252), the montage technique allows individual shots to remain autonomous units, while at the same time establishing a synthesis among these separated shots. The uniqueness of the Eisensteinian montage as a dialectical film form lies in its capacity to hold these conflictual phenomena (part and whole, and continuity and discontinuity) in tension with one another. Taking note of this dialectical dimension of Eisenstein's montage, Deleuze argues in *Cinema 2: The Time Image*: "The whole is the organic totality which presents itself by opposing and overcoming its own parts, and which is constructed like the great Spiral in accordance with the laws of dialectic" (158). This kinship the montage form bears with the dialectic leads Deleuze to give Eisenstein the epithet "a cinematographic Hegel" (210).

If we can thus see the Eisensteinian montage as a synthesis or *Aufhebung* of two conflicting dimensions of filmic raw material, it is possible to conceptualize at least two opposing versions of Eisenstein's film form, depending on which of the part-whole and

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continuity-discontinuity axes is given precedence. On one pole is a filmic form in which, as in the conventional Hollywood film, discontinuous narrative semes and seams are *sutured* and stitched back into a relatively continuous, developmental filmic whole. If such a filmic storytelling privileges the dimension of continuity and wholeness, one may well conceive of its counterpart, the visual signification of which points toward the other pole of the Eisensteinian dialectic and foregrounds the dimension of discontinuity and fragmentation.[44]

In light of Cha's self-professed intent to challenge the continuous enunciation in filmic syntax or that which she refers to as "the more traditional linear progression" in filmic narrative ("Summary of Work"), it is worthy of note that, as has been already discussed, *Exilée* moves in the other direction and composes itself with nothing but still images. It is quite fitting that Cha deploys such a static filmic narrative form as a way to represent the equally inert condition of "temps morts" in diaspora. Expounding on the significance of photographic stills as a form of filmic signification, Christian Metz glosses, "what is represented is a point in time that has been frozen" (*Film Language* 23). All the while she builds on such a cinematographic technique, however, Cha strives to transform a frozen or static temporality in the structuralist model into a concrete locus of diasporic history. She makes this clear when she explains that her use of the stills is predicated upon her repugnance toward a unilinear progression not just in narrative but also in history. When *Exilée* was presented at the San Francisco International Asian

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[44] I thank Professor Jameson for bringing this point to my attention in his seminar on Modernism (Fall 2008) when I was struggling to develop more coherent ideas about Theresa Cha's cinematography in relation to her interest in semiotics.

American Film Festival, Cha characterizes the text as "an attempt to disinherit the existing Time construct, its repetition, to make Entry into the Absence of established continuity and chronology in Time."[45] Her investigation of "dead times" by means of still images, therefore, stems from such a vigilant endeavor to undo the chronological, linear, and causal time construct, upon which the idea of "progress" has often been based, and in whose name numerous cases of injustice have been perpetuated in human history. Cha's de-chronologizing practice in this sense ties in with Benjamin's reflections that "The concept of the historical progress of mankind cannot be sundered from the concept of its progression through a homogeneous, empty time. A critique of the concept of such a progression must be the basis of any criticism of the concept of progress itself" ("Theses on the Philosophy of History" 261). Interpreted following Benjamin's observation, Cha's foray into dead times is not a mere repetition of an "empty time." Still less is it the tepid stasis of Baudelairean *ennui*. Quite the contrary; "temps morts" is a trope designed to blast open the continuum of the putative historical progress and to envisage a new history heretofore unimagined. Likewise, the technique of the stills powerfully represents the moribund historical deadlock Cha witnesses in her exilic existence and at the same time calls for a radically new form of temporality to come.

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[45] Cha Archive. No pagination.

Writing History, or, Constructing a Cinema-Text in *Dictée*

Cha's thematization of "temps morts," both as a way of criticizing the dominant

mode of historiography (from which the subaltern voice is excluded) and as a way of

imagining a new historical conjuncture (at which the hitherto marginalized histories can

be rewritten), is even further developed in her widely-acclaimed literary work *Dictée*.

Building upon her earlier filmic and video work, this multi-genre text "translates" her

semiotic study of filmic time into an original mode of writing about diasporic history.

The following discussion examines how *Dictée* "re cites," on both thematic and formal

levels, her previous filmic and video work, particularly *Exilée*, and constructs a cinema-

text comprised of visual and narrative stills.

Like *Exilée*, *Dictée* takes as its central theme the abysmal depth of "dead times"

in diaspora and the resultant sense of death and bereavement. In taking up the theme of

"temps morts" from *Exilée*, Cha also restages the aesthetics of the stills and constructs

her textual space with a wide variety of static and inert images. The fragmentary images

of what she terms "A stand still" (80) include not only photographs and filmic stills but

numerous blank white spaces in varying sizes and lengths.[46] In addition, her storytelling

is significantly minimized and fractured to the extent that there is no unilinear,

developmental, or causal narrative thread. The whole text is divided into, and designated

as, nine blocs of different cultural forms—"Clio: History," "Calliope: Epic Poetry,"

"Urania: Astronomy," "Melpomene: Tragedy," "Erato: Love Poetry," "Elitere: Lyric

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[46] See especially pp. 94-119.

Poetry," "Thalia: Comedy," "Terpsichore: Choral Dance," and "Polymnia: Sacred Poetry." And these nine segments in turn are broken into a mixture of narrative fragments, poetic reflections, photographic images, quotations, dictation/translation exercises, and so forth. It is arguable that while reworking her favored cinematographic technique of the stills, Cha treats these narrative blocs and their fragmented components as narrative *stills* that do not congeal into a narrative whole or a temporal succession. And through this technique of "stilling" she effectively heightens a sense of displacement and isolation in her depiction of diasporic "temps morts."

No less important for our discussion of Cha's aesthetics of the stills is that, as has been mentioned at the start of this essay, the dictée-diseuse's storytelling is full of fragmented and disrupted phrases and sentences. Cha describes the dictée-diseuse's reciting ability in this way: "Broken speech. One to one. At a time. Cracked tongue. Broken tongue. Pidgeon. Semblance of speech. Swallows. Inhales. Stutter. Starts. Stops before starts. About to. Then stops. Exhale swallowed to a sudden arrest. Rest. Without. Can do without rests" (75). It is arguable that composing these disjointed sentences throughout the text is structurally in line with the cinematographic technique of the stills. As in filmic still images, in which an amalgam of heterogeneous shots does not congeal into a narrative synthesis, the inventory of fragmented words and phrases in the literary text is substituted for the progressive and coherent unfolding of sentences and paragraphs. Juxtaposed with Cha's deployment of the stills as a means to represent "temps morts," it is not accidental but rather strategic that she portrays the diasporic subject in *Dictée* as a stuttering subject who enunciates only *verbal* still images, as it were. Cha refers to this

stuttering as "verbal amnesia" in her project description for another work entitled *White Dust from Mongolia* and constantly attributes the dictée's broken sentence production to her "rupture, displacement, both physical and psychological" (*Exilée and Temps Morts* 149). Resonant with Cha's aesthetics of stilling, in other words, the dictée's stuttering is thus an articulation of the diasporic subject's experience of linguistic, cultural, and temporal fragmentation and displacement. Seen thus, Cha's production of fragmented narratives, which leads Karyn Ball to label her as "an avant-garde darling" of postmodern *récits* (161), needs to be approached from a different perspective. That is to say, in *Dictée*, as well as in *Exilée*, Cha utilizes visual, verbal and narrative stills not so much to champion the celebratory postmodern ideas of contingency, indeterminacy, and schizophrenia as to express the painful historical reality of diasporic "tempts morts" by means of the cinematographic technique of the stills.

The proposition that *Dictée* can be read as a cinema-text that represents the diasporic "dead times" by making skillful use of diverse still images is viable if consideration is given to the fact that the thematically and structurally similar video-film work *Exilée* is published as a written text as "Exilée," or that Cha had been planning to recast her visual work *White Dust from Mongolia* as a historical novel at the time of her death (Lewallen, "Audience Distant Relative" 5). Indeed, when converted into written form, *Exilée*, *White Dust from Mongolia* and *Dictée* resemble one another in that all these texts scrutinize the diasporic subject's existential condition through a multihued

constellation of fragmented writings and visual images.[47] If, as Rinder suggests, the prominent feature of Cha's art is to "take thematic and formal approaches developed in one medium and reinterpret them in another" (*The Theme of Displacement* 1), it would be not too far-fetched to reason that Cha employs in *Dictée* the themes and techniques explored in her other visual art work and turns the literary text into a cinematographic book.

When it comes to Cha's making of cinema-book, one might as well think of her visual essay "Commentaire," included in her edited anthology *APPARATUS: Cinematographic Apparatus*. Reminiscent of her mincing of the word "exilée" at the beginning of *Exilée,* her "Commentaire" dwells on what it means to comment, especially to comment on the filmic apparatus, by breaking down the word "commentaire" into its phonetic and phonemic components: "comment," "comment taire," "commentary," "comme," "as, like," "how," "how to," "taire," "to tear," "tear," and so on. Crucial for our reading of Cha's practice of cinematographic writing is the way she displays and arranges those words within her textual space. She assigns one page to each word so that most parts of this sixty-five-page essay show either white words on a solid black background or else black words on a solid white background, while the rest of the essay presents still images from Carl Dreyer's film *Vampyr* and photographs by Richard Barnes and Reese Williams. In visually and spatially organizing her essay, Cha intends each page to look like a movie screen (Figure 3.9). She makes this intention unmistakable by

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[47] For a collection of Cha's writing and visual materials prepared for her film *White Dust from Mongolia*, see *Exilée and Temps Morts: Selected Works*, pp. 148-171.

inserting two disparate pages that show photographs of a movie screen (Figure 3.10).

That Cha thus reconfigures her writing as a cinematographic apparatus is also reflected in

her book designing. The anthology captures on its very first and last pages two

photographs of a movie theater, one showing an empty theater and the other showing the

same theater packed with audiences (Figure 3.11). By placing those photographs in black

frames, Cha makes the opening and closing pages of the book look like projected images

on the cinema screen. As she thus envelops the entire text with those two visual images

that signal the "before" and "after" of a movie showing, she transforms her book on the

filmic apparatus into a filmic apparatus in its own right. That is to say, she presents her

writing on the filmic apparatus *as* a filmic apparatus in its own right, thereby illustrating,

so to speak, a becoming-cinema of writing.Accordingly, the reader is invited to *watch* her

"Commentaire" and to turn his *visual* perception and experience of her text into a critical

inquiry into the cinematographic apparatus and its signification.

Now I hasten to add that *Dictée* employs the same method of turning a piece of

writing into a filmic apparatus. When the book is published in 1982, Cha makes the front

and back covers present, in black frames, a photograph of a desolate desert (Figure 3.12)

and a photograph of nine Korean girls (Figure 3.13).[48] In this way Cha transforms the

book into a cinema screen, and in consequence our experience of the book amounts to

watching it. If, as many commentators have claimed, *Dictée* stands as an innovative mode

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[48] When the University of California Press reprinted the book in 2001, however, they altered the design by placing the two pictures on the first and last pages and presenting a photo of Cha's mother on the front cover. The original book design seems to better illustrate the cinematographic aspect of *Dictée*.

of writing, its formal originality should be sought above all in her practice of constructing a cinema-book.

That cinematic and literary narratives are treated as one and the same medium, that the former is "re sighted" as and "translated" into the latter in the process of Cha's formal innovation is suggested when she dwells on the central theme of the text— "temps morts." She writes:

> There is no future, only the onslaught of time. Unaccountable, vacuous, amorphous time, towards which she is expected to move. Forward. Ahead. And somehow bypassing the present. The present redeeming itself through the grace of oblivion. How could she justify it. Without the visibility of the present. She says to herself she could displace real time. She says to herself she could display it before and become its voyeur…She says to herself if she were able to write she could continue to live. Says to herself if she would write without ceasing. To herself if by writing she could abolish real time. She would live. If she could display it before her and become its voyeur. (140)

What is of great interest in the diseuse's longing to give expression to displaced and abolished times is that the act of writing is exchangeable with that of displaying and visualizing. This passage makes explicit the fundamental formal technique of *Dictée* as outlined above: Cha laboriously translates "writing" into "displaying," and in that process the book morphs into a displaying apparatus or becomes-cinema, to use a Deleuzian expression, it being understood that becoming, as in Cha's characteristic "translation," is not a stable structure of one-to-one correspondence or imitation, but a double process that transfigures both one that becomes and that which one becomes. Or as Deleuze puts it, "Becoming is always double, that which one becomes becomes no more than the one that becomes" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 305). For Cha, writing about time and history is at one

with visualizing them, and her narration of "temps morts" is equivalent to visually displaying them and becoming their voyeur. Considered in this way, Cha's disrupted and disjointed writing in *Dictée*, containing as it does so many fragmented stills of "memory/image/language," can be *watched*, as much as (or even rather than) *read*, as a visual expression of dead times. By thus visually displaying abolished and displaced times, Cha's writing turns the writer as well as the reader into a *voyeur* of diasporic "temps morts." It is none other than her reconfiguration of *Dictée* as a literary "re citing" and "re sighting" of the cinematographic apparatus, I argue, that makes her text a truly innovative mode of writing.

Writing on History vs. History as Writing

While Cha's representation of the "stilled" diasporic temporality in *Exilée* is closely associated with her diatribe against a linear, developmental time and narrative, her narrativization of the "onslaught of time" (140) in *Dictée* is similarly embedded in her unrelenting dismissal of traditional historiographies. It is unsurprising, then, that she pits "temps morts" against conventional chronological notions of history. Of diasporic history she writes, "All chronology lost, indecipherable, the passage of time, until it is forgotten. Forgotten how it stays, how it endures" (161). As she revises long-established modes of writing history, she adopts and even foreshadows some key ideas and concepts in poststructuralist or postmodernist thematics. One prominent example is her wholehearted embrace of difference. Drawing from the notion of difference, Cha takes an anti-

essentialist and anti-foundational attitude in her investigation of diasporic history. The

following passage is a case in point: here Cha presents another variation on the theme of

"re citing" by parodying the Catholic catechism:

> Q: WHO MADE THEE?
> A: God made me.
> To conspire in God's Tongue.
> Q: WHERE IS GOD?
> A: God is everywhere.
> Accomplice in His Texts, the fabrication in His Own Image, the pleasure the
> desire of giving Image to the word in the mind of the confessor.
> Q: GOD WHO HAS MADE YOU IN HIS OWN LIKENESS.
> A: God who has made me in His own likeness. In His Own Image in His Own
> Resemblance, in His Own Copy, In His Own Counterfeit Presentment, in His
> Duplicate, in His Own Reproduction, in His Cast, in His Carbon, His Image and
> His Mirror. Pleasure in the image pleasure in the copy pleasure in the projection
> of likeness pleasure in the repetition. (17)

As Elaine Kim notes, this passage typifies the way that the dictée disturbs the purportedly

passive activity of the catechism and thereby subverts the formation of a devout religious

subject ("Poised on the In-between" 17-18). Lisa Lowe analogously maintains that the

narrator of *Dictée* accomplishes "an aesthetic of infidelity" and disturbs the "imperative

of identical production" (130, 133). In a way similar to Jean Baudrillard's mockery of the

authority and self-identity of Christianity through "simulacra and simulation,"[49] Cha here

underlines how the spawning of images, copies, and differences can disrupt and

deconstruct the supposed identity and self-presence of God as the transcendental Subject.

As the catechism is repeated, His omnipresence is replaced by the proliferation of His

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[49] As he blurs the boundary between real and hyperreal through the notion of simulacra in "The Precession of Simulacra," he offers as the epigraph the following lines (pretending they are taken from *Ecclesiastes*): "The simulacrum is never what hides the truth—it is truth that hides the fact that there is none. The simulacrum is true" (*Simulacra and Simulation* 1).

own "image," "reproduction," "copy," and "carbon." His Word, which on Derrida's account is often taken as an embodiment of logocentrism and phonocentrism,[50] is likewise placed into the unremitting chain of repetition and difference. In short, while His Word is reiterated, it is *counterfeited*. Or, to paraphrase it in Deleuzian terms, we might say that Cha's re citing of the Catholic catechism affirms, through its repetition, the existence of *difference* at the very heart of identity—"everywhere the Other in the repetition of the Same" (*Difference and Repetition* 24).

Resonating with, and even prefiguring, many prominent thematics in contemporary cultural and theoretical discourse, Cha's animus against the metaphysics of identity, self-sameness, and presence underwrites her textual production in general. By virtue of such poststructuralist and postmodernist concepts of difference, heterogeneity, and anti-essentialism, Cha's rewriting of Korea's colonial past and postcolonial present, while contesting (neo)colonialism, neither idealizes a national(ist) history nor romanticizes her "place of origin." Her narrative does not take for granted any fixed notion of the nation in the first place. This de-essentializing approach toward the nation is observed at work when she records a naturalization process in the U.S. and her journey back to Korea:

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[50] Of God's Word or the Logos, Derrida observes: "God's infinite understanding is the other name for the logos as self-presence. The logos can be infinite and self-present, it can be *produced as auto-affection*, only through the *voice*: an order of the signifier by which the subject takes from itself to itself, does not borrow outside of itself the signifier that it emits and that affects it at the same time. Such is at least the experience—or consciousness—of the voice: of hearing (understanding)-oneself-speak [*s'entendre-parler*]. That experience lives and proclaims itself as the exclusion of writing, that is to say of the invoking of an 'exterior,' 'sensible,' 'spatial' signifier interrupting self-presence" (*Of Grammatology* 98).

I have the documents. Documents, proof, evidence, photograph, signature. One day you raise the right hand and you are American. They give you an American Pass port. The United States of America. Somewhere someone has taken my identity and replaced it with their photograph. The other one. Their signature their seals. Their own image. And you learn the executive branch the legislative branch and the third. Justice. Juridical branch. It makes the difference. The rest is past. You return and you are not one of them, they treat you with indifference. All the time you understand what they are saying. But the papers give you away. Every ten feet. They ask you identity. They comment upon your inability or ability to speak. Whether you are telling the truth or not about your nationality. They say you look other than you say. As if you didn't know who you were. You say who you are but you begin to doubt…Not single word allowed to utter until the last station, they ask to check the baggage. You open your mouth half way. Near tears, nearly saying, I know you I know you, I have waited to see you for long this long. They check each article, question you on foreign articles, then dismiss you. (*Dictée* 57-58)

Being exiled is, as Cha makes clear here, like shuffling back and forth between two or multiple geographical, cultural, and temporal landscapes without belonging comfortably to any of them. Faithful to the spirit of decentering and deterritorialization in contemporary theory, she in no wise guarantees the dictée's facile identification with either her "homeland" (Korea) or her "country of residence" (U.S.). For this reason Priscilla Wald considers *Dictée* to be a supreme literary example that brings into doubt the notion of becoming American and registers "a crisis in the national 'we'" (300-304). Similarly, Naoki Sakai reads *Dictée* through the lens of Deleuze's idea of "repetition without return" and acclaims the text as a sophisticated illustration of the "undecidability" of cultural identity and the "multilinguality" of every mother tongue ("Distinguishing Literature" 37). As Cha herself elucidates, her probe into history in *Dictée* is devised to demonstrate that "There is no destination…Our destination is fixed on the perpetual motion of search. Fixed in its perpetual exile" (*Dictée* 80-81). One of the

most invaluable insights Cha's work provides is probably to be sought in the way she thus vigilantly problematizes the very idea of origin and identity with a view to creating a locus of contradiction and reconciliation in which radically new forms of history, social formation, and subjectivity can be re-imagined. Her entire oeuvre is an iridescent prism that illuminates such a locus of historical, cultural, and social re-imagining which she designates as a "time between" (*Exilée and Temps Morts* 128) and "Tertium Quid neither one thing nor the other" (*Dictée* 20).

Inasmuch as Cha revitalizes diasporic "tempts morts" as a constructive third space, she seems to stand very close to postcolonial theorist Homi K. Bhabha. Yet, as will become evident, a critically informed reading will reveal to what extent her historical vision sets itself apart from Bhabha's and offers a critical vantage point from which to re-evaluate some of the most influential versions of postcolonial theory and practice.

It is true that like Cha, Bhabha foregrounds the importance of "translating" and "mimicking" while attempting to re-examine colonial and postcolonial history. In *The Location of Culture* he tries to rectify the monological facet of his predecessor Edward W. Said's theorization of the West's will to power vis-à-vis its colonized and of the "dictation" of Orientalism.[51] If Said's *Orientalism* tends to theorize the colonized as the passive object of Orientalist representation and domination, Bhabha stresses the dynamic interplay and exchange at work in the "dictation" and "translation" of colonial discourse. That is to say, whereas Said claims that "Orientalism is after all a system for citing works

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[51] Consider, among others, the following sentences: "The exteriority of the representation is always governed by some version of the truism that if the Orient could represent itself, it would; since it cannot, the representation does the job, for the West, and *faute de mieux*, for the poor Orient" (*Orientalism* 21).

and authors" (*Orientalism* 23), Bhabha seeks, as Cha does, to "re cite" the Orientalist

system and knowledge and power. Accordingly, Bhabha reads colonialism as a signifying

process of discourse that is structured by the conflictual economy, and locates the

postcolonial site of agency and contestation in the metonymic structure of cultural

translation. In "Of Mimicry and Man," more specifically, he argues that the "dictation" of

colonial discourse upon the colonized is domed to failure because the colonizer's desire

for "a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same,*

but not quite" (86) ultimately brings with it a sly "translation" or "mimicking" that

displaces and de-authorizes the normative and nominative presence and identity of

colonial discourse along the axis of metonymy (90-91). In another essay titled

"Interrogating Identity," Bhabha regards the subaltern as being able to re-translate and re-

signify colonial discourses that are "neither empty nor full, neither part nor whole" (64).

In thus theorizing a *discursive* form of postcolonial agency, he does his utmost to

decenter the binaristic order of things between colonizer and colonized—or that which

Abdul R. JanMohamed would call the "economy of manichean allegory"[52]—in which

colonial discourse is often embedded and embodied.

    The more striking similarity that Bhabha shares with Cha can be found in his

conceptualization of "temporal caesura" as the locus of postcolonial agency and history.

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[52] JanMohamed describes the manichean mechanism at work in colonial discourse in these terms: "The dominant model of power- and interest-relations in all colonial societies is the manichean opposition between the putative superiority of the Europeans and the supposed inferiority of the native. This axis in turn provides the central feature of the colonialist cognitive framework and colonialist literary representation: the manichean allegory—a field of diverse yet interchangeable oppositions between white and black, good and evil, superiority and inferiority, civilization and savagery, intelligence and emotion, rationality and sensuality, self and Other, subject and object" ("The Economy of Manichean Allegory" 63).

As is the case with Cha's "temps morts," Bhabha's concept of "temporal caesura" is grounded in his objection to narratives of progress and development in the Enlightenment tradition. In a similar manner to Cha's critique of the "traditional linear progression" in narrative, Bhabha questions the way that the traditional developmental narrative is oftentimes interlocked with nation-building in the history of Western colonialism. In "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation," to take one example, he notes that the nation is represented in conventional historiography in terms of a teleological "temporal process" (142) or a "homogeneous empty time of the nation's narrative (152). Paralleling the way Cha denaturalizes the identity and sameness of nationhood, Bhabha dismantles identitarian and teleological ideologies inherent in the constitutive relationship between nation and narration. As he pushes further his critique of the complicity between narrative writing and nation-building, he observes:

> It is indeed only in the disjunctive time of the nation's modernity—as a knowledge caught between political rationality and its impasse, between the shreds and patches of cultural signification and the certainties of a nationalist pedagogy—that questions of nation as narration come to be posed. How do we plot the narrative of the nation that must mediate between the teleology of progress tipping over into the "timeless" discourse of rationality? How do we understand that "homogeneity" of modernity—the people—which, if pushed too far, may assume something resembling the archaic body of the despotic or totalitarian mass?...To write the story of the nation demands that we articulate that archaic ambivalence that informs the time of modernity. (142)

Bhabha aspires here to deconstruct the identitarian temporal structure of the modern. For him, the "nation as narration" is structured and constituted along two organizational axes of temporality, namely, "the continuist, accumulative temporality of the pedagocial" and "the repetitious, recursive strategy of the performative" (145-146). If the former

represents a teleological and homogeneous national temporality, Bhabha explains, the latter conceives of a national culture in terms of "contemporaneity."

It is none other than this "double temporality" (153) that Bhabha's postcolonial "translation" of the modern nation/narration purports to dismantle. While thus seeking to dislocate the nation's putatively homogeneous or unilinear temporality, he calls for a "temporality of the 'in-between'" or a "third locus" (148, 184). He glosses this "in-between" temporality as "temporal caesura," a concept comparable to Cha's "temps morts" or "Tertium Quid." He elsewhere defines such a postcolonial temporality as "the time-lag of cultural difference" and holds that "temporal caesura" is less a dead and unhistorical site than "a structure of the representation of subaltern and postcolonial agency" ("'Race,' Time and the Revision of Modernity" 237).[53]

Notwithstanding the unmistakable resemblance between Bhabha's "temporal caesura" and Cha's "temps morts," however, Bhabha's heavy recourse to poststructuralism in general and Derridean deconstruction in particular eventually leads him to a different path than the one Cha opts for. As he decisively repudiates the national(ist) narrative of colonialism, Bhabha writes:

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[53] Consider also his remarks on the "time-lag" in relation to "temporal caesura": "The time-lag opens up this negotiatory space between putting the question to the subject and the subject's repetition 'around' the neither/nor of the third locus. This constitutes the return of the subject agent, as the interrogative agency in the catachrestic position. Such a disjunctive space of temporality is the locus of symbolic identification that structures the intersubjective realm—the realm of otherness and the social—where 'we identify ourselves with the other precisely at a point at which he is inimitable, at the point which eludes resemblance.' My contention, elaborated in my writings on postcolonial discourse in terms of mimicry, hybridity, sly civility, is that this liminal moment of identification—eluding resemblance—produces a subversive strategy of subaltern agency that negotiates its own authority through a process of iterative 'unpicking' and incommensurable, insurgent relinking" ("The Postcolonial and the Postmodern" 184-185). Bhabha further elaborates on "the third space" in "The Third Space: Interview with Homi Bhabha" in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*. Ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence Wishart, 1990), pp. 207-221.

> The nation's totality is confronted with, and crossed by, a supplementary movement of writing. The heterogeneous structure of Derridean supplementarity in *writing* closely follows the agonistic, ambivalent movement between the pedagogical and performative that informs the nation's narrative address. (154)

> The postcolonial space is now "supplementary" to the metropolitan centre; it stands in a subaltern, adjunct relation that doesn't aggrandize the presence of the West but redraws its frontiers in the menacing, agonistic boundary of cultural difference that never quite adds up, always less than one nation and double. From this splitting of time and narrative emerges a strange, empowering knowledge for the migrant that is at once schizoid and subversive. (168)

As he outlines the concept of the modern nation *as* writing (*grammè*), Bhabha aims to undo the totality or identity of the nation by means of supplementarity and *différance*, which Derrida describes as an unceasing process of "dislocat[ing] itself in a chain of differing and deferring substitutions" ("Différance" 26). With this deconstructive move Bhabha's reinterrogation of colonialism risks renouncing history in favor of a temporality arising from the differing/deferring concatenation of signs.[54] Whereas, in other words, Said's formulation of Orientalism obscures the postcolonial site of resistance and agency due to his recourse to the Foucauldian model of capillary power,[55] Bhabha's adoption of Derridean deconstruction ends up replacing history by a temporality locked up in the static structure of sign(ifier)s.

With regard to Bhabha's reliance for his postcolonial rewriting on Derrida's supplementarity and *différance*, Jameson's observation in *The Prison-House of Language*

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[54] For more on this, see Chapter 1, above, in which I compare Derrida's deconstructive notion of history and Jameson's invocation of history as the ultimate hermeneutic horizon.

[55] Dennis Porter provides an adept analysis of the contradictory aspects of Said's theorization of Orientalism in "Orientalism and Its Problem." See also Robert Young, *White Mythologies*, pp. 119-140.

can be illuminating. For Jameson's contention that the conceptual models based on

Saussurean linguistics tend to bracket the referent and substitute for concrete realities of

history an abstract and synchronic structure of signs[56] suggests the extent to which

contemporary language-based theoretical models, deconstruction included, somehow

militate against Bhabha's postcolonial rewriting of history. Bart Moore-Gilbert pursues

this line of inquiry when he castigates Bhabha for conceiving of discursive resistance as

the foremost locus of postcolonial agency. In taking issue with Bhabha's textualization of

postcolonial history and resistance, he adds, "the material contexts and negotiations of

(neo-)colonial power are consistently presented in terms of, or overridden by, an

economy of textual transactions" (139). In an analogous manner Robert Young writes in

White Mythologies that Bhabha's postcolonial contestation of colonial discourse is less a

political form of resistance as such than a subliminal process (148).

When framed like this, the unbridgeable difference between Bhabha's "temporal

caesura" and Cha's "temps morts" becomes evident. Although both Bhabha and Cha

draw on highly sophisticated language-based theoretical models for their analysis of

"dead times" under the regime of (neo)colonialism, the irreducible discrepancy between

these two postcolonial writers is this: while Cha labors to "re cite" contemporary

theoretical discourse for the sake of her engagement with history, Bhabha does not seem

to push his "sly civility" or "mimicry" hard enough to the extent that he puts to question

the poststructural positions upon which his postcolonial project is predicated. In

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[56] See especially pp. 186-189. Jameson maintains that history in poststructuralism is oftentimes "the generation of time out of stillness" and "the temporality latent within the sign itself" (188).

consequence, while Cha aims to look into "temps morts" as a new site of *writing history*, Bhabha theorizes "temporal caesura" only to affirm *history as writing*.

As enabling as poststructuralism and postmodernism seem to prove themselves to be in Cha's historical inquiry, her narrative is neither assimilable nor reducible to those theoretical positions. Even if she incorporates numerous postmodernist and poststructuralist themes and insights into her writing, she by no means views history as a simulacrum of historical facts or a mere textual effect. Her concern is not to reduce history to a text, but rather to salvage history from a proliferating process of textualization or simulation. On this point she is adamant:

> *Simulated pasts resurrected in memoriam*. She hears herself uttering again re-uttering to re-vive. The forgotten. From stone. Layers. Of stone upon stone her self stone between the layers, dormant. No more. She says to herself she would return time to itself. To time itself. To time before time. To the very first death. From all deaths. To the one death. One and only remaining. (*Dictée* 150; my emphasis)

This passage, as much as the rest of the text, underscores memory as a vital force through which to revive and resurrect dead times anew. For Cha, history is not so much a mere text or simulacrum as a deep and old wound that cannot be healed or put aside simply by forgetting. And memory is, as in Marcuse's Utopian anamnesis, an arduous effort to negate the here and now of "temps morts."

In so invoking memory as a powerful force for unearthing and re-membering the petrified layers of history, Cha struggles to turn the diasporic "tempts morts" into the very site of vitality and creation. The following passages, for instance, poetically suggest

the way in which Cha transfigures the exilée-dictée's inert and moribund history into a dynamic site/sight of historical rebirth and recrudescence:

> You remain dismembered with the belief that magnolia blooms white even on seemingly dead branches and you wait. You remain apart from the congregation. (155)

> The time thought to have fixed, dead, reveals the very rate of the very moment. Velocity. Lentitude. Of its own larger time. (157)

These passages epitomize the efforts on Cha's part to reawaken and call into life "temps morts." By means of such revitalization is the ostensibly stagnant and lifeless temporality "re cited" and "re sighted" as the very locus of change and life. Meanwhile, Cha breaks open the static temporality in "temps morts" and achieves a breakthrough to some larger historical horizon—the *long durée* of history or that which she calls "the larger perception of History's recording" (32). Such a gesture seeks to open the asphyxiating monadic closure of postmodernism or poststructuralism to "History's revision" (28). She seems to propose that a meaningful historical imagination is possible not through the postmodernist or poststructuralist proliferation of "simulated pasts," but only through stimulating and re-imagining our relations to the past. Instead of seeing history as a text or writing in the way Bhabha appears to do, therefore, she would rather endorse Jameson's contention that "history is *not* a text" (*The Political Unconscious* 35)[57] or Said's claim that "texts are *worldly*, to some degree they are events, and even when they appear to deny it, they are nevertheless a part of the social world, human life, and of

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[57] As he calls to task the tendency in contemporary theory to textualize history, Jameson argues "that history is *not* a text, not a narrative, master or otherwise, but that, as an absent cause, it is inaccessible to us except in textual form, and that our approach to it and to the Real itself necessarily passes through its prior textualization, its narrativization in the political unconscious" (35).

course the *historical* moments in which they are located and interpreted" (*The World, The Text, and the Critic* 3-4; emphasis added). For her, as for Jameson and Said, history is not simply writing. Rather, "History is what hurts" (102), as Jameson memorably puts it. It is none other than such a historical reality, or "History, the old wound," as Cha puts it (*Dictée* 33), that she incessantly and refreshingly brings into view, in hopes of resurrecting simulated pasts in memoriam.

The Postcolonial Medium and Reconfiguring History

In *Dictée* the special mission of resurrecting "temps morts" through memory is bestowed upon the diseuse. Through her stuttering and disjointed recitation, which Ed Park reinterprets as "an eloquent stutter" (9), she has to recuperate the forgotten history and breathe life into the visual, verbal, and temporal still images of "temps morts." Although the diseuse appears throughout the text, her role is even more highlighted in the sixth section, entitled "Elitere: Lyric Poetry." Modifying the literary convention, Cha renames Euterpe (Muse of music) as "Elitere" and thus creates her own Muse of writing. Opening the Elitere section with a black-and-white still image of the Korean masses in a demonstration against the Japanese colonial rule, she invokes the diseuse on the facing page and a few pages thereafter:

> *Dead time. Hollow depression interred invalid to resurgence, resistant to*
> *memory. Waits. Apel. Apellation. Excavation. Let the one who is diseuse.*
> *Diseuse de bonne aventure. Let her call forth. Let her break open the spell*
> *cast upon time upon time again and again. With her voice, penetrate*
> *earth's floor, the walls of Tartaurus to circle and scratch the bowl's*

> *surface. Let the sound enter from without, the bowl's hollow its sleep.*
> *Until.* (123)

> *Dead time. Dead gods. Sediment.*
> *Turned stone. Let the one who is diseuse dust breathe away the distance of*
> *the well. Let the one who is diseuse again sit upon the stone nine days and*
> *nine nights.* (130)

The diseuse is here imparted with the mission of excavating the layers of history "nine days nine nights" and bringing forth a new future. Cha likens this act of unearthing and re-membering the dead times to the Annunciation, associating it with a "second coming" (150). This unmistakable Christian element notwithstanding, I argue that in a manner comparable to her subversive parody of the Catholic catechism earlier in the text, Cha here appropriates the Western religion after her own fashion and transfigures the "*diseuse de bonne aventure*" into a Korean shaman.

As early as in 1986 Michael Stephens notes in passing that the "Polymnia: Sacred Poetry" section in *Dictée* can be read as a story about the Korean shaman or "moodong" [*sic*] (210). Expanding on this interesting observation I propose to read the diseuse (de bonne aventure) appearing throughout the text as a Korean spiritualistic medium called *moodang*. Cha was greatly intrigued by Korean shamanism, and in her performance pieces, such as *A Ble Wail* (1975), she often wore a traditional Korean costume and played the role of a *moodang*. In Korean folk culture, the *moodang* is a female mystic and fortune-teller whose shamanistic and mediumistic rituals bring forth the spirits of the deceased and brings them into contact with the living. In so resurrecting the dead and rehabilitating the debilitated, she helps the present to galvanize its relationship with the past and to move onto a new future. Through her ritual all kinds of scars and wounds,

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whether it be physical, mental or historical, are believed to be healed, while what was

thought to be dead in the past gets reconnected to the present and future. The *moodang*, in

short, is a medium by virtue of whose collective ritual the forgotten and buried histories

are remembered and revitalized so that a new form of history emerges in the process.

Because the *moodang* as a professional woman reciter performs the very tasks the diseuse

is called upon to take up in *Dictée*, it makes sense to reason that the woman reciter in

Dictée is envisioned as a *moodang*. The fact that the Korean *moodang* is well versed in

all the nine genres around which the nine narrative blocs in the text are organized—

history, epic poetry, astronomy, tragedy, love poetry, lyric poetry, comedy, choral dance,

and sacred poetry—also makes it plausible to regard the reciter in the text as *moodang*.

Through the *moodang*'s "re citing/re sighting/re insighting," the nine disconnected

narrative blocs and their fragmentary or "stilled" components are reconnected to one

another and enter into a spiraling movement of history—"Tenth, a circle within a circle, a

series of concentric circles" (173, 174).

 Given this similarity between the diseuse and the *moodang*, it is intriguing that

Cha compares the role of an artist to that of a medium in her M.F.A. thesis "Paths":

> The artist's path…is that of a medium. His/Her vision belongs to an
> altering, of material, and of perception. Through this attempt, the
> perception of an audience has the possibility of being altered, of being
> presented a constant change, Re volution. (1)

Later in the thesis she also defines her writing as a ritual that restores collective history

and memory:

> In this way, the piece becomes an intimate sharing, a collective
> experience, of the collective memory and imagination…The artist is

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relayer, messenger from the Collective Sources. S/He attempts to find some collective key associations, that would result in a kind of transformation in the audience as well as Him/Herself. (3-4)

In this way the artist, as a medium, is urged to connect disjunctive historical moments with the help of memory and imagination. While history is thereby re-membered and re-imagined, individuals are also repositioned in relation to one another within a larger collectivity and within "History's revision" (*Dictée* 28). As the ritual of the medium, in other words, art affirms history as a collective experience and collectivity as a historical sharing. And if the textual space of *Dictée* is interspersed with a vast array of fragmented visual, linguistic, and historical images, the transformative power of the medium or the diseuse is called upon to reconnect and rewrite those disjointed narrative stills.

The way that the artist and the audience, the self and the other, are reconnected together by virtue of their "collective memory and imagination" is suggested in Cha's other writings as well. In "Audience Distant Relative," for example, she takes her audience to be her distant relatives to whom she is somehow related and connected through historical ties (*Exilée and Temps Morts* 18-19). In her reflection entitled "Object/Subject" she pursues further this intersubjective imagination:

> in our relationship
> i am the object/you are the subject
> in our relationship
> you are the object/i am the subject
> in our relationship
> you are the subject/i am the object
> in our relationship
> i am the subject/you are the object (*Exilée and Temps Morts* 23)

This kind of collective subjectivity or the "interfusion" between self and other, between subject and object ("Paths" 2), for which the *moodang* serves as a medium, is also presented in the opening pages of *Dictée* where the diseuse is portrayed as a medium/relayer:

> She allows others. In place of her. Admits others to make full. Make swarm. All barren cavities to make swollen. The others each occupying her. Tumorous layers, expel all excesses until in all cavities she is flesh. (3)

> She relays the others. Recitation. Evocation. Offering. Provocation. The begging. Before her. Before them. (4)

Cha's insistence upon the reciting subject's role as that of "interfusing" subject and object as well as her insistence on collective subjectivity as a site of historical memory and imagination separates her vision as much widely from the discourse of the postmodern decentered schizophrenic subject as from that of the modern Cartesian individual subject. Cha implies, so it seems, that it is such a collective decentering of both nomadic and monadic subjectivities that makes a postcolonial rewriting of history possible and imaginable.[58] And *Dictée* is an artistic *tour de force* that superbly demonstrates the way in which the diseuse-medium's intersubjective and collective *récit*-ing works to heal the deep and old wounds left by colonial and neocolonial history.

In view of such a role of the diseuse, it is quite fitting that the text ends with a story about a woman who comes to the aid of a girl who is seeking medicine for her sick mother. The woman functions as the helper, or what Vladimir Propp terms the "donor,"

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[58] See my commentary on Adorno's modern monadology and Deleuze's postmodern nomadology in Chapter 2, above.

who, while acting as a mediator, gives the hero a magical agent or power and thereby drastically changes the course of events in the narrative (Propp 45-50).[59] Indeed, the woman comes to rescue the girl and gives her a bowl of fresh spring water. In a Korean shamanistic ritual, a bowl of pure water symbolizes an exorcizing and healing power. Possessing as she does such a special power, the woman listens attentively to the girl's story and gives her rare medicine for her mother. Meanwhile, she assists the girl in breaking silence and articulating herself and eventually resuscitates the dying mother, who can be read as an emblematic allegory of diasporic "temps morts." In so functioning as a *moodang*, the woman excavates the deep layer of history and finds a spring of historical memory:

> *Dead words. Dead tongue. From disuse. Buried in Time's memory. Unemployed. Unspoken. History. Past. Let the one who is diseuse, one who is mother who waits nine days and nine nights be found. Restore memory. Let the one who is diseuse, one who is daughter restore spring with her each appearance from beneath the earth. The ink spills thickest before it runs dry before it stops writing at all.* (133)

The narrative in the last section of *Dictée* takes a new direction thanks to the woman, and the text comes to a close as the girl brings home the medicine. Mother's convalescence is anticipated, and the daughter now calls upon her mother to join her in breaking silence, stillness, and stasis: "In vigilence of lifting the immobile silence. Lift me to the window to the picture image unleash the ropes tied to weights of stones first the ropes then its

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[59] This helper or "donor" features also in Cha's *White Dust from Mongolia*, a work left unfinished at the time of her death. See "Project Description" and "Related Poems and Journal Entries" in *Exilée and Temps Morts*, pp. 148-165.

scrapping on wood to break stillness as the bells fall peal follow the sound of ropes holding weight scrapping on wood to break stillness bells fall a peal to sky" (179).

If, as I have suggested earlier, *Dictée* can be *watched* as a cinematic text comprised of visual, linguistic, and temporal still images, the window and its "picture image" can function here as another cinema screen onto which a revitalized and resurrected vision of history can be "unleashed" and projected. While "re sighting" the thematics of "temps morts" in this fashion, the text ends with one more black-and-white still image of Korean girls under the Japanese colonial rule (Figure 3.13). (Since the number of the girls is nine, they might serve as nine Korean Muses who inspire Cha to write her narrative.) One of them is Yu Guan Soon, the Korean Joan of Arc, or "Child revolutionary child patriot woman soldier deliverer of nation," as Cha describes in the text (37). Apropos of this Korean revolutionary Cha writes, "Some will not know age. Some not age. Time stops" (37). Although Yu is captured in the static still image as if to exemplify "temps morts," it is people like her, Cha implies, who revive the seemingly dead history through memory and remembrance and thereby herald a new future. It goes without saying that Cha, too, plays the role of a medium and enacts such a ritualistic act through her own writing. While building on her earlier multimedia work, Cha in *Dictée* narrativizes "temps morts" by means of various linguistic, visual, and historical stills. And in incorporating such cinematographic techniques into her literary swan song, she also transfigures herself into a postcolonial medium who labors to resurrect the lost memory, language, and image in history and calls for a new historical configuration. In one of her fragmentary writings, she memorably remarks, "it is not difficult to remember,

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only pain. because of the wound, but it is my calling. i have no other occupation, than to remember" ("i have time" 127). In some sense her entire oeuvre is none other than such an arduous endeavor to remember the deep wound of history and its pain. As she exquisitely visualizes that historical wound of "temps morts" in *Dictée*, we, too, are invited to become witnesses to the "simulated pasts resurrected in memoriam" and, ultimately, to join her in imagining a new history to come.

CHAPTER FOUR

A POETICS OF THE LABYRINTH
The Global Urban System and Contemporary Literary Production
In Paul Auster's *The New York Trilogy*

Dismantling the "Geometric Architecture" of Detective Fiction

Comprised of three previously published novels—*City of Glass* (1985), *Ghosts* (1986), and *The Locked Room* (1986)—Paul Auster's *The New York Trilogy* takes a unique position in the history of detective fiction. As many critics have noted, Auster's bravura display of quintessentially postmodern thematics such as contingency, indeterminacy, intertextuality, and decentered subjectivity alters the fundamental contour of detective fiction. William Spanos, for example, explains how the traditional genre of detective fiction and its underlying ideological paraphernalia have been discredited by what he calls "anti-detective fiction" and hails such a new literary form as "the paradigmatic archetype of the postmodern literary imagination" (154). Stephano Tani presents a comparable view in *The Doomed Detective* in which he documents the "doomed" destiny of traditional detective fiction signaled by the advent of "anti-detective fiction." There followed a spate of studies that demonstrated the way in which Auster's postmodern "anti-detective fiction" deconstructs the *architectonics* of the end-oriented detective novel and its hoary metaphysics of presence, truth, closure (Russell 71; Nealon 95; Dimovitz 614; Holquist 135). Pursuing further such a line of query, Madeleine

Sorapure takes note of Auster's destabilization of the "author-function" and classifies his narrative as a "meta-anti-detective" story (72), while John Zilcosky analyzes Auster's work in terms of the "'metaphysical' detective novel," a paraliterary genre that calls into question its own formal and thematic assumptions by "[mixing] fiction with literary theory" (195). In an interview with *Contemporary Literature* Auster himself comments that The *New York Trilogy* puts to use the genre conventions of detective fiction as a way to rub up against them and "get somewhere else entirely" (22).

Auster's reshaping of detective fiction, as delineated by critics and the novelist alike, can be better illustrated if we situate his formal innovation within what Tvetan Todorov dubs the "typology of detective fiction." In his mapping of the genre system or the "grid" of detective fiction (42), Todorov expounds on the most prototypical form of detective fiction, often called the whodunit, and writes:

> At the base of the whodunit we find a duality…This novel contains not one but two stories: the story of the crime and the story of the investigation…The hundred and fifty pages which separate the discovery of the crime from the revelation of the killer are devoted to a slow apprenticeship: we examine clue after clue, lead after lead. The whodunit thus tends toward a purely *geometric architecture*. ("The Typology of Detective Fiction" 44-45; emphasis added)

According to the conventional dictum of detective fiction, there is a crime which triggers an investigation and the detective's investigation in turn resolves the case in the end. In such a narrative structure, two stories that have two different temporalities and spatialities are interwoven: one story has to do with the days that lead up to the crime while the other concerns the subsequent days of the investigation. The second story of the investigation is often nothing but a process of construing and revealing what has happened in what

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temporal sequence and "who have done it" (45). Meanwhile, the two narratives with different temporalities and spatialities are *sutured* from the perspective of the detective, who reconstructs the narrative of the crime and superimposes a coherent and linear temporality upon the temporarily destabilized order of things. As we shall see at some length momentarily, all these assumptions underlying what Todorov calls the "geometric architecture" of the genre are dismantled in Auster's "anti-detective fiction." In Auster's fictions, there is no crime in the conventional sense of the word and the detective appears to lack the capacity to deal with the situation in which he finds himself involved. As William G. Little succinctly remarks, "In Paul Auster's *The New York Trilogy* nothing happens again and again" (133). In consequence, the architectonics of detective fiction and its various kinds of ideological paraphernalia are demystified in Auster's postmodern narrative.

Many critics have, accordingly, commented on Auster's radical reworkings of the genre. Notwithstanding their insights into the metamorphosis of the *typology* of detective fiction, however, left unanswered in most of their accounts is the very history or, rather, *topology* of the genre—that is to say, the spatial realignments of the modern and postmodern world in which the historical gestation and mutation of the genre are embedded. Georg Lukács once noted that the genre theory which classifies the novel into diverse sub-genres—detective novel, adventure novel, psychological novel, peasant novel, and the like—often falls into the pitfall of a reactionary formal operation and winds up substituting a "soulless and ossified" taxonomy for "the living dialectics of history" (*The Historical Novel* 240). Something similar can be said apropos a number of formal studies

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of Auster's realignments of detective fiction. As a way to *historicize* such formal approaches, I will suggest below that the emergence and establishment of detective fiction as a literary form has as its necessary preconditions the breakup of the pre-modern world and the maelstrom of modernization. It is far from fortuitous that archetypal detective stories are often set in a modernizing urban space in which the knowability of one's social Other and of the world becomes considerably limited and in which a multitude of people populating the volatile social fabric—"*Ces millions de gens qui n'ont pas besoin de se connaître*" (Rimbaud, "Ville" 326)—become myriad inscrutable mysteries. In some sense, the linear and progressive narrative construction and the resulting narrative closure in conventional detective stories have as their condition of possibility the very *impossibility* of such a closure in the real world in which those stories are produced. Arguably, such a narrative form works to program its readers and accustom them to the newly emerging complex and disorienting social space at the same time as it provides its readers with a sense of order, stability, and knowability—something increasingly unattainable and unfeasible in the modern social space.

If the formation of detective fiction as a cultural form is thus entwined with the production of the modern social space that has become an impenetrable mystery in its own right, how does the genre change in the contemporary world when the spatial apparatus of the global world system produces an even more intricate concatenation of social spaces and turns the entire globe into what Saskia Sassen describes as a "transnational urban system" (225) or what Fredric Jameson terms "one enormous urban system" (*The Seeds of Time* 28)? If Auster's "anti-detective fiction" deviates from a

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conventional mode of detective stories that are usually set in the modern city, how does

his innovative textual space bring into representation and remap global social space?

The following brief formal analysis of Auster's *The New York Trilogy* centers

around these questions. Although Auster's work has been faulted time and again for its

ahistorical play with postmodern and poststructural thematics, I will suggest that the

historicity of his literary production should be found in his representation of the *spatial*

configuration of the postmodern world (which is the age of globalization).[1] As Walter

Benjamin and Jameson observe, our spatial perception or spatial affect is more akin to

distraction than to concentration and therefore can most easily be *repressed* (Benjamin,

"The Work of Art" 239; Jameson, "Is Space Political?" 195). While the complex spatial

organization of the globalizing world has largely been under-explored and repressed in

postmodern American literature, Auster places in the foreground the present historical

conjuncture in terms of its idiosyncratic spatial production and thereby lays bare the

spatial unconscious of globalization.[2] It is against the backdrop of Auster's cartography

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[1] I follow Jameson here in suggesting that postmodernism is not over, that postmodernism (as well as postcolonialism) is a historical symptom of the structural mutation of late capitalism. Chapters 1 and 3, above, interrogate the connection postmodernism has with globalization and postcolonialism, respectively.
[2] While Benjamin contemplating the way in which the reception of art in the age of mechanical reproduction demands no concentration but instead promotes a sense of distraction, he comments on architecture as follows: "Architecture has always represented the prototype of a work of art the reception of which is consummated by a collectivity in a state of distraction. The laws of its reception are most instructive" (239). In his reflections on the politics of space Jameson similarly writes: "architecture is the most *repressible*: all other arts demand some minimal effort of reading…Even a painting demands a glance; whereas architecture can be lived in, be moved around in, and simultaneously ignored. Much of U.S. culture could be discussed in terms of just this *repression* of space and of architecture" (195; my emphasis). The present chapter, as well as my entire dissertation, shares Benjamin's and Jameson's observations on the repression of space and argues that innovative contemporary cultural texts, by means of their very forms, intervene in the convoluted and contradictory spatial system of the world today and bring to figuration the spatial unconscious of globalization. For my Jamesonian theorization of the *spatial unconscious of globalization*, see Chapter 1, above.

of contemporary spatial production that his deployment of intertextuality needs to be reassessed. Many of the narratives he incorporates into his own textual space—among them, Baudelaire's "Any where out of the world: N'importe où hors du monde," Poe's *A. Gordon Pym* as well as *Robinson Crusoe*, *Don Quixote*, Marco Polo's *Travels*, and Haydn's opera *Il Mondo della Luna*—deal with the theme of traveling and drawing a line of flight out of one's accustomed abode. Through his masterful use of intertextuality as a historicizing trope, Auster pits the current historical conjuncture and its spatial configuration against those of the past and in doing so, draws a map of the labyrinthine postmodern global world. Therefore, the next section aims to reevaluate the historical dimensions of intertextuality by reading Baudelaire and Poe, two of the most prominent literary figures whom Auster reworks in *The New York Trilogy*, with an emphasis on the way their narratives thematize the relationship between the modern city and literary production. Building upon and elaborating that discussion, the remaining sections will look at how Auster's narrative takes the postmodern global city as its main protagonist and how he brings into relation the problematic condition of literary representation in postmodernity and the complexity of the spatial system of globalization.

Urban Spatial Modernism in Baudelaire and Poe

When it comes to the intertextual relationship *City of Glass* forms with other texts, Baudelaire takes a crucial position. His thematization of modernity and the modern city is particularly important for our understanding of Auster's representation of postmodernity

and the global city. In "Any where out of the world: N'importe où hors du monde," one of

the prose poems in *Le Spleen de Paris*, Baudelaire writes, "Il me semble que je serais

toujours bien là où je ne suis pas" (*Oeuvres complètes* 182).[3] The poetic persona likens

human existence to a confinement at the hospital and converses with his soul about

getting out of the place of ennui and lethargy in which they find themselves caught. In the

imaginary conversation with his double, he expresses his yearning to travel around

different parts of the world such as Lisbon, Holland, Batavia, and the Baltic. This restless

Parisien who unceasingly daydreams of traveling around the world appears in "The

Painter of Modern Life" as a *flâneur* who wanders around in the city with an insatiable

curiosity. Baudelaire details the *flâneur* as follows:

> His passion and his profession are to become one flesh with the crowd.
> For the perfect flâneur, for the passionate spectator, it is an immense joy to
> set up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of
> movement, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite. To be away from
> home and yet to feel oneself everywhere at home; to see the world, to be at
> the center of the world, and yet to remain hidden from the world—such
> are a few of the slightest pleasures of those independent, passionate,
> impartial natures which the tongue can but clumsily define…He is an "I"
> with an insatiable appetite for the "non-I," at every instant rendering and
> explaining it in pictures more living than life itself, which is always
> unstable and fugitive. ("The Painter of Modern Life" 9-10)

There is no doubt that the birth of the *flâneur* is anchored in the development of

commodity culture and the extravagant display of spectacles in the modern city. In

contrast to the country, modern urban space is filled with a heap of lavish spectacles and

richly charged with diverse libidinal excitements of which Baudelaire's "A une passante"

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[3] This passage is translated in Louise Varèse's rendition as follows: "It always seems to me that I should be happy anywhere but where I am" (*Paris Spleen* 99).

offers a textbook illustration. Despite the *flâneur*'s wish to "become one flesh" with the other and "to set up house in the heart of the multitude," however, the modern city is characterized by volatility, alienation, and anxiety. As is suggested in the ending of "A une passante," Baudelaire, while articulating a new sense of excitement that urban culture has to offer, also stresses a profound sense of alienation and estrangement—"Car j'ignore où tu fuis, tu ne sais où je vais, O toi que j'eusse aimée, ô toi qui le savais!" (*Oeuvres complètes* 101).[4] Benjamin excellently captures this alienated nature of the *flâneur*'s modern city when he describes, "The gaze which the allegorical genius turns on the city betrays, instead, a profound alienation. It is the gaze of the flâneur, whose way of life conceals behind a beneficent mirage the anxiety of the future inhabitants of our metropolises" (*The Arcade Project* 21).

In such an alienating and anxiety-ridden urban space, the insatiable desire of the "I" to harmonize with the "non-I" paradoxically accentuates the increasing chasm between self and other and, by extension, the fragmentation of the social wholeness. If one recalls Lukács' view of Greek literature as a locus where the I and the Not-I as well as the subject and the world were relatively reconciled, and where the possibility of access to the social totality and the problem of representation were not a critical issue (*The Theory of the Novel* 29-39), Baudelaire's modern city poses a new set of problematics with regard to grasping and representing society as a whole. Faced with such a historical situation, Baudelaire insists that modern art should come up with its own

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[4] Richard Howard's translation: "Of me you know nothing, I nothing of you—you whom I might have loved and whom knew that too" (*Les Fleurs du Mal* 98)

mode of representation distinguishable from the insipid imitation of Nature in earlier

periods ("The Painter of Modern Life" 34). Prefiguring Henri Lefebvre's thesis that every

society produces its own unique social space (*The Production of Space* 53), Baudelaire

suggests that each age has its distinctive comportment, glance, and perspective and that

the "painter of modern life" should come to terms with the emergence of new urban

space ("The Painter of Modern Life" 13). In doing so, Baudelaire brings into the heart of

his modernist poetics the correlation of literature and space. If, according to Benjamin's

appraisal, it is with Baudelaire that Paris becomes for the first time the subject of lyric

poetry (*The Arcade Project* 21), it is also Baudelaire who first brings the modern city and

literary representation into relation with each other. In other words, the significance of

Baudelaire's modernism or his "modernism in the streets," to use Marshall Berman's

witty characterization,[5] rests in his thematization of the inextricable linkage between

literary production and spatial production.

The close relationship between urban space and literary narrative is also

thematized, albeit to a lesser degree, in "The Man of the Crowd," a short story by Edgar

Allan Poe, whom Baudelaire acclaims as "the most powerful pen of our age" ("The

Painter of Modern Life" 7). Having been bed-ridden for a long time, Poe's convalescent

narrator sits in front of the window at a coffee house in London and looks at passersby

with an unusually intense curiosity (131). After spending some time in that idle manner,

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[5] In *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity*, Berman takes Baudelaire as "a first
modernity" (133) and demonstrates that Baudelaire's modernist poetics inscribes into itself the complex
dynamic between the "pastoral" and the "counter-pastoral." The phrase "modernism in the streets" is taken
from the title of the third section, entitled "Baudelaire: Modernism in the Streets" (131-172)

he finally hurls himself into the street and trails an old man for no particular reason. That is the only apparent narrative thread in the text. Indeed, what is noteworthy about this short story is that there is no interesting "content" or plot in the conventional sense of the word. Instead, the narrator's act of storytelling is hardly distinguishable from the act of walking in the city, while the focus of the narrative is placed on modern urban space and its kaleidoscopic scenes which constantly stimulate the narrator's curiosity and make him ceaselessly wander. In that sense, it can be said that Poe's narrative unfolds *spatially* as the narrator walks through every nook and cranny of the city and watches myriad spectacles and people. Insofar as London's cityscape is what sets in motion the narrator's walking and writing alike, it would be not too much of an exaggeration to say that this short story is about nothing but the modern city itself or that the old man is a mere pretext or a "motivation of the device," to use the Russian Formalists' concept,[6] for bringing to the fore the narrator's experience of and in the city.

In thus probing into the inextricable relationship of literary and spatial production, Poe's short story highlights the difficulty of representing the modern city. The ending of the story in particular attests to such a representational conundrum. After following the old *flâneur* for a considerable duration of time, the narrator gives up his pursuit and contemplates:

> And, as the shades of the second evening came on, I grew wearied unto death, and, stopping fully in front of the wanderer, gazed at him steadfastly in the face. He noticed me not, but resumed his solemn walk,

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[6] "Motivation" as used by the Russian Formalists is elaborately theorized in, among others, Boris Tomashevsky's "Thematics," pp. 78-87. See also Victor Shklovsky's view of aesthetic motivation as an end itself, see his "Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*: Stylistic Commentary," pp. 30-31.

> while I, ceasing to follow remained absorbed in contemplation. "This old man," I said at length, "is the type and the genius of deep crime. He refuses to be alone. *He is the man of the crowd*. It will be in vain to follow; for I shall learn no more of him, nor of his deeds. The worst heart of the world is a grosser book than the 'Hortulus Animæ,' and perhaps it is but one of the great mercies of God that '*es lässt sich micht lessen*.'" (139)

When the narrator thus finds it pointless to follow the stranger, he stops walking and the narrative likewise comes to an abrupt end. Not unlike the ending of "A une passante," this passage underlines the difficulty of understanding and communicating with other city dwellers. The narrator trails the stranger with such a keen interest and curiosity only to be left alone and realize the impenetrability of the social others. When his endeavor to become "one flesh with" the Other and to connect with the world proves to be futile, the text implies, the narrator withdraws to his own inner world and constructs his private bourgeois monadic cell as a kind of bulwark against the outside world. Ift the focus of the narrative is placed upon the cityscape of London and if the act of following a stranger is only a pretext for highlighting the narrator's experience of and in the city, this text can be said to function as an allegory of modern urban space which increasingly resists any conventional representation or figuration. In this sense it is none other than the modern city that is an unfathomable text that "*es lässt sich micht lessen*" (does not allow itself to be read).

Literary Representation and the Spatial Disjuncture of Modernity

In this way, both Baudelaire and Poe call attention to how the emergence of modern urban space informs and transforms the problematic of representation and how

modern literary production and spatial production are mutually constitutive and constituted. If the production of narrative is thus deeply inscribed in the production of social space, one would also need to account for literary modernism in relation to the larger framework of the modern economy and its spatial apparatus. Reframing modernism along the axis of space, Berman persuasively demonstrates that modernism and its characteristic vitalities, energies, and anxieties issue from "the drives and strains of modern economic life: from its relentless and insatiable pressure for growth and progress; its expansion of human desires beyond local, national and moral bounds…the volatility and endless metamorphosis of all its values in the maelstrom of the world market" (121). Berman here contextualizes the inception and evolution of modernism within the spatial expansion of the modern economy beyond its local and national borders. The evolution of the modern economy toward the world market to which he refers was not actually completed in modern times and would wait until our contemporary moment of globalization. Berman's observation is nevertheless highly perceptive in that he points toward the way the *spatial* logic of modern capitalism engenders distinctive worldviews and representational practices chacteristic of modernism. However, insofar as his discussion is confined to modernism as such, to that very degree his perspectives need to be reformulated in such a way that explains both the commonalities and differences between modernism and postmodernism in *spatial* terms.

Terry Eagleton's study of modernism in relation to "exiles and émigrés" is one way to recast Berman's discussion. In *Exiles and Émigrés* Eagleton points out something peculiar and remarkable about British literary modernism, namely that "With the

exception of D.H. Lawrence, the heights of modern English literature have been dominated by foreigners and émigrés: Conrad, James, Eliot, Pound, Yeats, Joyce" (9). Eagleton shows that while the Romantic poet or the realist novelists could write "out of a relationship of intricately detailed intimacy with his society" and grasp their society as a totality, the advent of the modern economy took its toll on the organic picture of the social totality (10-11).[7] It can be inferred from Eagleton's formulation that exiles and émigrés, due to their comparativist and stereoscopic visions, were better positioned to recognize different degrees of reification at work in the process of modernization and to develop a historical vision of the fragmented social totality of the modern world. What is of much importance here is that Eagleton's exegesis suggests the possible connection between literary modernism and the international spatial network of cultural exchange buttressed by the increasingly expanding modern economy (which had not yet reached the transnational or global scale of our own historical moment).

A more sophisticated theory that addresses both the embeddedness of literary production in the spatial production of the modern economy and the structural differences between modernism and postmodernism is developed by Jameson. Placing the modernist

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[7] Eagleton recently propounds a similar view asserting that "Like the revolutionary working class, the modernist artists acknowledged no homeland, crossing national frontiers as easily as they glided from one art-form or coterie or manifesto to another. Huddled together in some polyglot metropolis, they set up home in art rather than in nation-states. In that way, they could compensate among other things for the loss of a genuine homeland and a national tradition. Modernism was a hybrid affair, mixing together fragments of various national cultures. If the traditional world was now in pieces, if every human identity was now a collage, the modernists would pluck an artistic virtue from that historical necessity, scavenging resourcefully among the rubble of clapped-out ideologies in the manner of Baudelaire's ragpickers to fashion some wondrous new creations" (*After Theory* 69).

problematic of representation and the impassioned quest for innovative representational

forms within the context of the evolution of capitalism, he argues,

> [N]or does representation really emerge as an issue and a dilemma in its
> own right when the possibility of some realist access to the social totality
> is taken for granted and given in advance. It is only with the second or
> monopoly stage of capitalism, and the emergence of a classical imperialist
> system beyond the confines of the various national experiences, that a
> radical aesthetic and epistemological doubt about the possibility of
> grasping society as a whole begins to be felt: and it is precisely this radical
> doubt that inaugurates modernism as such and constitutes the
> representational drama specific to it. (*Late Marxism* 244)

For Jameson, the crisis of representation in modernism has to do with radical changes in

reality that increasingly resist any traditional mode of representation.[8] In other words, the

increasing fragmentation of the social totality in the wake of the emergence of the

imperialist world system and its expansion beyond national borders makes the realist

notion of social transparency or intelligibility obsolete and so triggers a whole new range

of representational problems and practices.

In a slightly different context, Jameson elaborates more on the dissolution of the

Lukácsean vision of social transparency in the modern and its upshots for literary

representation Lukács's Hegelian analysis of the impact of the changing relationship

between *Erscheinung* (appearance) and *Wesen* (essence) on representational forms,

Jameson characterizes modernity in terms of the widening chasm between people's

concrete experience of the *Lebenswelt* and the structure of the modern world system:

> The crisis in realism can therefore be theorized or modelled in the
> following way: as a gap between individual and phenomenological

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[8] In Chapter 2, above, I have dealt with the representational crisis of modernism as it is brought into
figuration in the work of Mallarmé, Baudelaire, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Schoenberg, among others.

experience and structural intelligibility. Or to put it more simply, if, in the newly decentered situation of the imperialist network, you live something strongly and concretely, it is unintelligible, since its ultimate determinants lie outside your own field of experience. If on the other hand you are able to understand a phenomenon abstractly or scientifically, if your abstract mind is able to assemble all the appropriate determinants, present and absent as well, then this knowledge fails to add up to a concrete experience, remains abstract and sealed away in the compartment of the mind reserved for pure knowledge and intellection. (*The Modernist Papers* 240-241)

Whereas the social totality or the intelligibility thereof in realism is deeply grounded in the national or classical market phase of capitalism in which the individual subject is not yet completely severed from the socio-economic determinants and in which his individual experience can more or less be understood in connection with the larger social structure as a whole, modernism sets in when such a possibility is seriously called into question. In other words, as the imperialist stage of capitalism starts to produce a decentered and international spatial network on the globe, the defining material conditions move beyond the national territory which constitutes the fundamental parameters of the individual subject's phenomenological and epistemological comprehension. (From this perspective, V. I. Lenin's conceptualization of the modern economy as a monopoly or imperialist stage of capitalism can likewise be seen as gesturing toward an increased level of spatial rearrangement and disjunction in the modern world.[9]) On Jameson's account, modernism is a cultural response to such a

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[9] I am here referring to Lenin's "Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism." Lenin highlights the spatial implication of the imperial or monopoly stage of capitalism as follows: "It is beyond doubt, therefore, that the transition of capitalism to monopoly capitalism, to finance capitalism, is connected with the intensification of the struggle for the partition of the world" (228). For a discussion of the unprecedented level of abstraction in finance capital and its ramifications for the postmodern global world, see Jameson's

historical situation, that is, the emergence of the imperialist economy beyond traditional

social or national boundaries and beyond the purview of people's concrete experiences of

the lifeworld. Put differently, modernism is defined by a series of consistent attempts to

work out and negotiate in aesthetic and formal terms the socioeconomic contradictions

inherent in the spatial disjuncture and dissonance of the modern world system.

The Global City and Postmodern Narrative

If Baudelaire's and Poe's work embodies the overdetermined relationship of

literary, urban, and economic production in modernity, how does this change in the

globalized postmodern world? If, as many poststructuralists/postmodernists and Marxists

alike have consistently maintained, there was some structural mutation in the transition to

the postmodern,[10] how does this *coupure* transfigure modernist poetics and the latter's

representational practices? A little more specifically, if Lefebvre is right to suggest that

"each mode of production has its own particular space, the shift from one mode to

another must entail the production of a new space" (46), what kinds of social spaces does

globalization produce and how does the new spatial production in turn reshape and and

transform contemporary literary production?

It is these questions that Auster's *The New York Trilogy* poses in such an

emphatic, if cryptic, manner. Set in contemporary New York City, his texts reframe the

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"Culture and Finance Capital" in *The Cultural Turn* as well as Giovanni Arrighi's *The Long Twentieth Century*. As is suggested in Chapter 1, above, Derrida's *hauntology*, too, can be taken as a commentary on such an abstract and immaterialized contemporary capitalist mode of production.

[10] See Chapters 1 and 2, above, for my discussion of these propositions.

Baudelairean poetics of the modern city in a way that draws out a new set of relationships between literary, spatial, and economic production in the age of globalization. All three novels collected in the *Trilogy* somehow or other problematize the representability and narratability of the contemporary world. In the first novel, *City of Glass*, Auster articulates a sense of indeterminacy and contingency from the very first sentence: "It was a wrong number that started it" (3). The "investigation" is initiated, the narrator insinuates, by such a chance event. Befittingly, the narrator says that "nothing was real except chance," that there is nothing but an event and its outcome, with no linear causality between the two. He also adds that what matters is the story itself, not its meaning (3). Insofar as the text thus foregrounds contingency, undecidability, and non-meaning, it is peculiar that the main character-detective, Daniel Quinn, is an old-style mystery novelist. For, as I have already mentioned, Auster's "anti-detective fiction" has little to do with the traditional kind of mystery novel that is structured around relatively stable notions of meaning and truth and progresses linearly from a "beginning," through the detective's intervention, to the final *dénouement*. Quinn's mystery novels have more affinity with this kind of narrative than with Auster's own "anti-detective fiction." By selecting a conventional mystery writer as the main character/detective and portraying the trials and tribulations he goes through, Auster deliberately questions the architectonics or the *Grund* of the genre. Apropos Quinn's mystery narratives, we are told early on that:

> What he liked about these books was their sense of plenitude and
> economy. In the good mystery there is nothing wasted, no sentence, no
> word that is not significant. And even if it is not significant, it has the
> potential to be so—which amounts to the same thing…Since everything
> seen or said, even the slightest, most trivial thing, can bear a connection to

the outcome of the story, nothing must be overlooked. Everything becomes essence; the center of the book shifts with each event that propels it. (9)

This passage unambiguously describes Quinn's penchant and quest for textual unity and wholeness. Every element, whether thematic or formal, should be fully controlled and meticulously structured so that the compositional process leads to an organic whole or what Cleanth Brooks would call the "well-wrought urn."[11]

Resonating with some of the central credos of the New Criticism that sought after an autonomous completeness and unity in a literary text, Quinn's perspective also dovetails with Poe's principle of narrative production. In his "Philosophy of Composition" Poe lays out his compositional method like the following:

Nothing is more clear than that every plot, worth the name, must be elaborated to its *dénouement* before anything be attempted with the pen. It is only with the *dénouement* constantly in view that we can give a plot its indispensable air of consequence, or causation, by making the incidents, and especially the tone at all points, tend to the development of the intention. (453)

This type of writing procedure requires the writer to envision the totality of his narrative well before he writes anything with his pen. Poe's compositional philosophy shares in that respect some unmistakable affinity with Arnold Schoenberg's composition of twelve-tone music.[12] One can take their construction of literary or musical closure to be

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[11] This alludes to the title of his well-known *The Well-Wrought Urn*.

[12] In *Fundamentals of Musical Composition*, Schoenberg writes in a manner analogous to Poe's compositional principle: "A composer does not, of course, add bit by bit, as a child does in building with wooden blocks. He conceives an entire composition as a spontaneous vision. Then he proceeds, like Michelangelo who chiseled his *Moses* out of the marble without sketches, complete in every detail, thus directly *forming* his material" (1-2). For my analysis of the affinity between Schoenberg's twelve-tone composition and Adorno's philosophical form, see Chapter 2, above.

part of the characteristically modernist strategies of constructing a monadic whole in response to the gradual fragmentation of the social totality in the modernizing world. (In both cases, one might also note some noticeable tendency that turns a diachronic progress of literary and musical narrative into a synchronic simultaneity, to which perhaps the relatively short nature of Poe's or Schoenberg's work is ascribable.)

At any rate, Auster's postmodern detective novel determinedly distances itself from such a mechanical compositional practice. In an interview with Larry McCaffery and Sinda Gregory, he remarks, "There's a good deal of that in bad eighteenth- and nineteenth-century fiction: mechanical plot devices, the urge to tie everything up, the happy endings in which everyone turns out to be related to everyone else. No, what I'm talking about is the presence of the unpredictable, the utterly bewildering nature of human experience" (52). Championing such a principle of unpredictability and disorientation, he makes apparent, from the very beginning of *City of Glass*, his effort to question and challenge the totalizing belief in narrative closure and in the transparency of meaning and truth:

> In the beginning, there was simply the event and its consequences.
> Whether it might have turned out differently, or whether it was all
> predetermined with the first word that came from the stranger's mouth, is
> not the question. The question is the story itself, and whether or not it
> means something is not for the story to tell. (3)

In sharp contrast to traditional narrative production in which every element is integrated into the narrative whole, Auster's text disrupts such a holistic vision and other related conventional representational theories and practices. While experimenting with new narrative forms, Auster defamiliarizes the very act of writing a mystery story and turns it

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into a mystery in its own right. "There is no story, no plot, no action—nothing but a man sitting alone in a room and writing a book" (202), says another detective figure in *Ghosts*, the second novel of the *Trilogy*, hinting at the nature of Auster's innovative narrative production.

In line with Auster's de-totalizing and defamiliarizing compositional practices is his thematization of contingency, indeterminacy, and undecidability. Quinn's nom de plume, William Wilson, is quite telling in this light since the pseudonym, taken from Poe's short story "William Wilson," reinforces a sense of undecidability and ambiguity. Whereas in Poe's story the theme of *doppelgänger* is regulated and controlled in accordance with his compositional philosophy outlined above, however, the element of doubles is even further complicated and multiplied in all three novels in the *Trilogy* to the point where the authenticity of subjectivity and even the notion of authorship are seriously called into doubt. Corresponding to Auster's deconstruction of the architectonics of detective fiction, *City of Glass* says little of the "main character." We are told that "As for Quinn, there is little that need detain us. Who he was, where he came from, and what he did are of no great importance" (3). Notwithstanding such reluctance or incapacity to offer any detailed information about Quinn, however, it is stressed that Quinn likes walking more than anything else. Like Baudelaire's *flâneur*, Quinn enjoys strolling around the city without any particular destination and goes wherever his legs lead him. In this respect, this novel not merely derives its theme of ambiguity and uncertainty from Poe's "William Wilson" but draws on the theme of writing/walking in the city in "The Man of the Crowd." As in the latter narrative about the *flâneur* (who

follows another *flâneur*), Quinn trails an old man named Peter Stillman Senior in

Manhattan in order to protect Peter Stillman Junior who suspects that his father might kill

him. Meanwhile, as he keeps an eye on Stillman Senior, Quinn records his detailed

observations and speculations in his red notebook, which later becomes the basis of *City*

of Glass. In this sense Quinn's writing is inseparable from his walking in the city.

Here Michel de Certeau's discussion of walking in the city as a "spatial practice"

can illuminate the intertwined spatial and literary production in Quinn's narrative. In a

manner reminiscent of Lefebvre's distinction between social space and Euclidean

isotropic space (1), de Certeau draws from Maurice Merleau-Ponty's differentiation

between "geometrical space" and "anthropological space" and maintains that a *place* as

an objective and physical field is transformed into *space* when the subject practices and

actualizes that place.[13] Interestingly enough, as he relates the subject's transformation of

an inert place into an actualized space, he also looks upon the practice of reading as

spatial production:

> In short, *space is a practiced place*. Thus the street geometrically defined
> by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers. In the same
> way, an act of reading is the space produced by the practice of a particular
> place: a written text, i.e., a place constituted by a system of signs. (*The*
> *Practice of Everyday Life* 117)

One may pursue this line of argument still further and suggest that the practice of writing

also can be a kind of spatial production. For, as is the case with reading, writing, too, is a

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[13] This is not to imply that Lefebvre's and de Certeau's theories of spatial production are identical. For an
account of some of their differences, especially in regards to their views on everyday social space, see
Soja's *Thirdspace* (310-314). Soja characterizes their disparate takes in terms of "view from above" and
"view from below."

spatial practice that involves transforming a void *tabula rasa* into a textual space filled

with a system of signs. If writing is thus seen as a form of *spatial* production, we can

correlate Quinn's spatial practices in both urban space and his textual space and see how

his writing and walking in the city are at once intertwined and mutually constitutive. In a

much more intricate way than is the case in Baudelaire's or Poe's narrative, Auster's *City

of Glass* couples textual production and spatial production together and thereby recasts

the question of representation in the contemporary postmodern world in both *literary* and

spatial terms.

The complex manner in which Auster approaches the problematic of

representation is well in evidence in his portrayal of Stillman Senior. Stillman's book,

entitled *The Garden and the Tower: Early Visions of the New World*, which Quinn comes

to read during his investigation, is particularly intriguing, in that it interrogates the crisis

of representation in both literary and spatial terms. For the elder Stillman, contemporary

society faces a serious representational crisis because our language has been corrupted

and contaminated. In his Milton-inspired book, he writes:

> Adam's one task in the Garden had been to invent language, to give each
> creature and thing its name. In that state of innocence, his tongue had gone
> straight to the quick of the world. His words had not been merely
> appended to the things he saw, they had revealed their essences, had
> literally brought them to life. A thing and its name were interchangeable.
> After the fall, this was no longer true. Names became detached from
> things; words devolved into a collection of arbitrary signs; language had
> been severed from God. The story of the Garden, therefore, records not
> only the fall of man, but the fall of language. (52)

Stillman here crudely chronicles how the prelapsarian identity between sign and referent,

between the subject and the world, has been disjointed. He rehearses a similar position

when he explains his philosophy of language to Quinn. As he sees it, the contemporary

world is fragmented and in order for the world order to be restored, the human language

should be renewed and purified. While he talks about his goal of inventing a new

language, he says,

> A language that will at last say what we have to say. For our words no
> longer correspond to the world. When things were whole, we felt
> confident that our words could express them. But little by little these
> things have broken apart, shattered, collapsed into chaos. (92-93)

Such a quest for the prelapsarian language and the purity and transparency of the sign

system is repeated in *Ghosts*, in which the detective figure Blue expresses his belief in the

correspondence between words and things: "Words are transparent for him, great

windows that stand between him and the world (174).

Insofar as the story of Eden that allegorizes the fall of man and human language

also records the "fall" of space—a *spatial* displacement from one place to another—

Stillman's descriptions can be said to recount the problematic status of representation in

spatial terms. Given the convergence of the linguistic and spatial disintegration and

degeneration in Stillman's theory, it is also notable that the second part of Stillman's

book deals with the Tower of Babel. As a testament to the impossibility of any unified or

originary language, the Tower of Babel illustrates how the corruption of human language

is at one with the architectural and spatial collapse of the tower. If the Tower of Babel

thus allegorizes the deconstruction of both language and space, it is hardly a mere

coincidence that Auster places that allegory at the heart of Quinn's thwarted textual and

spatial production. After he follows Stillman all over New York for many days, it dawns

on Quinn one day that Stillman's seemingly mindless strolls have a regular pattern. After charting that pattern on the map of Manhattan, he finds the unnerving fact that Stillman's paths form a few alphabets: "OWEROFBAB" (85). He soon conjectures that these words quite possibly form the phrase "THE TOWER OF BABEL." Unsettled by this finding, he tries to persuade himself to think that those letters are nothing but the creation of his imagination, that even if they form the words "OWEROFBAB," that is a sheer fluke.

Now Quinn reaches the dead end without knowing what to do: "He arrived in a neverland of fragments, a place of wordless things and thingless words" (87). This fragmented space, in which there is a discrepancy between things and words, between signifier and signified, becomes an impasse for Quinn's literary and spatial practices. In the other two novels in the *Trilogy*, the detective characters go through a similar disillusionment. "For the first time in his experience of writing reports," we are told of Blue, "he discovers that words do not necessarily work, that it is possible for them to obscure the things they are trying to say" (176). Similarly, the narrator of *The Locked Room* is explicit in voicing his frustration when he says, "All the words were familiar to me, and yet they seemed to have been put together strangely, as thought their final purpose was to cancel each other. I can think of no other way to express it. Each sentence erased the sentence before it, each paragraph made the next paragraph impossible" (370). In such an overt way *The New York Trilogy* stages myths about pristine and transparent language and places in perspective the problem of representation in the contemporary world.

The Space of Deconstruction and the Destruction of Space

The way in which *The New York Trilogy* debunks mystical beliefs in language has

drawn much attention from critics. Alison Russell, for one, places Auster's critique

squarely within Derrida's deconstruction and argues that it is none other than various

logocentrisms or theories of language rooted in the metaphysics of presence that are the

"crime" under investigation in the *Trilogy* (72). Scott A. Dimovitz chimes in with Russell

and draws parallels between Auster's repudiation of the prelapsarian language and "the

Derridean argument against a quest for presence" (617), while Jeffrey T. Nealon spells

out how Auster takes issue with a "classically ontotheological view of language" as

encapsulated in Stillman's quasi-religious language theory (100).

I do not object to these deconstructive approaches to Auster's texts; as a matter of

fact, I would even endorse without too much reservation Russell's somewhat overstated

claim that *The New York Trilogy* is "an incessant play of 'différance'" (72) and a

virtuosic display of "dissemination" (75). However, left not fully explored in such

typically Derridean inquiries are, it seems to me, the *spatial* dimension of Derrida's

deconstruction and its explanatory power for Auster's thematization of representational

crisis. This dearth of attention is peculiar, to say the least, given that both Derrida and

Auster constantly bring the questions of language and space together. In order to do

justice to both Derrida and Auster, it is necessary to look at the way in which Derrida

theorizes the *spatiality* of différance[14] as well as the way that Auster's texts resonate with, yet eventually stray from, a deconstructive framework. As a way to do that, it is fruitful to compare Derrida's view on space and language (as articulated in his exegesis of the Tower of Babel) and Auster's standpoint.

In Derrida's oeuvre, what comes closest to Auster's portrayal of the elder Stillman's belief in transparent language would be his contemplation on Jean-Jacques Rousseau in *Of Grammatology*. In his study of Rousseau's *The Essay on the Origin of Languages*, Derrida decries Rousseau's hypothesis about the originary moment of linguistic purity in which human speech is a natural and unmediated expression of emotions and thoughts. Derrida argues,

> There *must* (*should*) *have* been plenitude and not lack, presence without difference. From then on the dangerous supplement, scale or harmony, *adds itself from the outside as evil and lack* to happy and innocent plenitude. It would come from an outside which would be simply the outside. This conforms to the logic of identity and to the principle of classical ontology (the outside is outside, being is, etc.) but not to the logic of supplementarity, which would have it that the outside be inside, that the other and the lack come to add themselves as a plus that replaces a minus, that what adds itself to something takes the place of a default in the thing, that the default, as the outside of the inside, should be already within the inside, etc. What Rousseau in fact describes is that the lack, adding itself as a plus to a plus, cuts into an energy which *must* (*should*) *have* been and remain intact. And indeed it breaks in as a dangerous supplement, as a *substitute* that *enfeebles*, *enslaves*, *effaces*, *separates*, and *falsifies*. (215)

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[14] I have explained in Chapter 1 that Derrida's deconstruction puts forth new forms of spatiality such as "nonlocus," "spacing," and "trace." While examining the spatiality of Derridean deconstruction and its influence on Peter Eisenman's deconstructive architecture, I have read their theory and practice as symbolic acts that give expression to the spatial contradictions of the contemporary globalizing world. The following discussion of Derrida in this chapter is another variation on the same thematics.

As this passage elucidates, Derrida's deconstruction of origin, identity, and presence

shows that at the very moment of "purity," there is *always already* contamination. The

architectonics of Rousseau's discourse on the "origin" of languages is undergirded by the

repression of lack, *différance*, and alterity—what Derrida here calls, appropriating

Rousseau's phrase, "dangerous supplement," something that is both exterior and interior,

both added and essential, both substitute and necessity (154).[15] From this point of view,

even the immediacy and identity between words and things which Stillman Senior

believes existed in Eden or before the fall of the Tower of Babel are also caught in the

infinite chain of *différance* or supplement. For Derrida there is no origin that only later

becomes corrupt. To the contrary, the very origin is always already derived and

contaminated because it cannot escape the decentering process of *différance*. As Derrida

puts it, "Through this sequence of supplements a necessity is announced: that of an

infinite chain, ineluctable multiplying the supplementarity mediations that produce the

sense of the very thing they defer: the mirage of the thing itself, of immediate presence,

of originary perception. Immediacy is derived" (157).

The resonance between Derrida's deconstruction of the "origin" of language and

Auster's critique of the myth of the prelapsarian language can also be observed in

Derrida's "Des Tours de Babel." Just as Auster does in *The New York Trilogy*, so does

Derrida pursue his inquiry into the problem of linguistic representation further in spatial

terms. Deconstructing the onto-theology of the Tower of Babel myth, Derrida maintains,

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[15] See also his *Dissemination*, p. 109

The "tower of Babel" does not merely figure the irreducible multiplicity of tongues; it exhibits an incompletion, the impossibility of finishing, of totalizing, of saturating, of completing something on the order of edification, architectural construction, system and architectonics. (165)

The Tower of Babel has traditionally been taken as an allegory for the impossibility of universal language and the ineluctable incommunicability among human languages. Nevertheless, as has been suggested in my earlier discussion of Stillman's language theory, the Tower of Babel is associated with the question of space as well. Accordingly, Derrida reads the Tower of Babel myth as a trope that allegorizes the structural impossibility of immediacy, originality, and totality not just in linguistic but also spatial terms. Derrida's strategic move that aligns language and space in his critique of presence is glimpsed when he argues elsewhere that the Tower of Babel is at one with the labyrinth, an unintelligible and unmappable *spatial* condition ("Architecture Where Desire Can Live" 147-148; emphasis added). Implied here is that just as any conception of linguistic purity or wholeness is unfeasible, so postulating a space of plenitude, unity, and identity is also unviable. By means of deconstruction Derrida demonstrates the ways in which language and space are always already disjointed and *labyrinthine*. This approach stands in diametric opposition to Stillman's invocation of Eden and the Tower of Babel as loci in which language and space remained intact and transparent. Seen from a deconstructive point of view, Stillman's pursuit of an originary language is nothing but a metaphysics of presence.

It is not unequivocal that Auster's investigation of language and space bears resemblance to such a Derridean line of inquiry. Yet what is truly remarkable about

Auster's achievement in the *Trilogy* is that he, interrogating as he does how language and space are *always already* "out of joint," simultaneously scrutinizes how language and space have *historically become* "out of joint." In Chapters 1 and 2, I have suggested that Derrida's theoretical model can be supplemented by an historical and historicizing mode of thought. Something similar seems at work here: while Auster shares much commonality with deconstruction when it comes to his examination of the *metaphysics of presence* inherent in the notion of untainted language and space, he departs from such a theoretical framework and historicizes *the metaphysics of the present* that intensifies the crisis of representation. If, as Scott A. Dimovitz and John Zilcosky contend, Auster deploys postmodern and poststructural theories not in a desire to endorse them, but with a view to creating a critical space outside those theories (Dimovitz 614, 629; Zilkosky 195-197), such a creative space can be located in his effort to situate the postmodern or poststructural problematics of language and space within the historical context of the emergence of global social space.

Maps of the World and Contemporary Global Social Space

In his effort to zero in on the "contamination" of language and space and the resultant crisis of representation in the contemporary global world, Auster plays different historical periods against one another and thereby casts a fresh light on the present historical condition. It is worth mentioning in this respect that *City of Glass* incorporates into its textual space a number of maps and representations of social spaces from other

cultural texts. In so putting to work the technique of intertextuality and juxtaposition, Auster foregrounds a variety of thematics of (un)mappability and (un)representability in different historical periods and from different parts of the world and in the process brings to relief the distinctive spatial contours of the global city in which Quinn writes and walks. For instance, on the night when Quinn received the misplaced phone call from Stillman Junior, he was re-reading the first page of Marco Polo's *Travels*. Quinn reflects on the following passage in particular:

> We will set down things seen as seen, things heard as heard, so that our book may be an accurate record, free from any sort of fabrication. And all who read this book or hear it may do so with full confidence, because it contains nothing but the truth. (7)

As the book title *Le divisament dou monde* (The description of the world) implies, Marco Polo's text is a travelogue that documents his experience during his trip overseas. Regardless of its truth value or credibility, the book can be read as the European's cartography of the world during the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century. In presenting his world map, Marco Polo is never doubtful of the representability or truthfulness of the things he sees, hears, and experiences. It is quite ironic that when Quinn broods over Marco Polo's self-assured belief in the identity between words and things, he receives a phone call which signals the beginning of a series of contingent and chance events which eventually leads Quinn to the labyrinth of unrepresentability and unmappability in the contemporary world.

We are soon introduced to another map. When Quinn makes his first visit to the young Stillman, he walks by the Frick Collection and reminisces on Vermeer's paintings:

> He thought for a moment of Vermeer's *Soldier and Young Girl Smiling*,
> trying to remember the expression on the girl's face, the exact position of
> her hands around the cup, the red back of the faceless man. In his mind, he
> caught a glimpse of the blue map on the wall and the sunlight pouring
> through the window, so like the sunlight that surrounded him now. He was
> walking. He was crossing the street and moving eastward. (15)

Aside from a number of questions as to the meaning of this painting, whose hermeneutic

ambiguity is comparable to that of *Mistress and Maid*, another famous work by Vermeer

housed at the Frick, it is notable that a map is hanging on the wall behind the girl in the

painting. On the top of the map it reads: "NOVA ET ACCVRATA TOTIVS

HOLLANDIAE WESTFRISIAEQ. (VE) TOPOGRAPHIA" (New and Accurate

description of the topography of the whole Holland and of West Friesland). This asserted

accuracy and verisimilitude of the map is not dissimilar from Marco Polo's self-confident

faith in the authenticity of his cartography. As he muses over Vermeer's work, Quinn

keeps walking in Manhattan at the same time as he tries to visualize himself within the

painting. It is interesting indeed that Auster presents an "accurate" map at the very

moment when Quinn is about to begin his role as a detective (of whom some matchless

capacity to map the topography of the case under investigation is demanded). By doing

so, Auster poses the question whether Quinn charts, as Marco Polo and Vermeer do, a

"new and accurate" map and an "accurate record" of the urban space in which he is

expected to perform an investigation.

While in Marco Polo's and Vermeer's times the Europe-centered worldview was

expanded through an increased interest in non-European regions in the world or through

colonial expedition, Auster's twentieth-century postmodern globalizing world undergoes

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a quantum leap in worldwide expansion and global interconnection. Now global capital has penetrated into the entire globe and the entire realm of human life while the simultaneously territorializing and deterritorializing spatial apparatus of globalization has produced numerous hitherto unimagined social spaces.[16] Hence, the social spaces produced in the era of globalization are inevitably different from those in Marco Polo's or Vermeer's times. Since contemporary social spaces are more complexly convoluted and overdetermined, mapping and representing such spaces of necessity entails a more complicated and demanding task. Therefore, Auster recasts the problematics of representation in the contemporary world against the backdrop of the evolution of the global city of which we cannot seem to construct an accurate and clear-cut map.

Stillman Senior's attribution of the contamination of language to the disintegration of contemporary urban space is one such example that attests to some of the upshots of the development of global urban space for representation. As he explains to Quinn that his objective is to invent a new and accurate language, Stillman condemns the fragmentation of the city fabric in Manhattan:

> I have come to New York because it is the most forlorn of places, the most abject. The brokenness is everywhere, the disarray is universal. You have only to open your eyes to see it. The broken people, the broken things, the broken thoughts. The whole city is a junk heap. It suits my purpose admirably. I find the streets an endless source of material, an inexhaustible storehouse of shattered things…I give them names…I invent new names that will correspond to the things. (94)

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[16] In the previous chapters, I have touched on the spatial world system of global capitalism, deconstructive architecture, transnational diasporas, and virtual space. In the epilogue, I look at what Marc Augé terms the "non-place" by commenting on IKEA stores.

This passage reiterates Stillman's belief that the "brokenness" of language is indissociable from that of space. For Stillman, the dissociation of words from things and the resulting representational problems are at one with the spatial disjuncture of Manhattan. Auster is far from uncritical of this more or less schematic view, and yet in staging Stillman's theory, he tries to ground the seemingly ahistorical and non-contextual thematics of uncertainty, unrepresentability, and contingency within the historical disintegration of global urban space.

In relation to Stillman's perspective on the transformation of New York City into "junk heap," Rem Koolhaas's conception of postmodern urban space as "junkspace" can be instructive. In his idiosyncratic manifesto *Delirious New York*, Koolhaas analyzes the spatial organization of Manhattan and views the "Manhattan Grid" as a manifestation of modern instrumental rationality:

> The Grid is, above all, a conceptual speculation. In spite of its apparent neutrality, it implies an intellectual program for the island: in its difference to topography, to what exists, it claims the superiority of mental construction over reality. The plotting of its streets and blocks announces that the subjugation, if not obliteration, of nature is its true ambition...With its imposition, Manhattan is forever immunized against any (further) totalitarian intervention. In the single block—the largest possible area that can fall under architectural control—it develops a maximum unit of urbanistic Ego. (20)

Although Koolhaas does not necessarily disapprove of "Manhattanism" but instead finds it to be some source of exhilarating freedom and liberty, the Manhattan grid can be seen from another angle as a rationalized spatial system that imposes a geometric regularity and order upon nature. In addition, the grid is similar to the structure of exchange value by means of which disparate and heterogeneous units are made equivalent to and

exchangeable with one another. In the way the exchange system gradually liquidates use

value and reifies social relations, the grid system aspires to a highly abstracted spatial

organization. In this light, Alan Trachtenberg is right to suggest that the grid, upon which

most major American cities, with the exception of Washington, were modeled, is "a

scheme which blocked out spaces as parcels of property to be filled in at the will of the

owner" (*The Incorporation of America* 115-116). He goes on to argue, "Dividing space

into private packages for sale, for development or speculation, the grid proclaimed a rule

of profit, delineating the city as 'real estate' rather than as communal space" (116).

Despite Koolhaas's enthusiasm about New York City, the grid shares with

modern instrumental reason this potentially reifying and abstracting tendency. In this

respect, it seems more helpful to understand contemporary New York City in terms of

"junkspace," a term Koolhaas uses to describe the contemporary global social space

impoverished by the unsuccessfully finished project of modernization. Commenting on

postmodern space, he explains:

> If space-junk is the human debris that litters the universe, junk-space is the
> residue mankind leaves on the planet. The built…product of
> modernization is not modern architecture but junkspace. Junkspace is what
> remains after modernization has run its course or, more precisely, what
> coagulates while modernization is in progress, its fallout. Modernization
> had a rational program: to share the blessings of science, universally.
> Junkspace is its apotheosis, or meltdown. ("Junkspace" 408)

Koolhaas's description of junkspace brings into perspective Stillman's view of

Manhattan as a space of "disarray" and "junk heap." Such "junkspace" doubtless defies

any "accurate" or "truthful" mapping or representation. It is no accident then that unlike

Marco Polo or Vermeer, Quinn loses his bearings and feels disoriented in the global city morphed into "junkspace":

> New York was an inexhaustible space, a labyrinth of endless steps, and no matter how far he walked, no matter how well he came to know its neighborhoods and streets, it always left him with the feeling of being lost. Lost, not only in the city, but within himself as well…By wandering aimlessly, all places became equal, and it no longer mattered where he was. On his best walks, he was able to feel that he was nowhere. And this, finally, was all he ever asked of things: to be nowhere. New York was the nowhere he had built around himself and he realized that he had no intention of ever leaving it again. (*The New York Trilogy* 4)

This labyrinthine urban space gives Quinn a sense of being lost and belonging nowhere, as if to affirm Koolhaas's observation that "Junkspace is post-existential; it makes you uncertain where you are, obscures where you go, undoes where you were" ("Junkspace" 409). The Manhattan Grid has degenerated into nothing but a chaotic labyrinth and "nowhere." In such a space of disorientation and displacement, any quest for pure universal language or for the Lukácsean realist representational form is bound to fail. Therein lie Quinn's conundrum as the detective/writer and also Auster's dilemma as a postmodern writer, for both of them need to map such social space and bring it into figuration.

Some of the ramifications that this global "junkspace" and this "nowhere" have for Quinn's literary-spatial practices can be explained through the lens of *linguistic-spatial schizophrenia*. In his interpretation of historical amnesia in postmodernity, Jameson draws from Lacan's analysis of schizophrenia as a breakdown in the signifying chain and holds that just as a Lacanian schizophrenic cannot connect the syntagmatic flow of signifiers to produce or understand meaning, so the postmodern subject cannot

successfully coordinate his past, present, and future due to his inability to grasp the chain

of temporalities (*Postmodernism* 26). This interesting discussion of a temporal dimension

in schizophrenia can in turn be translated in spatial terms. Recounting his personal

experience at the Bonaventure Hotel in Los Angeles, Jameson characterizes postmodern

space as a space of disorientation:

> So I come finally to my principal point here, that this latest mutation in
> space—postmodern hyperspace—has finally succeeded in transcending
> the capacities of the individual human body to locate itself, to organize its
> immediate surroundings perceptually, and cognitively to map its position
> in a mappable external world. (44)

If we take a semiotic approach to this disorienting spatial configuration, we may

reconceptualize the disjuncture between the human subject and the surrounding space in

terms of *spatial schizophrenia*. In such a semiotic reading of space, rooms can be seen as

nouns that construct spatial sentences by pairing up with other spatial verbs (such as

corridors, doorways, stairways, elevators, and escalators) and spatial adjectives (such

ornaments as paintings, maps, curtains, and so on) (105). In that case people's

movements in that space—entering, leaving, moving up and down, etc.—can be seen as

their spatial enunciations. If space is thus transcoded in semiotic terms, one's incapacity

to spatially position himself or find his bearings can be read as a kind of schizophrenia in

the sense that just as the linguistic schizophrenic cannot form syntagmatic connections

among signs, the spatial schizophrenic cannot coordinate the spatial signifiers he

encounters.

This interrelatedness between linguistic and spatial schizophrenia helps to explain

what Quinn goes through as a writing-walking subject in postmodern urban space. Not

only does he experience a sense of spatial disorientation (as a detective) in New York

City; but he also faces the crisis of literary representation (as a writer). And these

phenomena are intimately bound up with each other. As Auster gives a picture of Quinn's

linguistic and spatial schizophrenia, so to speak, in the specific context of the historical

evolution of Manhattan, he relates together the unmappability of the global city and the

thematic of unrepresentability in postmodern narrative. In the other two novels *Ghosts*

and *The Locked Room* as well, Auster portrays New York City as a labyrinthine space

that brings into crisis the detective/writer figure's mapping of the city and his literary

production alike. In one sense all three novels can be said to highlight the global city as

the main protagonist around which the whole drama of misrecognition,

incommunicability, unrepresenttbility, contingency, disorder, and mystery evolves. Thus,

one might even say that New York City is itself the "crime" that Auster investigates

through his intricate narrative production.

The Spatial Unconscious of the Global Urban System

It is no surprise, then, that Auster's *The New York Trilogy* concentrates, perhaps

more than any other contemporary American novel, on delineating the contour of the

city. While the entire *Trilogy* draws out the complex topography of New York City by

way of depicting each main detective character's movement in the city, *City of Glass*

stands out with its exceedingly exhaustive record of Quinn's meandering in Manhattan.

After he loses track of Stillman Senior, Quinn comes to the realization that his

investigation has come to naught and aimlessly wanders:

> He walked down Broadway to 72nd Street, turned east to Central Park
> West, and followed it to 59th Street and the statue of Columbus. There he
> turned east once again, moving along Central Park South until Madison
> Avenue, and then cut right, walking downtown to Grand Central Station.
> After circling haphazardly for a few blocks, he continued south for a mile,
> came to the juncture of Broadway and Fifth Avenue at 23rd Street, paused
> to look at the Flatiron Building, and then shifted course, taking a westward
> turn until he reached Seventh Avenue, at which point he veered left and
> progressed further downtown. (127)

This meticulous detailing of Quinn's meandering goes on more than one page thereafter.

This seemingly meaningless list of places Quinn passes by guides the readers through

Manhattan's glaring streets and famous landmarks and allows them to spatially

experience the city along Quinn's itinerary.

Quinn's aimless wandering comes to a brief pause when he stops in front of the

United Nations so as to take a short rest. One of the early important constructions that

reshaped the post-World War II Manhattan skyscraper and of which Le Corbusier was a

member of the multinational board of architects (Koolhaas, *Delirious New York* 277-281),

the UN Headquarters stand as a symbol of international unity and cooperation.[17]

However, what Quinn witnesses there is in no way the organization's rosy vision of

internationalism or the neoliberalist blueprint of globalization. Instead, lying in front of

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[17] In a tone resonant with his call for "Architecture or Revolution" (*Towards a New Architecture* 289), Le Corbusier envisioned the UN as a medicine to be administered to New York's pathological urban space. As Koolhaas writes, "To Le Corbusier, this building is a medicine, bitter perhaps, but ultimately beneficial." Then he quotes Le Corbusier: "New York will not afer all crush the UN in receiving it. On the contrary, the UN will bring to a head New York's long expected crisis, through which New York will find the ways and means to resolve its urbanistic deadlock, thus effecting upon itself a startling metamorphosis, though in this case it is a providential one" (*Delirious New York* 279).

Quinn is the disarray of dystopian spectacles that poignantly attests to the pulverizing

effects of globalization on the city and its underprivileged dwellers:

> Today, as never before: the tramps, the down-and-outs, the shopping-bag
> ladies, the drifters and drunks. They range from the merely destitute to the
> wretchedly broken. Wherever you turn, they are there, in good
> neighborhoods and bad…For every soul lost in this particular hell, there
> are several others locked inside their madness—unable to exit to the world
> that stands at the threshold of their bodies. Even though they seem to be
> there, they cannot be counted as present. (131)

The postmodern global urban space thus foregrounded exemplifies how global capital

creates a Third World within the First World and impoverishes both urban space and

people therein. In spite of its status as a Mecca for global finance capital, New York is

also a space of inexorbitant brokenness and suffering.

Paradoxical as though this may sound, it is one of the defining characteristics of

global spatial production today. As David Harvey theorizes in *Spaces of Global*

Capitalism, global capitalism, while it gestures toward the standardization and

destratification of the world market, capitalizes on uneven geographical development. He

describes such a simultaneous process of geographical centralization and dispersal as "the

perpetual instability within the geographical landscape of capitalism" (98). In a similar

vein, Saskia Sassen holds that while global cities are fractured by dematerialized finance

capital and its post-spatial network of temporal simultaneity, they are also instantiated

and governed by "capital fixity" and the latter's regulatory spatiotemporal apparatus. So

she argues, "Replete with such regulatory fractures, global cities include dense and

complex borderlands marked by the intersection of multiple spatiotemporal (dis)orders"

(221). Resonant with Jameson's analysis of the antinomies of postmodern globalization,

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Adorno's and Deleuze's diagnosis of (non)identity in capitalism, and Hardt and Negri's theorization of the (de)territorializing apparatus of Empire,[18] Harvey's theory of (un)even geographical development and Sassen's spatiotemporal (dis)order point to the spatial contradictions of globalization. Auster's depiction of the global city in *The New York Trilogy* gives expression to such contradictions in global spatial production and relates the crisis of literary representation to the insurmountable difficulty of representing the convoluted and contradictory spatial apparatus of globalization.

Reflecting on the impoverished urban space that spreads out before his eyes, Quinn recites Baudelaire: "Il me semble que je serais toujours bien là où je ne suis pas. In other words: It seems to me that I will always be happy in the place where I am not. Or, more bluntly: Wherever I am not is the place where I am myself. Or else, taking the bull by the horns: Anywhere out of the world" (132). Quinn's evocation of Baudelaire notwithstanding, in this postmodern global city, the kind of excitements many modernists had about the modern city seem to have evaporated into the air, while the revolutionary modernist utopian urbanism now rings hollow. The contradictory spatial production of contemporary globalization intensifies to a historically unparalleled degree the incommensurability between the subject's lived experience (*Erscheinung*) and the abstract global world system (*Wesen*).[19] In consequence, it becomes increasingly difficult for one to find his bearings and "cognitively map" the complex spatial network of

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[18] For my analyses of these contradictions of global capitalism, see Chapters 1 and 2, above.
[19] Lukács's *The Theory of the Novel* offers a perceptive and thoroughgoing analysis of the gap between *Wesen* (essence) and *Erscheinung* (appearance) in realism. For Jameson's reformulation of Lukács's framework, see his discussion of realism, modernism, and postmodernism in "Cognitive Mapping" (277-280).

globalization. At the very end of the text, Auster offers a glimpse of the globalized social reality of the world today:

> If it was not night now, he thought, then night would come later. That was certain, and whether he looked out the window or not, the answer would be the same. On the other hand, if it was in fact night here in New York, then surely the sun was shinning somewhere else. In China, for example, it was no doubt mid-afternoon, and the rice farmers were mopping sweat from their brows. Night and day were no more than relative terms; they did not refer to an absolute condition. At any given moment, it was always both. The only reason we did not know it was because we could not be in two places at the same time. (152)

Not dissimilar to Baudelaire's poetic persona in "Any where out of the world: N'importe où hors du monde," Quinn daydreams about the other side of the globe. These seemingly arbitrary reflections nevertheless touch the fundamental nature of social reality in the globalized economy. The site of Quinn's everyday life is New York, but the ultimate determinants of the contemporary world are dispersed around the globe and based on the systemic yet decentered transnational division of labor. Quinn's intellectual work as a mystery story writer as well as the flourishing of finance capital in Manhattan is interconnected with and underpinned by people's labor in foreign countries such as China, the world's gigantic industrial powerhouse. Such a globalized social reality radically challenges and relativizes traditional notions of geographical space or national boundary as an "absolute condition."

The development of the convoluted spatial network of the global economy and the widening gap between one's lived experience (*Erscheinung*) and the fundamental material determinants (*Wesen*)—it is perhaps against this backdrop that Quinn's sense of disorientation can be examined:

> Quinn was nowhere now. He had nothing, he knew nothing, he knew that
> he knew nothing. Not only had he been sent back to the beginning, he was
> now before the beginning, and so far before the beginning that it was
> worse than any end he could imagine. (124)

Toward the end of the novel, Quinn becomes temporally and spatially disoriented.

Quinn's inability to temporally coordinate what has happened to him from the

"beginning" to the "end" is a correlate of his incapacity to spatially map the global city

(and, by extension, the spatial world system) in which he finds himself caught. It is

needless to say that this temporal and spatial disorientation affects his capacity to narrate

and represent such a reality. It is not a mere coincidence, then, that he cannot complete

his investigation but instead disappears, leaving behind only his fragmentary notes which

later become the basis of *City of Glass*. While, as Madeleine Sorapure suggests, Quinn

neither aspires to nor achieves a perspective above or beyond the case he investigates

(83), Auster relates it to the detective's incapability to cognitively map and represent the

global city in which he undertakes his investigation. In that sense, it is arguable that the

representational difficulty Auster thematizes in the *Trilogy* is in large part embedded in

the drastic spatial reconfigurations of the world in the age of globalization. Insofar as

Auster thus contextualizes unrepresentability (as well as other customary postmodern

thematics such as *différance*, contingency, multiplicity, decentered subjectivity, and so

on) within the very history of global spatial production, his poetics of the global city is

not to be simply disregarded as being unhistorical. To the contrary, he brings into view

the *spatial unconscious* of globalization while also illustrating the ways in which the

contradictory spatial dynamics of global capitalism have been disregarded and even

repressed in many postmodern thematics and general scholarship on postmodernism as well.

Taking the global city as a locus in which literary, spatial, and economic production in postmodernity is indissociably yet complexly interconnected, Auster examines how the global economy produces its unique urban system and how this spatial production in turn transforms the conventional representational form of detective fiction. While thus laying an emphasis on the dynamic interplay between space and narrative, he formulates his labyrinthine poetics of the global city. In doing so, he powerfully dramatizes the unrepresentability or unmappability of the fragmented social reality in the globalizing world. In this regard, the ending of the text is quite suggestive. In a way similar to Poe's symbolic use of whiteness for hermeneutic undecidability in *A. Gordon Pym* or to his own ambiguous ending in "White Spaces,"[20] Auster concludes his investigation of labyrinthine global space and narrative like so: "The city was entirely white now, and the snow kept falling, as though it would never end" (158).

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[20] "White Spaces" ends in the following way: "And the immense journey through space that continues. Everywhere, as if each place were here. And the snow falling endlessly in the winter night" (*Collected Poems* 162).

EPILOGUE

THE DIALECTIC OF NON-PLACE AND NO-PLACE
Toward a New Social Space to Come

The American Scene and Learning from IKEA

On February 18, 2009, Swedish furniture retailer IKEA opened in Charlotte its first store in the Carolinas. It was a long-awaited grand opening for many Carolinians who had willingly traveled all the way to Woodbridge, Virginia or Atlanta, Georgia to shop for IKEA products and had petitioned, online and offline, in hopes of bringing an IKEA store to their region. There is something ironic, one may think, about this local fervor about IKEA, especially given that North Carolina had until recently manufactured more than sixty percent of all U.S. furniture and thirty-five percent of all home furniture in the world (Shapiro xiii). While the Tar Heel state's furniture industry gradually lost its glorious splendor, IKEA has meanwhile become the world's largest furniture manufacturer with 296 stores operating in 36 countries.[1] The enormous popularity of the transnational company has thus left somewhat lusterless the Carolinians' regional localism and, if to a lesser degree, the Americans' zealous patriotism fostered after September 11, 2001.

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[1] IKEA Homepage. www.ikea.com

The success of IKEA owes a great deal to what the company calls "the IKEA idea," the ultimate objective of which is to offer a wide variety of well-designed, high-quality home furnishing products at affordable prices for everyone. Such a consumer-friendly and "democratized" idea is encapsulated in the words of the founder of the company, Ingvar Kamprad: "a functional and good article *does not* have to be expensive" (Kamprad 227).[2] Indeed, IKEA products are inexpensive *but* fine-looking—a rare combination in the furniture industry, made possible in part by foregrounding some chic "European flair" and backgrounding the real sites of production, China being chief among them. Besides, an attractive finishing touch is added to this "IKEA style" by the company's innovative concept of flat pack form that helps significantly minimize the cost of packaging and handling and has the bonus of making the consumers experience the pleasure of quasi-craftsmanship and achievement in the simple process of assembling their purchased commodities.

The novelty of the IKEA style as a cultural form resides not just in what products they make and how they manufacture them but also in the way that they turn their irresistibly charming stores into a unique site of consumption and entertainment. That is to say, it is the innovative organization of the very *topography* of shopping and consumption that polishes and perfects the "IKEA style." A comparison with conventional furniture stores such as those in Hickory or High Point, North Carolina will

[2] More specifically, Kamprad notes, "All nations and societies in both the East and West spend a disproportionate amount of their resources on satisfying a minority of the population. In our line of business, for example, far too many of the fine designs and new ideas are reserved for a small circle of the affluent. That situation has influenced the formulation of our objectives" (228). He goes on to relate the "IKEA spirit" to democratization (229).

perhaps better illustrate how IKEA offers a distinctive *spatial* form of shopping experience. IKEA stores are almost invariably designed and organized as a "one-way" layout that showcases a multiplicity of furniture showrooms ranging from bedroom, living room, bathroom and kitchen to storage closet, office space, and children's playroom, fully furnished and meticulously decorated. While such linear, *syntagmatic* signification of the built space constitutes one axis of the spatial organization of the IKEA stores, another axis is also present—a *paradigmatic* axis comprised of areas where shoppers can modify and embellish the already given spatial *énonciation* by substituting numerous interchangeable items for those used in the showrooms. Through such an intricate spatial coordination of the consumption space along the syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes, IKEA stores generate seemingly interminable combinations or permutations of styles. The "totalizing" scope of the commodities sold at IKEA stores is such that we might have the illusion that almost every fundamental commodity we need in our living space is here. Befittingly, IKEA's self-proclaimed ultimate goal is "to create a better *everyday life* for the many people" (Kamprad 228; my italics). In accordance with such a spirit that replicates the *biopolitical* production of global capital,[3] IKEA

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[3] I have in mind Hardt and Negri's description of the biopolitical nature of Empire here. They expand on Foucault's work on biopower and argue that the new paradigm of power, which they call Empire, has now under its command the entire life of people. They write: "Biopower is a form of power that regulates social life from its interior, following it, interpreting it, absorbing it, and rearticulating it. Power can achieve an effective command over the entire life of the population only when it becomes an integral, vital function that every individual embraces and reactivates of his or her own accord. As Foucault says, 'Life has now become…an object of power.' The highest function of this power is to invest life through and through, and its primary task is to administer life" (*Empire* 24). I would like to suggest that Foucault's concept of biopolitical power resonates, unexpectedly, with Adorno's reflections on the Culture Industry and the resulting "administered life." For Adorno's view, see *Minima Moralia* (15). See also my discussion in Chapter 2, above.

displays aesthetically beautiful yet affordable ways of life as spectacles and thereby seeks

to restructure everyday life *à la* the all-encompassing "IKEA style." (The company has

also launched "IKEA Food" and added a restaurant and a grocery section to each IKEA

store, so now you can also satisfy your gastronomic desires in the "IKEA style.")

While the IKEA style thus purports to produce and reproduce everyday life in its

entirety and showcases a new spatial form of commodified spectacles, the outer form of

IKEA stores also catches our attention. With few exceptions, IKEA designs its stores

worldwide as huge two-storey blue buildings with a yellow "IKEA" sign. Adorned with

the two colors from Sweden's national flag, the flat, rectangular architectural space

represents, tellingly enough, the company's logo. We know from Hegel and Heidegger

that architecture is not a representational art and does not represent the outside world or

the referent (Hegel, *Aesthetics* 188-189; Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art" 40).

To be sure, the built form of IKEA stores cannot by any means be said to represent its

exterior. Even though, as Peter Eisenman observes, American shopping malls often

recreate "the aura of the authenticised object" by simulating the arcades of the 19th

century or the classic American "main street" ("Architecture and the Crisis of Reality"

38), the IKEA stores do not adhere to such a principle either. What we have instead is a

highly abstracted and de-contextualized architectural form. Or alternatively, we have a

new form of *realism*, if we can call it that, insofar as the outer form of each IKEA store

represents and corresponds exactly to the company's logo itself.

In other words, as an original site of consumption, IKEA presents an architectural

form transfigured into a logofied image itself. In this sense, we can account for IKEA's

spatial form in relation to the problem of the logo in the postmodern global society of the spectacle. As Susan Willis demonstrates in "Learning from the Bananas," the logo, as a highly abstracted and reified commodity form, is symptomatic of production under global capitalism, in which everything specific and concrete about the real sites of production is excised and repressed. As Willis studies the logos on the bananas in American supermarkets or the evolution of Mickey Mouse into a logo character, she remarks that "the abstract design of the logo…makes less real the site of production as an actual place complete with a history and a people" (*A Primer for Daily Life* 52). While she conducts such a symptomal reading of the "derealized" logo in late capitalist consumer society, Willis touches on another related concept, "theming," that is of some relevance to our understanding of contemporary cultural production. In her analysis of the spectacular parades of historical images and themes put together and recycled at Disneyland, she writes, "Real histories and places are of no concern at Disneyland; rather, it is assembled out of all the signifying bits already defined within the terrain of popular culture as references of time and place, but emptied of real history. The best word I know to describe the process of putting texts together its 'theming'" (56). Resonant with Naomi Klein's provocative call for "No Logo," Guy Debord's analysis of image production as the final stage of commodification, and even Jean Baudrillard's notion of the simulacra as being more real than reality in consumer society,[4] Willis' astute reading of the logo and

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[4] This refers to Klein's book *No Logo*, Debord's *Society of the Spectacle*, and Baudrillard's *Simulation and Simulacra*.

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"theming" casts a new light on the de-historicized and de-materialized nature of contemporary cultural production.

Recast in the critical framework Willis develops in her work on U.S. commodity and image culture, the IKEA store seems to embody a logofied and imagified space of the spectacle and to enact a derealization of production even on architectural and spatial levels. In light of such spatial production, it is suggestive that, as one article in the *Los Angeles Times* describes, people in Beijing pay a visit to their newly opened local IKEA store as they would go to a tourist attraction site, at times posing for photographs in the beautifully furnished rooms and at others even taking a nap on the displayed sofas or beds ("Beijing Loves IKEA," Aug 25, 2009). Such a phenomenon can be taken as an index of the degree to which IKEA stores turn themselves into a kind of amusement theme park filled with glamorous commodities and spectacles. Insofar as the IKEA style thus exemplifies an intensively logofied and imagified spatial production in globalization without any critical and ironical distance from the commodified world, Robert Venturi's catchphrase of learning from the "commercial vernacular" of Las Vegas (Venturi et al. 6) perhaps needs to be updated by incorporating into its miscellaneous lexicons the slogan, "learning from IKEA."

If the architectural space of IKEA, while articulating itself as a *parole* of the "commercial vernacular," distances itself from the real sites of production, it is quite ironic that the brand name "IKEA" was originally formed from the initials of the founder's name (Ingvar Kamprad) and the first letters of Elmtaryd and Agunnaryd, the farm and village in which he grew up. Where the IKEA store have lost this concrete

spatial connection and attachment that Kamprad had with his surroundings, and now stand instead as self-enclosed and self-referring spaces, it is suggestive that like many other shopping malls, they are without windows. The IKEA stores simultaneously dispel the Corbusean notion of the expressive correspondence between a built space and its outer form and emphasize their isolation from the cityscape in which they are located. To invoke Adorno's "windowless monad," Mallarmé's pure formalism, or Manfredo Tafuri's "pure architecture" as a way to characterize such a space would perhaps be of little relevance or even pointless,[5] so long as the self-confinement of IKEA stores, instead of embodying the contestatory or subversive spirit of modernism proper, replicates the logic of the market.

Rather, it might be useful to use Marc Augé's notion of "non-place" as a way to classify such a sealed-off and self-contained space. Augé locates the defining character of globalization or "supermodernity" as he calls it in contemporary spaces of transit such as shopping malls, motorways, airports, and hotels, among others, in which people have only to interact with spectacles or signs and do not develop a sense of belonging as they do with "places." These "non-places," Augé explains, do not relate themselves to their outside but only create solitude and similitude (*Non-Places* 107). In *Supermodernism: Architecture in the Age of Globalization*, Hans Ibelings similarly finds the essential characteristics of contemporary spatial production in "an architecture that refers to nothing outside itself" (89-94), while Rem Koolhaas describes such a built form as an

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[5] Chapter 2, above, looks at Adorno's and Deleuze's philosophical forms in terms of the Mallarméan white space of writing or what Roland Barthes calls "writing degree zero." For Tafuri's view on "pure architecture," see his *Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Developoment*, especially, pp. ix-x.

"architecture cut loose from its moorings" (*S, M, L, XL* 365). As a way to bring into relief the de-contextualized and self-enclosed nature of transnational spatial production, as exemplified in IKEA, let me briefly dwell on another landmark building in North Carolina which is not far from the IKEA store in Charlotte and our "experience" of which consists predominantly in our act of moving along the spatial trajectory of the built space and consuming nicely furnished and decorated rooms and spectacles.

What I have in mind is Biltmore House in Asheville. Designed by the founder of the American Institute of Architects, Richard Morris Hunt, Biltmore has, since its completion in 1895, been one of the best-known buildings in the U.S. Henry James visits this place in early February in 1905 during his exploration of the "American scene" and describes it as a "castle of enchantment" (*The American Scene* 396). What captivates the great writer's attention the most is the isolated nature of the house vis-à-vis its surrounding neighborhood. He writes, "Vast brackets, applied, as it were, to the very face of nature, enclosed and rounded this felicity; which was no more of the texture of the general Southern stuff than a patch of old brocade would be of the woof of the native homespun" (396). Further on in the same page he calls the house a "vast parenthetic Carolinian demonstration" (396-397). Virtually contemporaneous with Husserl's phenomenological *epoché* or bracketing, James's mention of "brackets" or "parenthetic" here underscores the self-enclosed nature of the "modern miracle" (396), as he admiringly describes Biltmore House. The landscape designer for the house, Frederick Law Olmstead, too, highlights the spatial dissociation of Biltmore from its exterior when he says, "the visitor passes with an abrupt transition into the enclosure of the trim, level,

open, airy, spacious, thoroughly artificial Court, and the Residence…breaks suddenly and fully upon him" (qtd. in Beveridge and Rocheleau 230). The construction of the castle as a monadic enclave seems not inadvertent when consideration is given to the fact that the patron of the house, George Washington Vanderbilt, turned away from his family business of shipping and railroads—i.e. the business of connecting various parts of the nation and the world—toward artistic and cultural pursuits because of his introverted and shy disposition (Hewitt 2). (The stark contrast between George Vanderbilt and the railroad tycoon and family patriarch, "The Commodore" Cornelius Vanderbilt—tellingly captured in James McNeill Whistler's pale portraiture of the former and the grandiose statue of the "founder of the New York Central Lines" at the New York Grand Central Terminal—might be seen as a cipher of the gradual dissolution of the entrepreneurial type of autonomous subjectivity in the Gilded Age.)

Apropos of the relationship between Biltmore House and its outside, it is noteworthy that the castle is modeled upon France's Loire Valley chateaux. Although not completely identical (or perhaps opposed in spirit) to other typically modernist attempts to evoke pre-modern and non-commodified elements—Heidegger's insistence on the Earth and "dwelling"; Wagner's and Stravinsky's incorporation of archaic and mystical elements; Picasso's so-called African period; Pound's and Eliot's respective reference to traditional Chinese and European cultural heritages; and even the desperate escape into the secluded countryside called "Snow Country" in Kawabata Yasunari's *Yukiguni*, to cite but a few eminent examples—Biltmore's "quotation" of European aristocratic culture

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marks, if not its "overcoming" of, then at least its (regressive) distanciation from, the baleful force of the commodifying modern world.

This incongruous relationship Biltmore House has with its surrounding other can perhaps be situated in the larger historical context of the spatial tensions between part and whole, between interior and exterior in the Gilded Age of which Olmsted's other famous projects may serve as notable symbolic acts. One example would be Central Park in Manhattan. As Alan Trachtenberg expounds in *The Incorporation of America*, Olmsted conceived of the park as a mediatory space or a "middle ground" at the historical juncture at which there emerged an increasing chasm between public and private spaces. Olmsted's proposal for the park was intended to function as an antidote to the "fractured urban world," that is, the disintegration or "splitting of the city into places of work…and of residence" (108). While Olmsted's blueprint for Central Park thus gives figuration to the relationship between a built space and its exterior in terms of the split between "domestic" and "commercial" spheres, his designing (together with Daniel Burnham, among others) of the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893 stands as a *locus classicus* in which the layout of the vast exposition site serves as a spatial allegory of the newly emerging American empire's position in and relations with the world.

If built spaces in the Gilded Age, such as Biltmore, Central Park and the Chicago Exposition, thus register and work out a host of interrelated contradictions pertaining to the gradual dissociation between the interior and the exterior, the private and the public, and the national and the international, we may ask how IKEA's self-referential "non-place" and, by extension, contemporary global space alleogorize such social, historical,

and cultural problematics. If, according to Henri Lefebvre, every society produces its

own social spaces (*The Production of Space* 53), then what distinctive social spaces does

the contemporary globalizing world engender and what insights, if any, can those spaces

in turn offer into socially, historically, and culturally original dimensions of

contemporary society? No less important, how does our understanding of globalization

and its complex spatial production reconfigure contemporary American culture? In short,

how does global spatial production inform and transform contemporary American

cultural production?

Totality and Space as the Repressed of Global American Culture

Turning on this interrelated set of questions, my project has charted some of the

ramifications of globalization for contemporary American culture with particular

attention to the relationship between global social space and cultural forms. One of the

reasons that I started my concluding epilogue with loosely connected reflections on IKEA

stores and some landmark architectural forms in American history is that there is some

sense in which globalized American culture (as much as global spatial production) has

itself become a "non-place." As culmination of the Culture Industry (Adorno) and "the

land of Disney and McDonald's" (Chow 14), America seems in many respects to embody

a vast "non-place" of commodification and derealization and also to be the least

interested in and curious about its outside and its Other. The cultural monolingualism of

the country (behind its efflorescence of cultural difference and heterogeneity) is such that

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it looks as if the entire social and cultural fabric were an extension of the monadic

structure of the Bonaventure Hotel which Jean Baudrillard describes in his travelogue

America:

> No interior/exterior interface. The glass facades merely reflect the
> environment, sending back its own image. This makes them much more
> formidable than any wall of stone. It's just like people who wear dark
> glasses. Their eyes are hidden and others see only their own reflection.
> Everywhere the transparency of interfaces ends in internal refraction.
> Everything pretentiously termed "communication" and "interaction"—
> walkman, dark glasses, automatic household appliances, hi-tech cars, even
> the perpetual dialogue with the computer—ends up with each monad
> retreating into the shade of its own formula, into its self-regulating little
> corner and its artificial immunity. (59-60)

Such a monadization and derealization in American culture which perplexes even the

countryman Jameson (*Postmodernism* 38-44) leads Baudrillard to write, famously yet

somewhat hyperbolically, that "Disneyland exists in order to hide that it is the 'real'

country, all of 'real' America that is Disneyland" (*Simulacra and Simulation* 12). Rather

simply put, my object of study in this dissertation has been none other than this

Disneyfied monadic structure of contemporary American culture that has forgotten or

repressed its connection with the Other, whether it be the rest of the globe or, simply,

history itself.

The self-confined closure of American cultural production or that which Thomas

Pynchon describes as the "exitlessness" and "the absence of surprise to life" in *The

Crying of Lot 49* (141) has been called into doubt with the advent of the global or

transnational turn in American studies. Through the lens of globality, worlding, deep time,

planetarity, and the like, many Americanists have reinvestigated what has hitherto been

repressed in America and her culture. Meaningful and significant though these approaches are, especially when it comes to bringing to attention the unconscious of American culture and invoking the uncanny return of the cultural other, it remains paradoxical that their expanding and even totalizing horizons of thought often fail to grapple with the totalizing logic of global capitalism. Without addressing the way in which the late stage of capitalism brings the entire world into its totalizing grip, and without taking into account the privileged position of the U.S. in that worldwide process, the call for globalizing, worlding, and planetarizing America risks becoming another updated version of yesteryear's postmodern slogans of difference, heterogeneity, and hybridity. In other words, if we fail to grasp global capitalism in its totality and its historical specificity at the very moment when every corner and cranny of the world is penetrated by "the capitalist system's increasingly integrative trend" (Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* 166) or by "*integrated (or rather integrating) world capitalism*" (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 492), there is no such thing as the uncanny return of the other. Rather, as the IKEA's Disneyfied spaces testify, in a historical situation in which the supposedly different and therefore "uncanny" global Other has also been Americanized in the late capitalist world system of stasis and identity, there is nothing but a return of the familiar and of the same. It is such dimensions of identity and totality in global capitalism that we also need to interrogate as we invoke the global or even planetary vision of difference and relationality.

My study has tried to simultaneously draw on and go against the transnational or global turn in American studies, and proposed to read contemporary American culture in

the context of the historical specificity of the global spatial world system. Chapters 1 and 2 accordingly read Jameson, Adorno, and Deleuze while laying a particular emphasis on the different ways that these thinkers intervene in the structural contradictions of contemporary cultural production through non-dogmatic notions of totality. Jameson uses the idea of "absent totality" to map the totality of global capitalism without falling into the pitfall of ontologization and eschatology. Adorno's critique of "the all-subjugating identity principle" (*Negative Dialectics* 320) does not prevent him from engaging with "the totality of the culture industry" in late capitalism in general and in American culture in particular (*Dialectic of Enlightenment* 126), while Deleuze, despite his philosophy of difference and repetition, conceptualizes "fragmentary totalities" (*What Is Philosophy?* 23) and tackles "the single world market" (*Negotiations* 152). Such critical reexamination of totality enables these thinkers to theorize the simultaneously centralizing and decentralizing, territorializing and deterritorializing logic of global capitalism. By bringing into conversation their different yet related theoretical discourses, the first two chapters of this dissertation have argued that in order to properly understand global culture, we need such a stereoscopic perspective that delves into the structural contradictions of global capitalism; and that the widespread aversion to totality that oftentimes represses the totalizing aspects of globalization constitutes the foremost political unconscious of global America.

I have also suggested in the preceding pages that to address the totality of globalization in its *historical* specificity means coming to terms with its totalizing *spatial* configurations. As my discussion of Jameson in Chapter 1 shows, space has become a

cultural dominant in global postmodernity in part because late capitalism seeks to "resolve" its structural contradictions through its spatial reorganization, a process that brings about the acceleration of the flow of capital and labor through its centralized and decentralized, spatial and post-spatial network; and also in part because the more or less completed process of modernization in postmodernity has eclipsed the quintessentially modernist sense of history, deep time, and the Bergsonian *longue durée*. This being the case, however, there is a dearth of work in globalized or planetarized American studies that deals with the totalizing spatial apparatus of contemporary globalization. Hence, while proposing to place the notion of totality back on the agenda of global/American cultural studies, my project also takes space as a privileged yet *repressed* site of contemporary cultural production in which the historically original characteristics of the global phase of capitalism are most profoundly discernible; and also in which the structural contradictions of global capitalism most saliently manifest themselves.

In addressing the significance of space in globalization, I have deliberately selected contemporary innovative cultural forms that can be said to be embedded in transnational spatial production in at least two senses. First, the production and circulation of these forms are inconceivable without transnational cultural exchange. All the cultural objects I have discussed—literary theory, deconstructive architecture, shopping mall, spatial music, video art, diasporic writing, postmodern detective fiction, the cyberpunk novel—inscribe into their very *forms* the traces and marks of U.S. transnational and transcultural exchange with the rest of the world. In this regard these cultural texts do not have one fixed national origin and instead register through their

forms the transnational or global dimension of cultural production in the world today.

Thus the study of these cultural forms cannot but be transnational and even planetary, and

such an interrogation of transnational cultural *forms*, I argue, needs to be on the agenda of

future planetary American studies.

Second, the texts I have opted for give presentation to various social spaces

produced within the intricate spatial system of contemporary globalization. The

theoretical discourses of Jameson, Derrida, Adorno, and Deleuze, as examined in the first

two sections of this study, register and intervene in the spatial turn in the emergence of

the global world system in one way or another, while their idiosyncratic forms of

philosophizing (Jameson's cognitive mapping, Derrida's deconstruction, Adorno's

twelve-tone philosophy, and Deleuze's philosophical smooth space) attest to the

spatializing aspects of contemporary thinking. Although not discussed side by side, both

Peter Eisenman's deconstructive architecture and the "non-place" of IKEA stores

vehiculate some of the contradictions of contemporary architectural space: they claim to

be non-spatial, autonomous, and de-materialized but are in reality rooted in various

material and spatial constraints and determinants of global capital. Whereas these built

forms disengage themselves from the outside and do not relate to the surrounding cities,

Paul Auster's detective fictions bring into figuration the evolution of the global city. As

Auster explores the postmodern thematics of indeterminacy, contingency, and

heterogeneity, he contextualizes such supposedly ahistorical elements within the

development of the simultaneously centralizing and decentralizing spatial world system

in which global cities such as New York City are inextricably entangled with one

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another. Similarly, Nam June Paik and Theresa Hak Kyung Cha foreground transnational diasporas, another social space produced in the era of globalization. Their multimedia art forms challenge the traditional understanding of postmodern art and illustrate how their supposedly ahistorical, spatialized art forms are entwined with the very history of their transnational migration and diasporic dislocation.

Cartographies of a New World to Come

In dealing with various cultural forms in conjunction with contemporary social space, I have tried to interpret cultural texts as *symbolic acts* that come to terms with and work out the convoluted and even contradictory spatial configurations of globalization. As I have thus mediated cultural/textual production and global spatial production, I have attempted to situate the "non-place" of contemporary American culture within the specific history and geography of the contemporary global world system. Regarding my cartography of global social space and cultural forms, however, I would like to add, self-consciously, Oscar Wilde's remark that "A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at, for it leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always landing" (*The Soul of Man under Socialism* 141). Even though not always explicitly pronounced in the preceding chapters, it must be stressed that all cultural texts scrutinized here and their intricate maps of diverse social and cultural "non-places" *do* include Utopian dimensions. Indeed, those theorists, writers, and artists whom I engage are all exquisite cartographers and their maps of the world are indicative of their

unwavering faith in Utopia, whether it be Jameson's urgent call for negative Utopia, Derrida's "messianicity without messianism," Adorno's imperative to send a message of hope in a bottle, Deleuze's invocation of a new world to come, Eisenman's construction of "blurred zones" and "interstitiality," Paik's vision of global symphony, Cha's resurrection of *temps morts*, or Auster's epiphany about the global interconnection. It also bears repeating that while these cartographers concern themselves with the "non-place" or "temps morts" of the world today, their Utopian desire is by and large expressed in *spatial* terms: by means of their spatialized textual forms, they offer us a dazzling, albeit ephemeral, glimpse of something other than what is, something that moves beyond the *hic et nunc*. Utopia thus imagined is not, all these visionary cartographers seem to teach us, a certain state of *being* we can somehow attain some day; it is, rather, a constant process of *becoming*, a process which Jameson and Derrida in different contexts call "permanent revolution" (*Marxism and Form* 362) and "perpetual revolution" (*Learning to Live Finally* 31) respectively. Or we may characterize that unceasing process in the stunning words of Cha: "Our destination is fixed on the perpetual motion of search. Fixed in its perpetual exile" (*Dictée* 81).

In more than a mere figurative or metaphorical sense, the people populating my textual space are, like myself, "in exile" in the social, cultural, and historical terrains of the U.S. I concur with Julia Kristeva that "Our present age is one of exile. How can one avoid sinking into the mire of common sense, if not by becoming a stranger to one's own country, language, sex and identity? Writing is impossible without some kind of exile" (298). On a similar note, I would also endorse Trinh Minh-Ha's remarks that "For a

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number of writers in exile, the true home is to be found not in houses, but in writing…[E]xile, despite its profound sadness, can be worked through as an experience of crossing boundaries and charting new ground in defiance of newly authorized or old canonical enclosures" ("Other than Myself/my other self" 16). In some way or other, all the people I have discussed in the dissertation are strangers and foreigners in exile. Even when they are Americans, they seem to find a true home in thinking, writing, and creating in a foreign language as it were, thereby dismantling the *Heim* of their national language and culture.

Through their iridescent cartographies of the present, all of my interlocutors-navigators thus insist upon becoming strangers to one's own country and foreigners in one's own language, in a way analogous to Deleuze's invocation of "becoming-minor" (*Kafka* 27), Spivak's planetary vision of becoming "foreign speakers (*Fremdsprächig*)" (*Death of a Discipline* 22), and Adorno's imperative "not to be at home in one's home" (qtd. in Said, "Reflections on Exile" 185). In doing so, they draw out the windless historical, social, and cultural closures of the present, constantly striving to call forth a new social space to come. In this sense, their delineations of sundry ideological *non-places* of the present historical conjuncture are the sites where their imagining of *no-place* (Utopia) as the absolute negation of the present system takes place. By mapping none other than *this* history, *this* space, to which we are all in thrall, those luminous cartographers of contemporary social space and cultural forms all aspire to dis-joint the *Heim* of global America and to summon forth a *new America to come*. As a way to stress this intertwining of *non-place* and *no-place* in the prismatic maps of the world charted in

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their hands, it seems to me fitting to conclude this study by invoking Jameson's

observation about Utopia once again:

> Utopia's deepest subject, and the source of all that is most vibrantly political about it, is precisely our inability to conceive it, our incapacity to produce it as a vision, our failure to project the Other of what is, a failure that, as with fireworks dissolving back into the night sky, must once again leave us alone with *this* history. ("Of Islands and Trenches" 101)

Figures
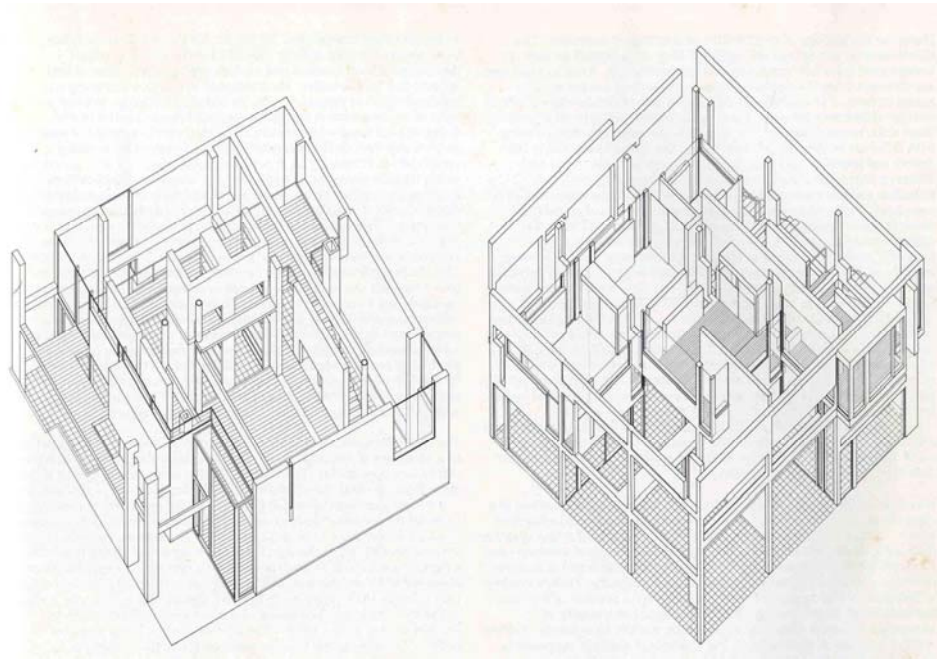
Figure 1. 1. Peter Eisenman, House I and House II
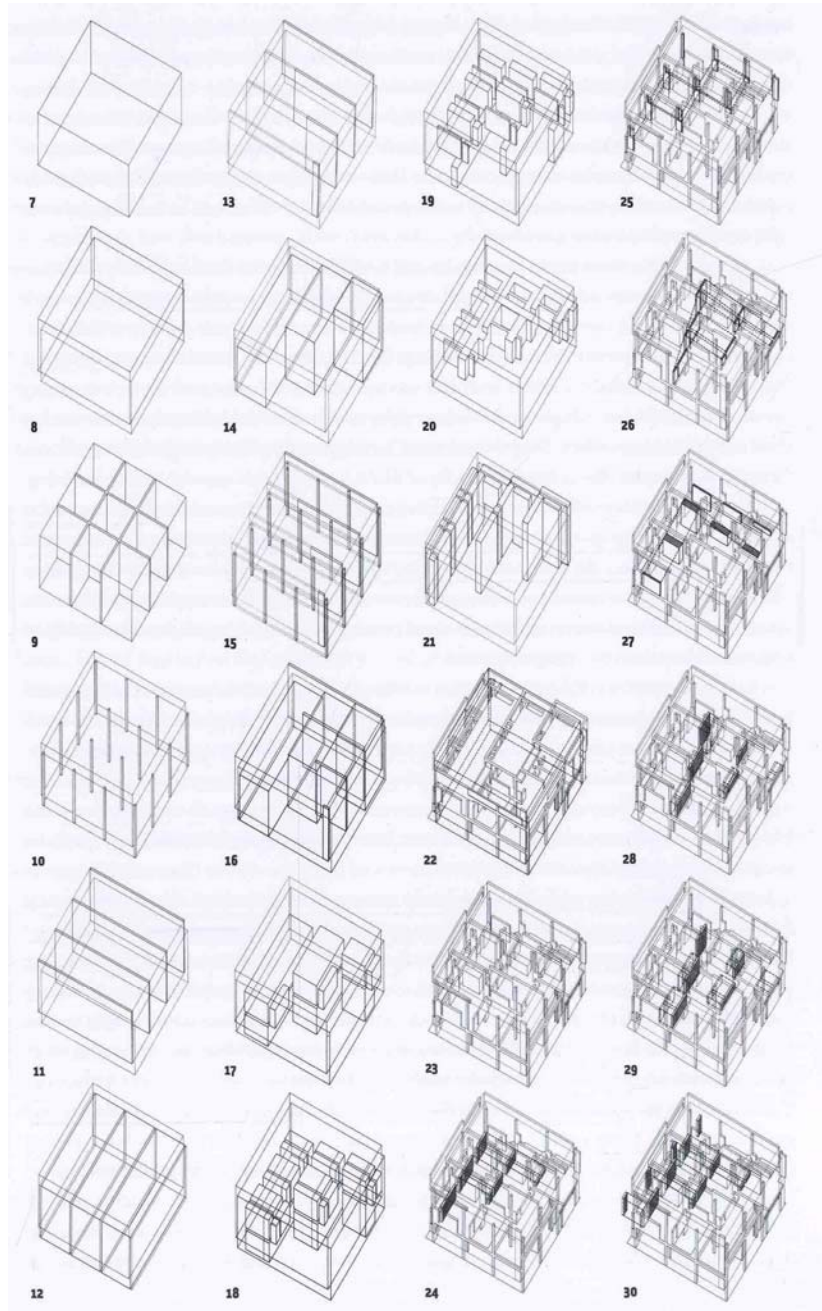
Figure 1. 2. Peter Eisenman, House II
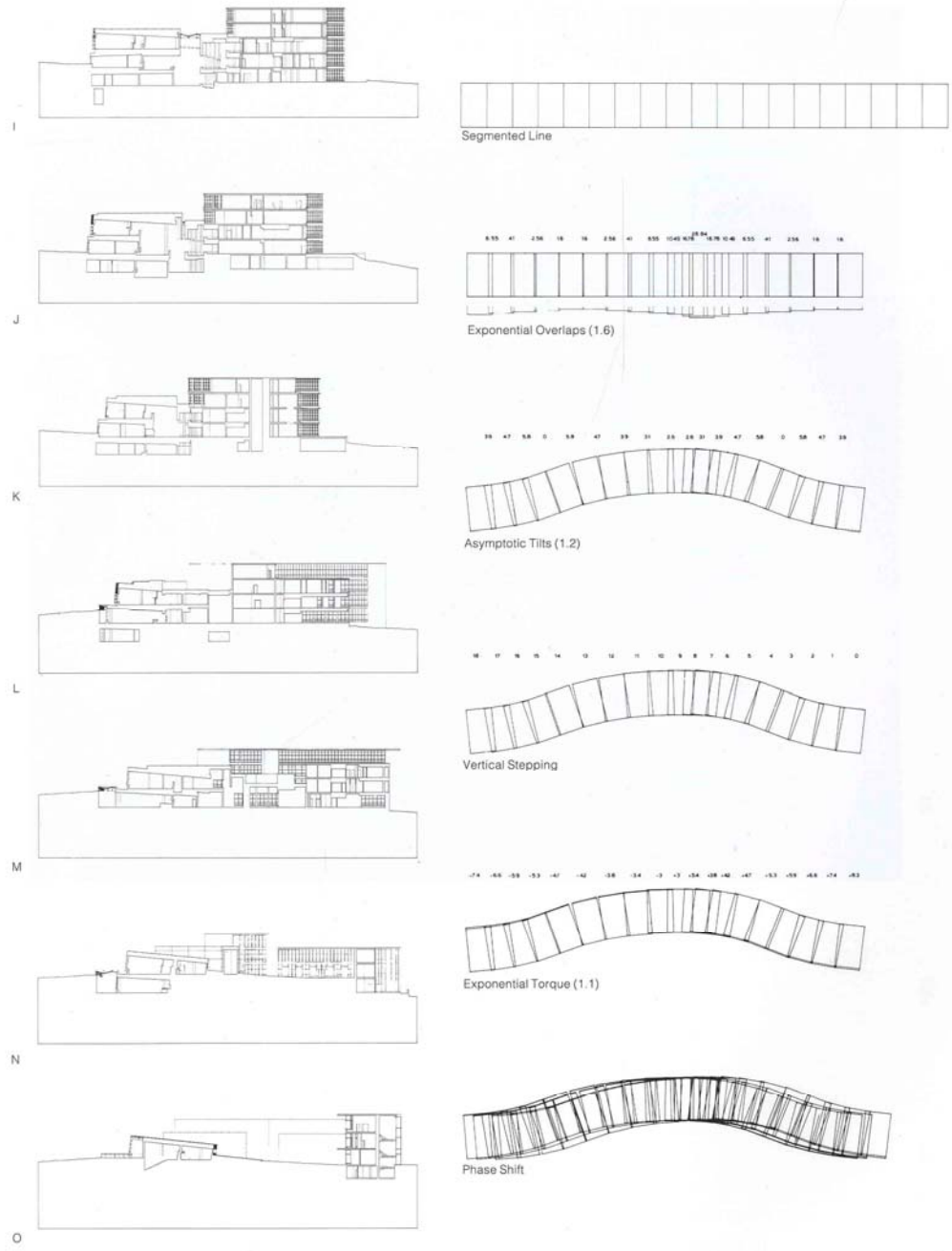
Figure 1. 3. Peter Eisenman, Aronoff Center

INTEGER OVERLAP

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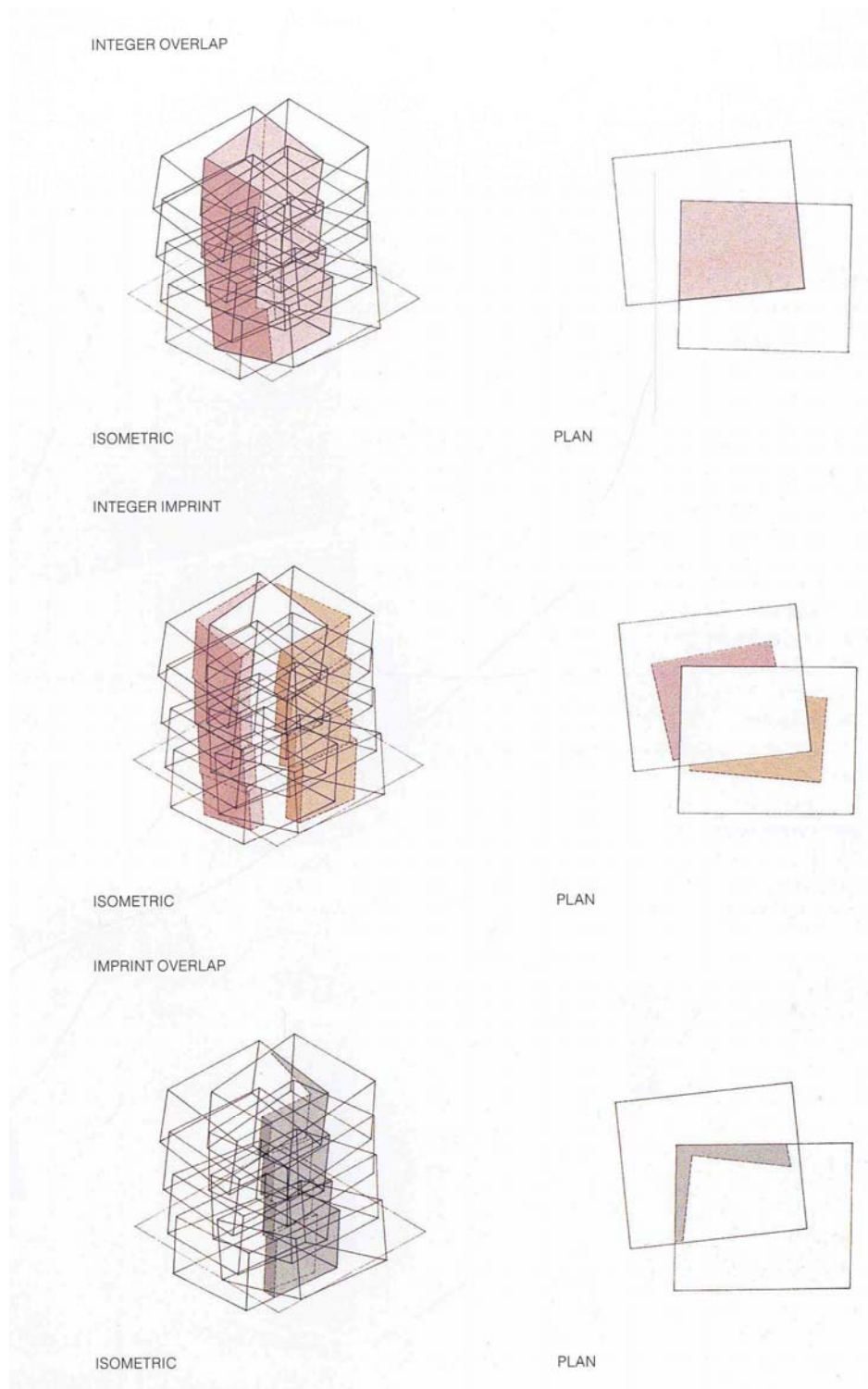
Figure 1. 4. Peter Eisenman, Nunotani Headquarters Building

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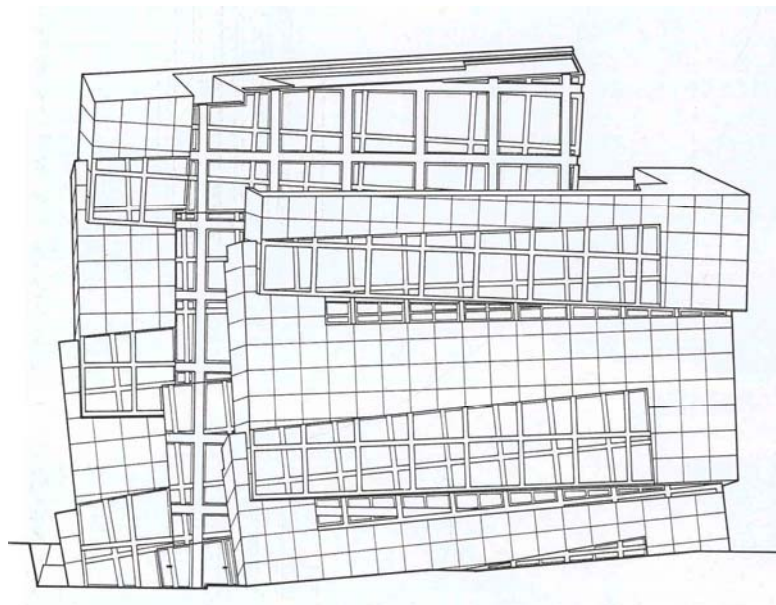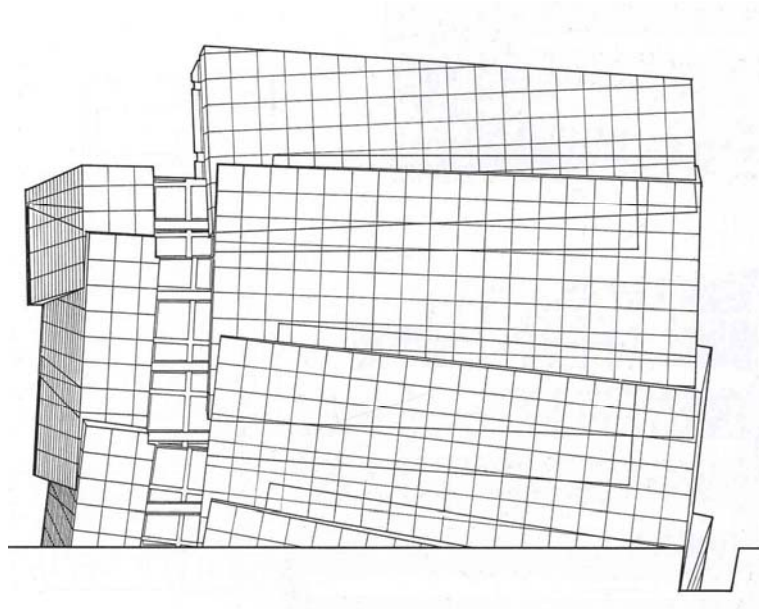
Figure 1. 5. Peter Eisenman, Nunotani Headquarters Building
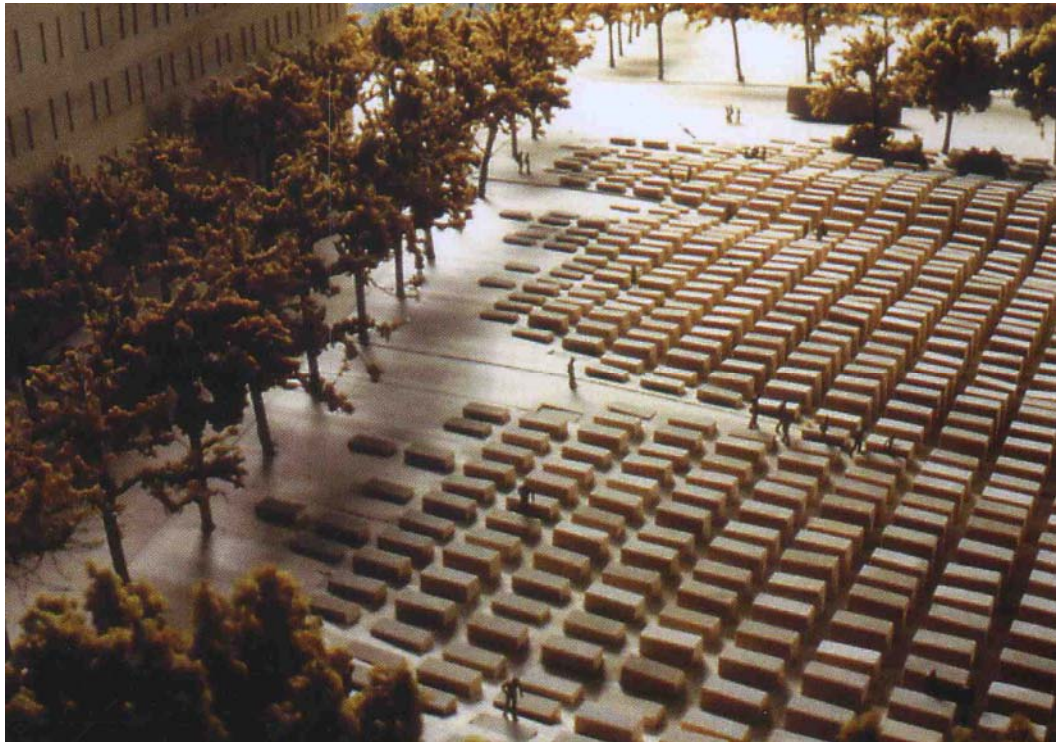
Figure 1. 6. Peter Eisenman, Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe
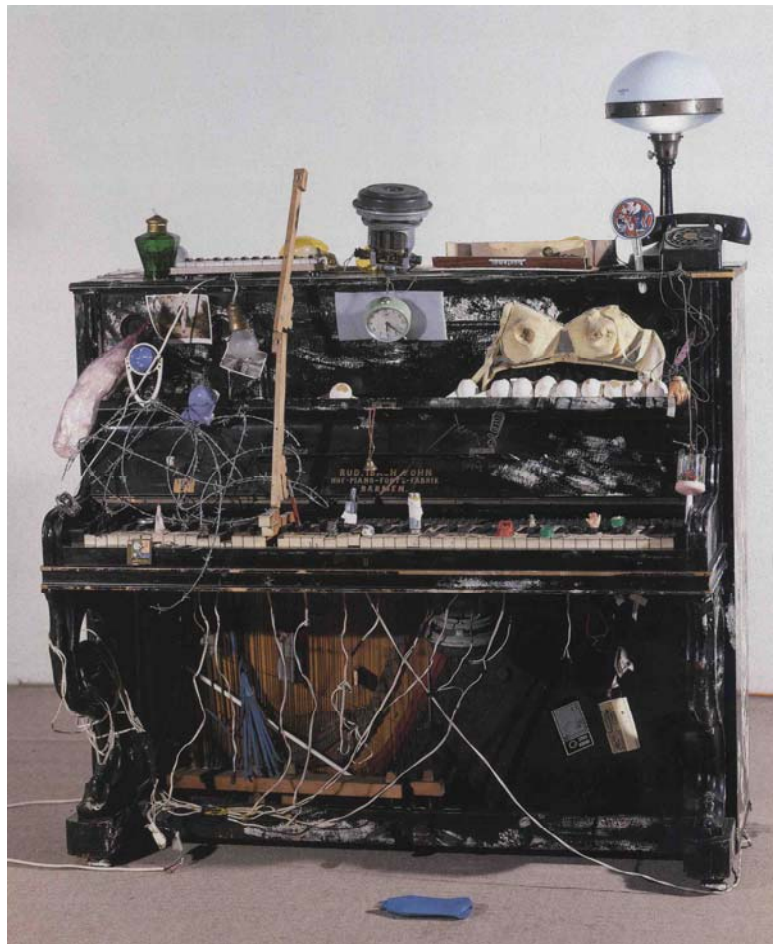
Figure 3. 1. Nam June Paik, *Klavier Integral*
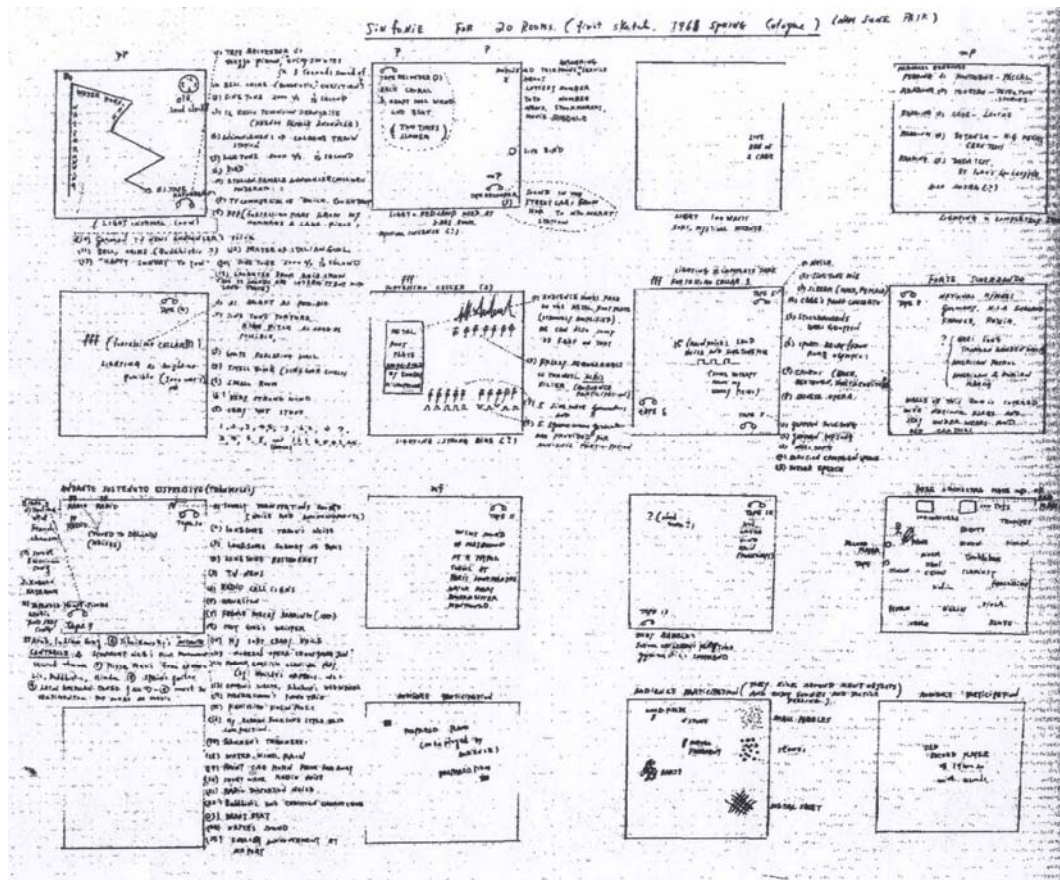
Figure 3. 2. Nam June Paik, Original Score for *Sinfonie for 20 Rooms*
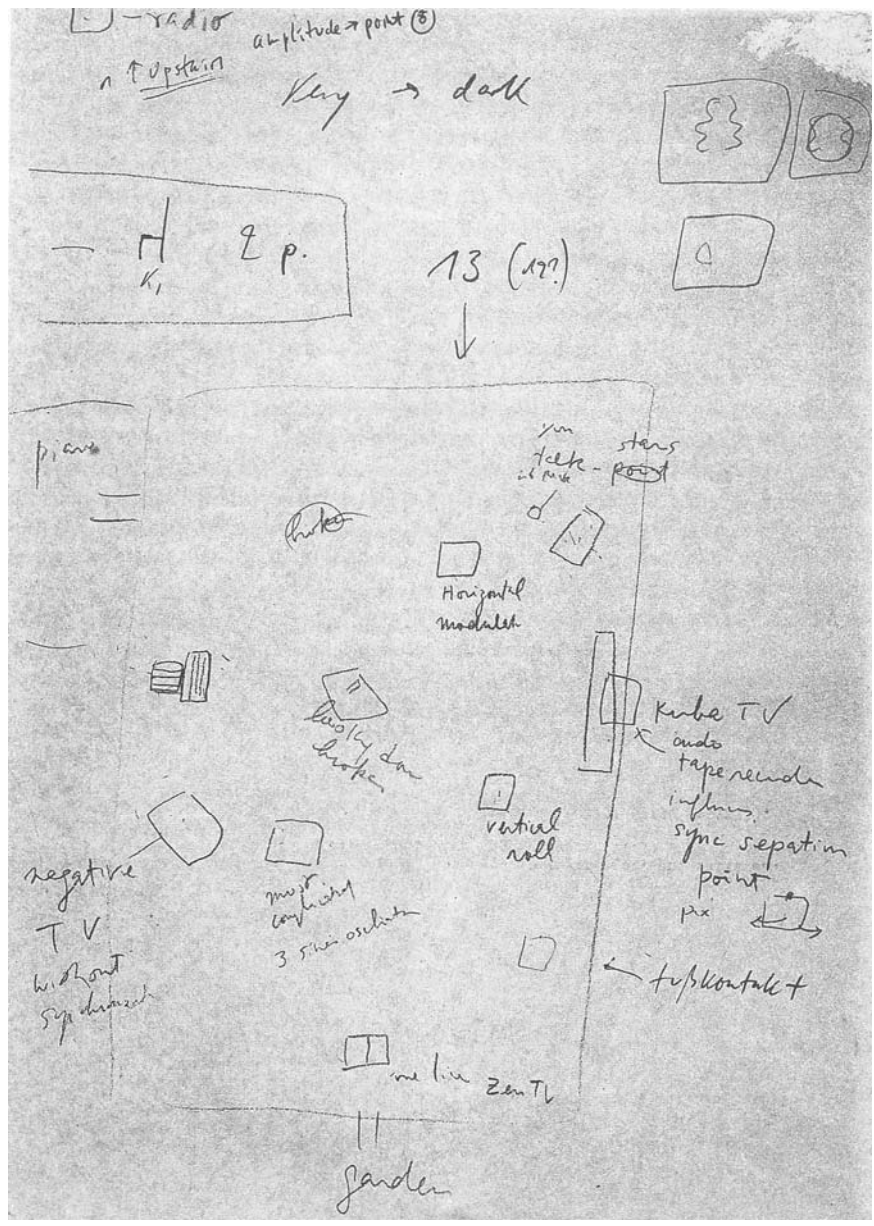
Figure 3. 3. Nam June Paik, Sketch for *TV Room*
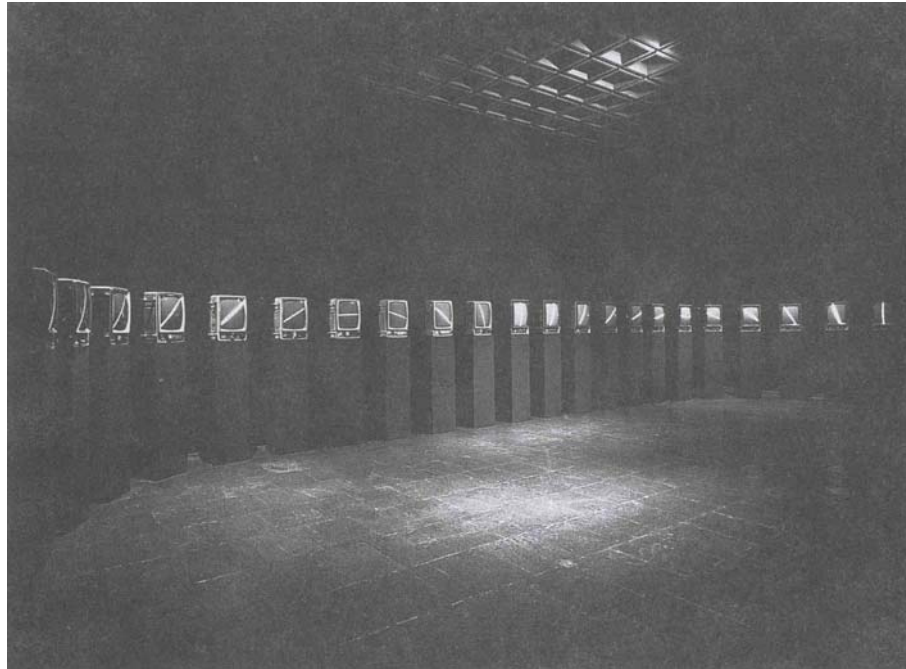
Figure 3. 4. Nam June Paik, *TV Clock*
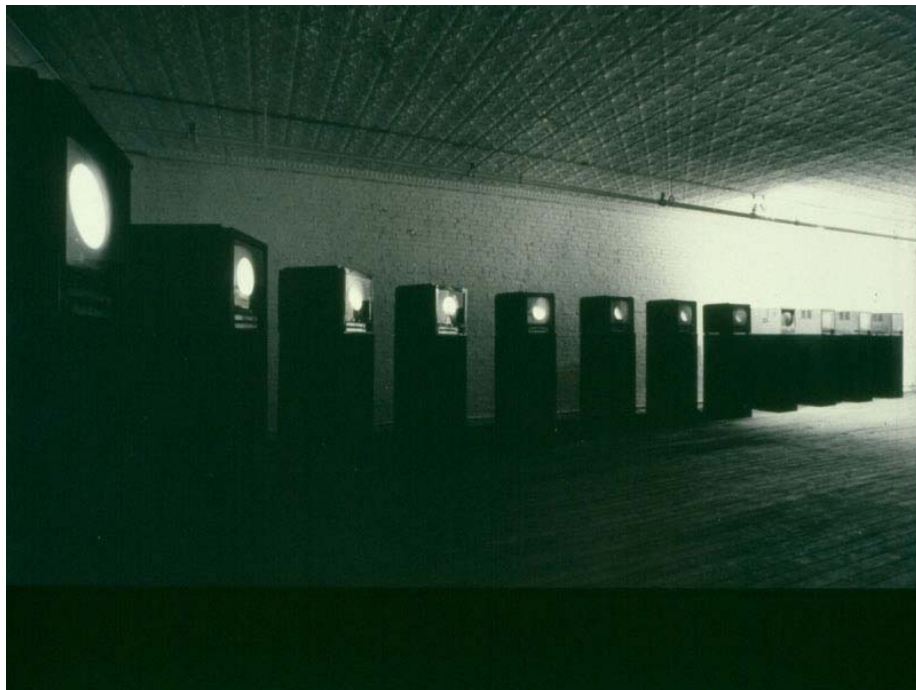
Figure 3. 5. Nam June Paik, *Moon is the Oldest TV*
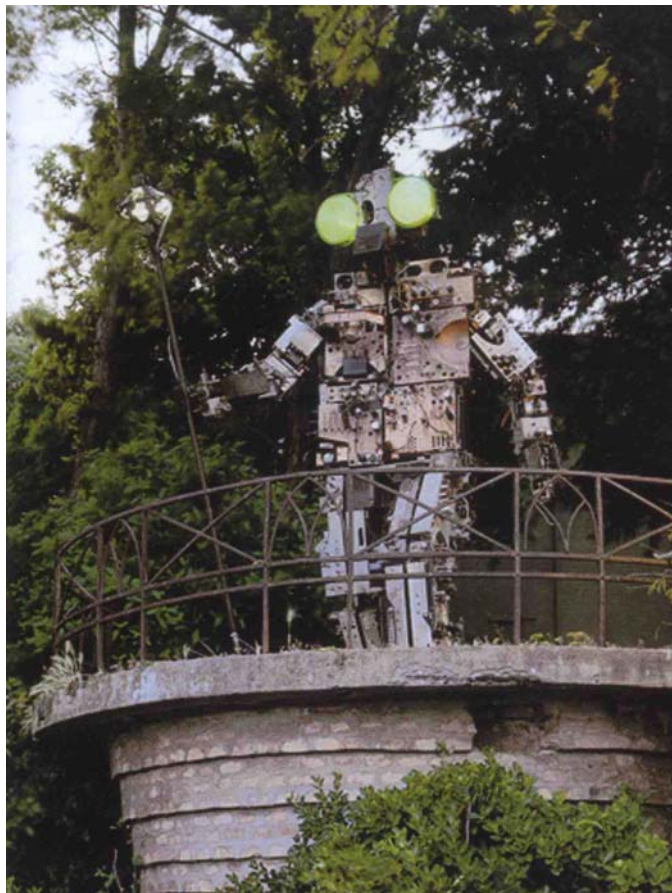
Figure 3. 6. Nam June Paik, *Dangun as a Scythian King*
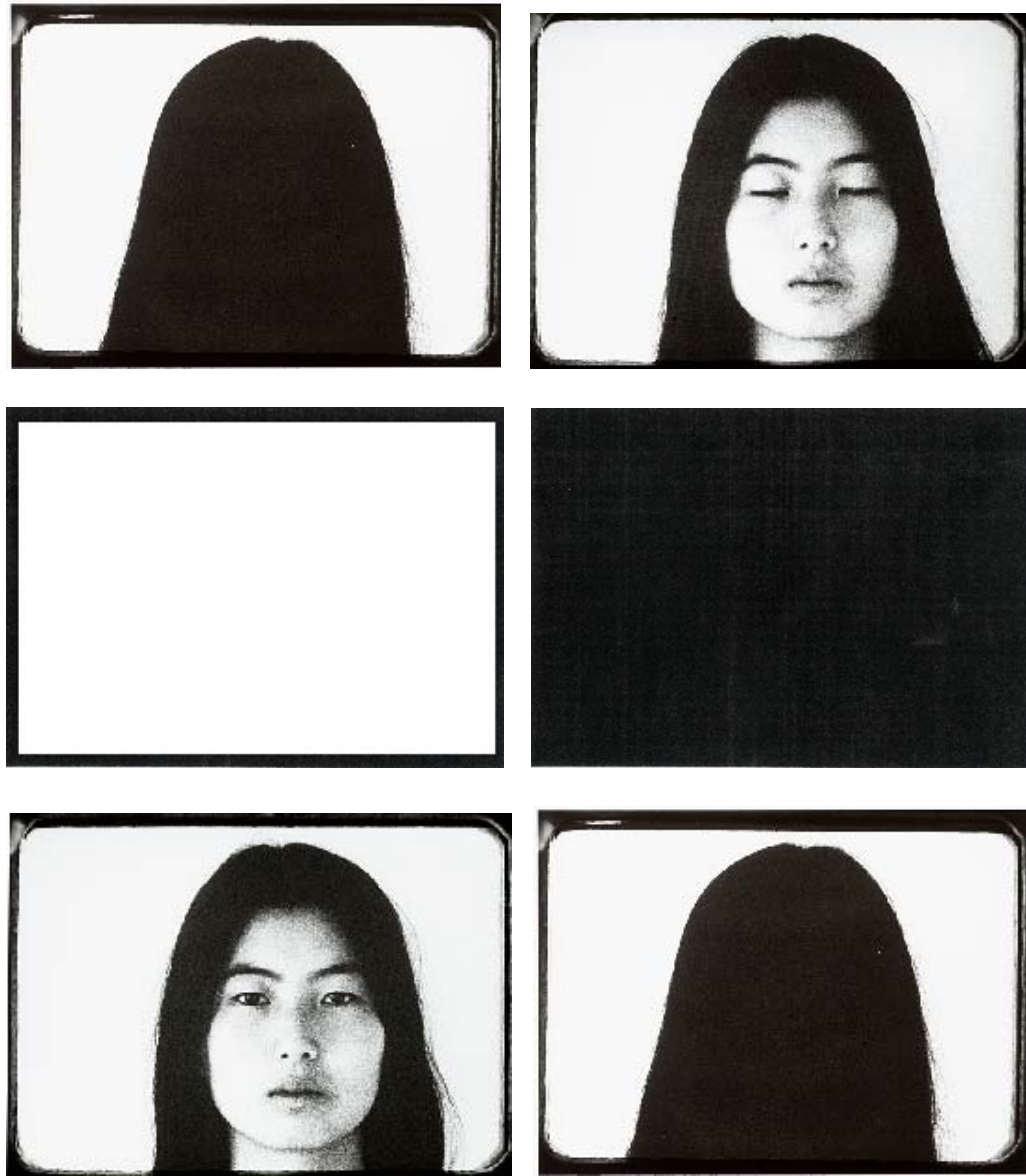
Figure 3. 7. Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, From *Permutations*
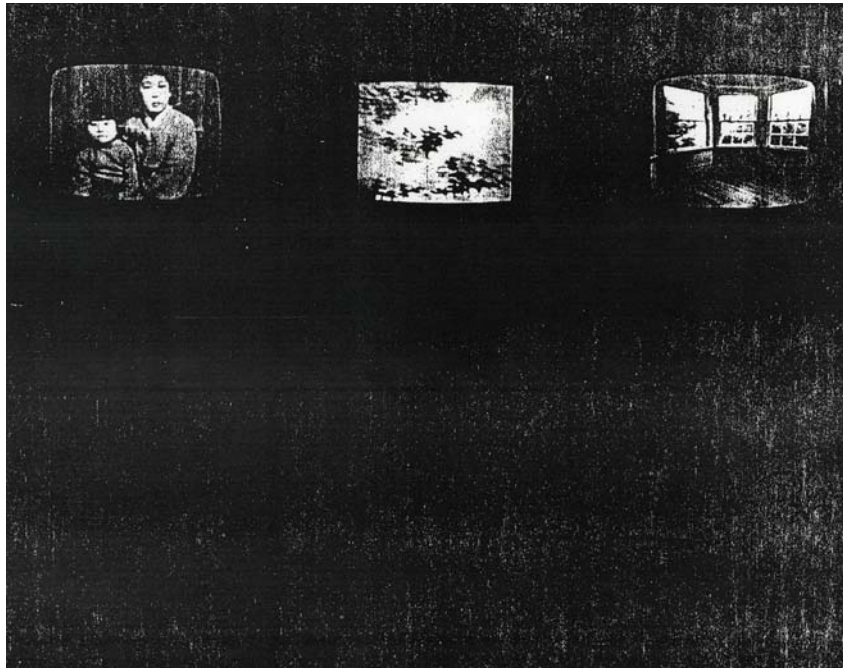
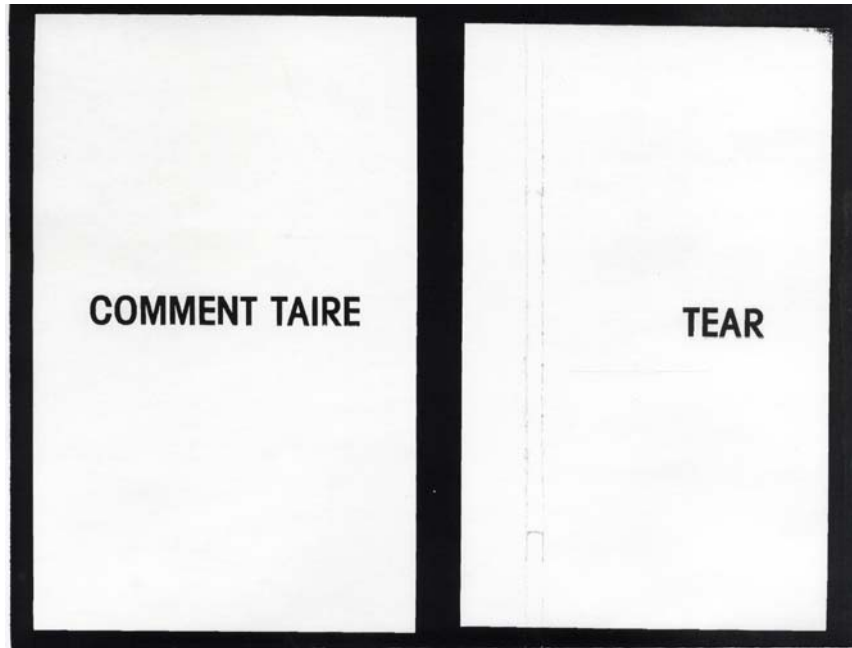**Figure 3. 8. Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, From *Passages Paysages***

Figure 3. 9. Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, From "Commentaire"
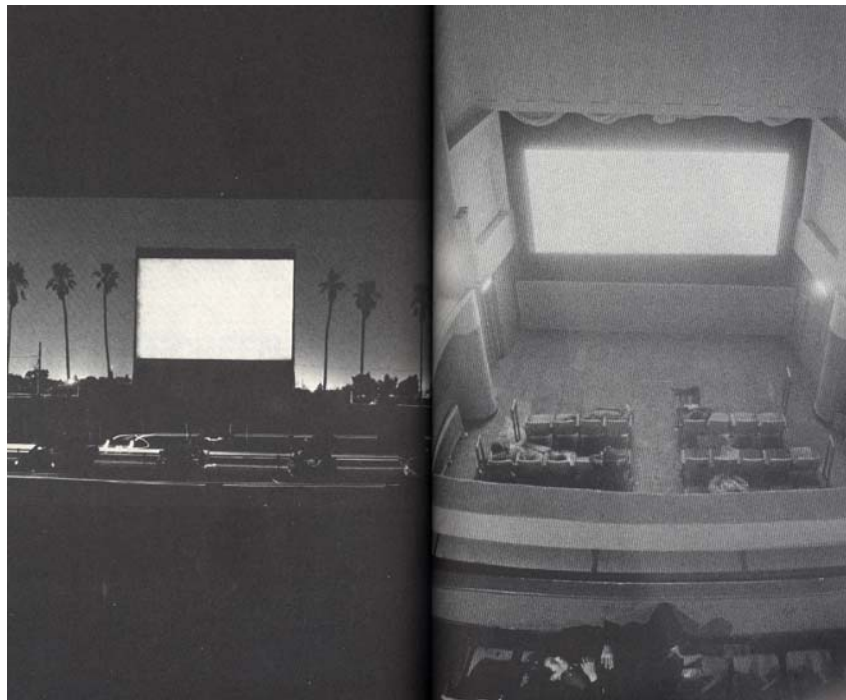

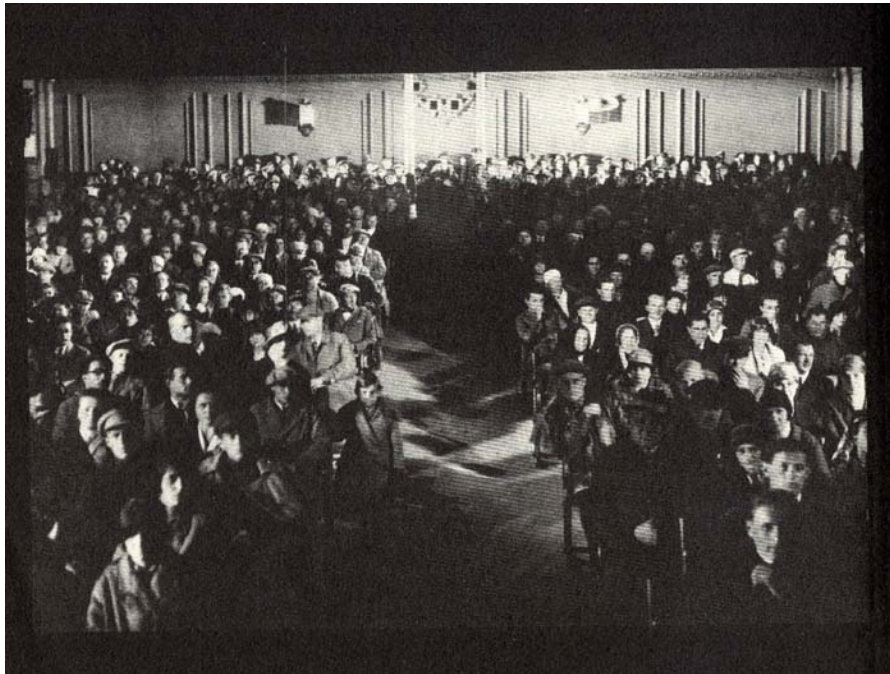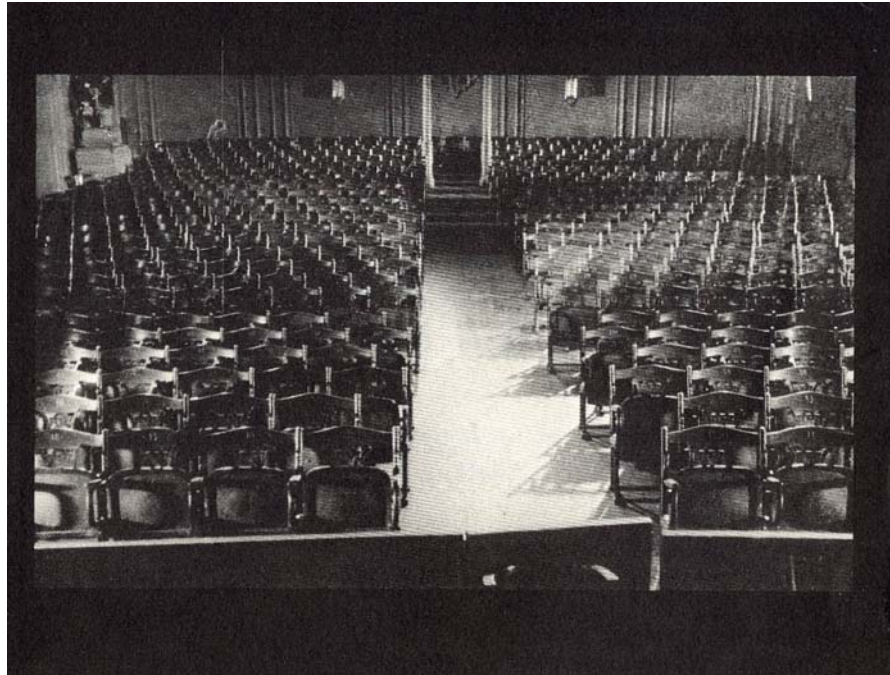**Figure 3. 10. Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, From "Commentaire"**

Figure 3. 11. Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, From *Apparatus*
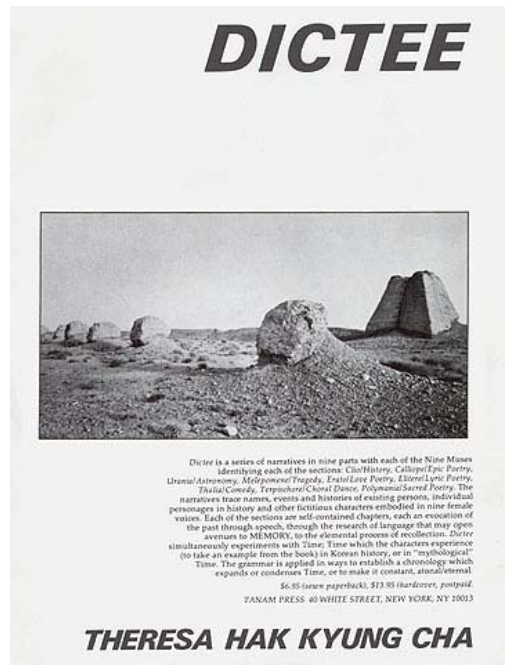
Figure 3. 12. Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, Cover Design of *Dictée* (1982)

Figure 3. 13. Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, from *Dictée*

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Biography

Koonyong Kim was born in Jochiwon, South Korea. He attended Yonsei University in Seoul where he received his BA and MA in English. In 2001 he came to the United States on a Fulbright Fellowship and has since been a James B. Duke Fellow at Duke. He has received the Duke Graduate School's Barbara and Fred Sutherland Dissertation Fellowship as well as the School of Criticism and Theory Fellowship from Cornell University. Kim is the author of "'Time is Out of Joint': Totality, History, and Utopian Form in Adorno's Twelve-Tone Philosophy" (Cambridge Scholars, 2009), and has contributed to the *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Literary and Cultural Theory* (forthcoming). He is also the Korean translator of Fredric Jameson's work. In the fall of 2010 he will begin work as Research Associate at the Institute for Critical Theory at Duke.