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# 1 Introduction: Dealing in Futures

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In December 2001, shortly after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, Don DeLillo began his by now famous article “In the Ruins of the Future,” by summing up a narrative of globalization that he perceived to be related to the attacks:

In the past decade the surge of capital markets has dominated discourse and shaped global consciousness. Multinational corporations have come to seem more vital and influential than governments. The dramatic climb of the Dow and the speed of the internet summoned us all to live permanently in the future, in the utopian glow of cyber-capital, because there is no memory there and this is where markets are uncontrolled and investment potential has no limit.<sup>1</sup>

DeLillo’s opening paragraph can be read as a performative, if sceptical rendition of the world narrative of globalization, a rendition of a utopian narrative of borderless capital markets and a technology-driven political economy that projects disembodied value into a “white-hot future”<sup>2</sup>. While DeLillo was careful to avoid a trifle explanation for the catastrophic events of 9/11 – “there is no logic in apocalypse”<sup>3</sup> – and asserted that it was not the global economy that was the terrorists’ primary target, he intuited that, with the attacks, a global contest of narratives and counter-narratives and their implicit temporal trajectories had gained new thrust: while the world narrative of globalization is dealing in futures, “the terrorists of September 11,” DeLillo wrote, “want to bring back the past.”<sup>4</sup> Against the grain of this constructivist view of history and politics as a

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1 “In the Ruins of the Future,” *The Guardian* (22 Dec. 2001): Web. 5 Jan. 2012. <[www.guardian.co.uk/books/2001/dec/22/fiction.dondelillo/print](http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2001/dec/22/fiction.dondelillo/print)> 1-7, 1.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid., 2.

4 Ibid., 1.

contest of narratives, the prominent position of DeLillo's own rendition of the narrative of globalization at the beginning of his article insinuates that he considers globalization a meta-process that can explain contemporary changes in economies, states, and societies. He thus views, like many others across the political spectrum, the idea of a globalizing world as a fact that has economic, cultural, political, and social effects on any given society.

Contrary to such a notion of globalization, Wendy Larner, scholar in human geography and sociology, focuses on the discursive framing of the concept and posits that "globalization is a powerful imaginative geography that legitimizes its own production."<sup>5</sup> Larner notes that the 'war on terror' in the wake of 9/11 did not mark the end of transnational flows of capital, goods, services, and people, but became incorporated into an imaginary of globalization that has no problem including national legislative measures and security techniques to contain particular commodities, forms of information, and, above all, population groups that are construed as risky. Strikingly, this imaginary allows the co-presence of economic openness and social closure; it conjoins these seemingly incommensurable aspects of globalization in the imperative to monitor and to select forms of mobility in terms of profit and risk management, terms that both 'deal in futures.' Quoting Nikolas Rose, Larner convincingly argues that the imaginary of globalization and the notion of global flows, networks, and mobilities might best be conceptualized as "'irreal spaces',"<sup>6</sup> produced by different practices and contexts that (and this is Larner's own inference) constitute "'irreal' subjects"<sup>7</sup> whose mobility is naturalized and either facilitated or thwarted.

Nikolas Rose<sup>8</sup> derives his concept of "irreal spaces" from Nelson Goodman and his theory on *Ways of Worldmaking*. A radical constructivist, Goodman denies the existence of one real world; for him there are only different versions constructed of different symbols and symbol systems.<sup>9</sup> Focusing on the different

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5 "Spatial Imaginaries: Economic Globalization and the War on Terror," *Risk and the War on Terror*, eds. Louise Amoore and Marieke de Goede (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2008) 41-56, 49.

6 Nikolas Rose qtd. in Larner, "Spatial Imaginaries," 49.

7 *Ibid.*, 53.

8 See *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1999) 32. It is worth noting that Rose, while taking the term from Goodman, dismisses Goodman's relativism as "too psychological." Arguing that Goodman conceives of a world version as a picture, Rose makes a point of emphasizing that for him, in contrast, thought constructs reality through practices of inscription, calculation, and action.

9 See *Ways of Worldmaking* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1978) 3-4.

ways of world making in science and art, Goodman plausibly argues that “we cannot test a version by comparing it with a world undescribed, undepicted, unperceived.”<sup>10</sup> The conflicting worlds and spaces fashioned by competing symbolizations are thus not ‘irreal’ in the sense that they are not consistent or have no validity; however, they can be assessed only as versions that, as Goodman puts it, “mak[e] the world they fit.”<sup>11</sup>

It is within this constructivist sense of symbolic world-making and the idea of narratives vying for dominance in a popular imaginary that the present study endeavors to juxtapose the irreal spaces fabricated by symbolic world-making in the service of a political rationality<sup>12</sup> with the irreal spaces and symbolic world-making of film and literature. More precisely, the study sets out to show that the literary and cinematic artifacts of its corpus offer counter-narratives to normative hegemonic discourses and practices that emerged in last the quarter of the twentieth century and have gained impact in the first decade of the twenty-first; it aims to show, above all, that these artifacts and their extrapolating narratives are epistemologically privileged by their openly and boldly fictional aesthetics. The study focuses on three North American fictional texts that were published within a decade around 2000 and belong to the genre of speculative fiction. These texts speculate on the future of political-economic subjectivity at the North American Pacific Rim and thus deal in futures just like the political-economic discourses they tackle.

At the center of the study are close readings of a U.S.-American film by Kathryn Bigelow (*Strange Days*, 1995), a U.S.-American novel by Karen Tei Yamashita (*Tropic of Orange*, 1997), and a Canadian novel by Larissa Lai (*Salt Fish Girl*, 2002). The readings aim to analyze how these fictional texts and their aesthetic strategies comment on the world-making of factual discourses of globalization, economic liberalization, and risk management. Particularly relevant to the texts, albeit not to all three texts in equal measure, is a hegemonic political-economic Pacific Rim discourse that, conditioned by the neoliberalization of governance in both the U.S. and Canada, has emerged in the closing decades of the twentieth century. This discourse has developed its own specific

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10 Ibid., 4.

11 Ibid., 138.

12 Following Foucault, Wendy Brown defines as a political rationality “a specific form of normative political reason, organizing the political sphere, governance practices, and citizenship. A political rationality governs the sayable, the intelligible, and the truth criteria of these domains.” “American Nightmare: Neoliberalism, Neoconservatism, and De-Democratization,” *Political Theory* 34.6 (2006): 690-714, 693.

variety of transnational economic utopianism, and has, in the process, construed the 'irreal space' of the Pacific Rim.

Challenged by the rise of Asian markets and increasingly successful Asian versions of capitalism, U.S.-American and Canadian economists in the 1980s and 1990s predicted the coming of a golden 'Pacific Century' that, under the aegis of North American nations and imperatives of global free trade, would supersede the expiring 'American Century' in terms of economic growth and vitality. Couched in the neoliberal rhetoric of transnational convergence and the 'free trade zone,' these economic speculations tie in with century-old hegemonic Euro-American constructions of the Pacific region. Like these historical constructions, the utopianist American Pacific Rim discourse strategically conjures homogenizing images of the region, while suppressing contradictions and rifts, such as the uneven regulation of money flows and migration, and the ongoing social and economic injustice along the lines of race and gender in multicultural North American societies. Embedded in the broader imaginary of globalization, and drawing on representational strategies that conceal the racializing and gendering politics on which it capitalizes, this speculative discourse produces an irreal space in order to secure symbolic hegemony and solicit more speculation.

Contesting the utopianism of this discourse, the narratives of the three fictional texts under scrutiny project different millennial visions of a hyper-capitalist, near-future North American Pacific west. All of them bleak dystopias, their perceptive criticism addresses the pervasive economization of the state, the social, and the subject, as well as the re-configurations of race, class, and gender within a new political rationality formed by an alliance of neoliberalism and neoconservatism. While each of the texts tackles different aspects of this new political rationality, they have in common that in their diegetic worlds the impact of an economic free market ideology outweighs other categories of subject formation.

The texts thus seem to position themselves in a theoretical controversy that emerged concurrent with their production. This controversy between scholars and activists of the political Left about the relevance of categories of difference to questions of governance and social justice might best be illustrated by a short digression to a verbal exchange between Judith Butler and Nancy Fraser. Lamenting what she perceives as a new factionalism in the social and political criticism of the Left in her article "Merely Cultural" (1997)<sup>13</sup>, Butler defies the notion of a clear-cut distinction between the material/the economic on the one hand, and identity politics and emancipatory social movements on the other.

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13 "Merely Cultural," *Social Text* 52/53 (1997): 265-277.

Butler criticizes, more precisely, that this distinction implicitly posits the economic as central to the definition of political subjectivity while devaluing identity politics and the struggles of new social movements as belonging to an irrelevant realm of the “merely cultural.”<sup>14</sup> Invoking insights of socialist feminists that, already in the 1970s, “sought to establish the sphere of sexual reproduction as part of the material conditions of life, a proper and constitutive feature of political economy,”<sup>15</sup> Butler asks, “why would a movement concerned to criticize and transform the ways in which sexuality is socially regulated not be understood as central to the functioning of political economy?”<sup>16</sup>

Butler’s criticism is specifically targeted at a distinction between injustices of recognition and injustices of redistribution that Nancy Fraser has articulated and analyzed in her book *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the Postsocialist Condition* (1996). As Butler has it, Fraser’s distinction “locates certain oppressions as part of political economy and relegates others [specifically hetero-normativity and the misrecognition of lesbians and gays, S.W.] to the exclusively cultural sphere”.<sup>17</sup> In her response to Butler’s criticism, Fraser rejects the accusation that implicitly identifies her (Fraser’s) position with “neo-conservative Marxisms,”<sup>18</sup> and contends that Butler’s arguments are not persuasive as they do not afford “an adequately differentiated and historically situated view of modern capitalist society.”<sup>19</sup> While asserting that injustices of misrecognition are as serious as distributive injustices, and while disavowing the view of economy and culture as separate spheres, Fraser advocates for the analysis of contemporary capitalist society

an approach that reveals the hidden connections between them. The point, in other words, is to use the distinction against the grain, making visible and subject to critique, both the cultural subtexts of apparently economic processes and the economic subtexts of apparently cultural processes. Such a ‘perspectival dualism’ is only possible, of course, once we have the economic/cultural distinction.<sup>20</sup>

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14 Ibid., 265.

15 Ibid., 272.

16 Ibid., 271, italics in the original.

17 Ibid., 269-270.

18 Ibid., 68.

19 Nancy Fraser, “Heterosexism, Misrecognition, and Capitalism: A Response to Judith Butler,” *New Left Review* a.228 (1998): 140-150, 143.

20 Ibid., 148.

Fraser's 'perspectival dualism' appears particularly called for in face of the shift to market rationality in governance that has become fully visible only in the first decade of the twenty-first century when the economic/cultural distinction has all but crumbled away. The emphasis in Bigelow, Lai and Yamashita's speculative fictions on the economic as central to the definition of subjectivity on a hyper-capitalist, near-future North American Pacific coast testifies to the authors' clairvoyant perception of a political climate that, as the controversy between Butler and Fraser shows, already in the 1990s began to render precarious familiar categories of critical political thinking.

This is not to argue that Bigelow, Yamashita and Lai can be identified with either Butler's or Fraser's position in the factionalism that, according to Butler, divides the struggles of the Left. It is important to note that the fictional authors' emphasis on the economic implies no underestimation of race and gender as 'merely cultural,' but aptly reflects a political culture that "figures citizens exhaustively as rational economic actors in every sphere of life."<sup>21</sup> Racism, sexism, as well as racialized and feminized labor figure prominently in the texts of all three authors, yet all three texts show these practices of social oppression and regulation to be integrated in and subordinate to the universalizing framework of the market and *homo oeconomicus*<sup>22</sup>. As the study hopes to show, the merit of their extrapolating, fictional representations of a near-future culture that is thoroughly economized lies exactly in making visible and subject to

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21 Wendy Brown "American Nightmare," 694.

22 In *The Birth of Biopolitics*, Michel Foucault sums up Gary Becker's understanding of individual economic behavior as "[...] any conduct which responds systematically to modifications in the variables of the environment."(269) For Foucault, this "most radical of the American neoliberals"(269) and his conclusion that "any conduct which 'accepts reality' must be susceptible to economic analysis"(269) reflects the classical economic definition of *homo oeconomicus* as the subject of radical self-interest and rational economic choice. Exposing the pretentiousness of the emphasis on individual self-determination in this universalizing definition, Foucault writes: "From the point of view of a theory of government, *homo oeconomicus* is the person who must be let alone. With regard to *homo oeconomicus*, one must laissez-faire, he is the subject or object of laissez-faire. And now in Becker's definition, *homo oeconomicus*,[...] the person who accepts reality or who responds systematically to modifications in the variables of the environment, appears precisely as someone manageable, someone who responds systematically to systematic modifications artificially introduced to the environment. *Homo oeconomicus* is someone who is eminently governable." *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France 1978-1979* (New York: Picador, 2010) 270.

critique the precariousness of the economic/cultural distinction that would allow the critical ‘perspectival dualism’ that Nancy Fraser advocates for an analysis of contemporary capitalist society.

The fictional texts that are at the center of this study thus depict a cultural state marked by a porousness of boundaries, which is generally associated with ideas of liberalization; they make visible, however, that this porousness of boundaries has not per se a liberatory or emancipatory effect. The title of the study “Restless Subjects in Rigid Systems” aims to capture this discrepancy.<sup>23</sup> The subjects of Bigelow, Lai, and Yamashita’s speculative fictions are restless subjects in rigid systems, both in a literal and in a figurative sense. As a reference to the texts’ protagonists the term ‘restless subjects’ signifies a subjectivity driven by hopes and speculations that are often prompted by deceptive representations. Many of them migrants or descendants of migrants, these subjects’ respective restless pursuit of happiness is often thwarted by the unexpected rigidity of systems of regulation, whose hidden practices and techniques of governance reduce them to economic actors. On a more abstract, if related level, the term ‘restless subjects’ refers to the unabated relevance of the subjects of race, class, and gender in the texts’ hyper-capitalist diegetic political systems, whose multiculturalism incorporates difference without abandoning racism, sexism, and inequality. Finally, the title also applies to the authors and the regulation of authorship in their respective fields of production. The authors’ respective position in these fields and these fields’ politics of authorship and representation will be addressed in paratextual readings at the beginning of each analytical chapter.

Before these paratexts and the aesthetic strategies and effects of the fictional texts are explored by way of close readings, a survey of the concepts and discourses that are central to the analyses will be given in the following. The starting point for this theoretical survey is a discussion of speculative fiction whose position inside or outside the genre of science fiction is highly contested. A second subchapter introduces the discourse of the Pacific Rim as an instance of economic utopianism and neoliberal speculation, and its reception by cultural critics. A third part presents different theories of risk with a particular focus on more recent conceptualizations of the term by Governmentality Studies and Critical Securitization Studies. And a final section defends ‘close reading’ as a

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23 The word “system” is used here in the sense of the *OED* definition I.1 a, as “a set or assemblage of things connected, associated, or interdependent, so as to form a complex unity,” *OED Online* (March 2012) Web, 20 Mar. 2012 <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/196665?redirectedFrom=system#eid>>. Its use does not imply a reference to systems theory.

practice that is, once again, becoming subject to debate in contemporary literary studies.

## 1.1 SPECULATIVE FICTION

Coined in the mid-twentieth century as an umbrella term<sup>24</sup> covering the fantastic from ‘hard science fiction’ to magic realism, the genre of speculative fiction has, in the past decade, gained a more specific significance of its own, marked by attempts at its redefinition as an extrapolation of contemporary life and society, rather than the fantastic creation of strange, extra-terrestrial worlds associated with science fiction in general. Underlying the struggle for generic redefinition is the decidedly bad reputation of science fiction as a formulaic, aesthetically unsophisticated, low-brow genre and its unrefined readers<sup>25</sup>, to whose escapist desires science fiction allegedly provides mere ‘fodder.’ A statement by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., author of critically acclaimed novels such as *Slaughterhouse Five* (1969), drastically captures the pervasive critical contempt for the genre: “I’ve been a sorehead occupant of a file drawer labelled ‘science fiction’ ever since [my first novel], and I would like out, particularly since so many critics mistake the drawer for a urinal.”<sup>26</sup>

Just as Vonnegut had wanted ‘out’ at a point in time when science fiction was widely considered pulp, critically acknowledged, canonical writer Margaret Atwood, more than a decade later, bent over backwards not to be placed ‘in’ in the first place. Questioned in an interview, as to whether her novel *The Handmaid’s Tale* (1985) could be considered science fiction, Atwood distanced

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24 The term was first used in 1953 by science fiction writer Robert Anson Heinlein who suggested that “the term ‘speculative fiction’ may be defined negatively as being fiction about things that have not happened.” Qtd. in def.3, *OED Online* (March 2012) Web. 5 Mar.2012. This is, of course, an ironic ‘definition;’ its staged naivety points, however, to degrees of fictionality as the issue that might be more crucial to a definition of speculative fiction than, for instance, the degree of scientific verisimilitude that is central to many theories of science fiction.

25 Science fiction readers are widely referred to in terms of fandom and addiction rather than literacy. See for example David Hartwell, “The Golden Age of Science Fiction is Twelve,” *Speculations on Speculation: Theories of Science Fiction*, eds James Gunn and Matthew Candelaria (Lanham, et al.: Scarecrow, 2005) 269-288.

26 Qtd. as an epigraph to Darko Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1979).

herself from a genre that she described as “filled with Martians and space travel to other planets, and things like that.” Rather, she claimed, “*The Handmaid’s Tale* is speculative fiction in the genre of *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was written not as science fiction, but as an extrapolation of life in 1948. So, too, *The Handmaid’s Tale* is a slight twist on the society we have now.”<sup>27</sup> Only a couple of years later, in 2005, Atwood’s open contempt had made way for a mild irony and a more differentiated generic model that, strikingly, inverts categorical relations. In a review of Ursula Le Guin’s work, Atwood writes:

“Science fiction” is the box in which her work is usually placed, but it’s an awkward box: it bulges with discards from elsewhere. Into it have been crammed all those stories that don’t fit comfortably into the family room of the socially realistic novel or the more formal parlor of historical fiction, or other compartmentalized genres: westerns, gothics, horrors, gothic romances, and the novels of war, crime, and spies. Its subdivisions include science fiction proper (gizmo-riddled and theory-based space travel, time travel, or cybertravel to other worlds, with aliens frequent); science-fiction fantasy (dragons are common; the gizmos are less plausible, and may include wands); and speculative fiction (human society and its possible future forms, which are either much better than what we have now, or much worse). However, the membranes separating these subdivisions are permeable, and osmotic flow from one to another is the norm.<sup>28</sup>

Obviously Atwood is, at this point, more uncomfortable with both the cultural status of science fiction as a reservoir of “discards from elsewhere” and the generic compartmentalization that excludes science fiction and its subdivisions from the realm of established ‘serious’ genres, than with the genre itself. Overall, her comment appears more accepting of science fiction (if still slightly derogatory of its more fantastic varieties), and the placement of speculative fiction within it, than her previous statement. It hardly provides, however, more touchstones of generic orientation with regard to speculative fiction, whether considered as a genre on its own or as a subgenre of science fiction. To learn that speculative fiction deals with “human society and its possible future forms” is

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27 “Interview with Margaret Atwood on her Novel *The Handmaid’s Tale*,” *Reader’s Companion to The Handmaid’s Tale by Margaret Atwood*, (Doubleday, 1998) Web, 5 Mar. 2012. <[http://www.randomhouse.com/resources/bookgroup/handmaidstale\\_bgc.html#interview](http://www.randomhouse.com/resources/bookgroup/handmaidstale_bgc.html#interview)>.

28 Margaret Atwood, “The Queen of Quinkdom,” *The New York Review of Books* 49.14 (26 Sept. 2002): Web, 5 Mar. 2012 <<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2002/sep/26/the-queen-of-quinkdom/>>.

less helpful than the reference to the *Handmaid's Tale* as a “slight twist on the society we have now.” While the former definition is so general that it applies to most science fiction ‘proper’ as well, the latter implies a difference in the degree of non-mimetic representation, a gradual difference on a scale of fictionality as a marker distinguishing speculative from science fiction ‘proper,’ a differentiation that will be discussed in more detail below.

Atwood’s (half-hearted) change of attitude towards science fiction can be read as reflecting a slowly developing critical reassessment of the genre, and points to the fact that the history of science fiction as a genre worthy of academic attention is a fairly short one. This history can be traced back to efforts to dismantle the rigid division between high and low culture and the canon revisions of the 1970s. But even then, the genre was still considered aesthetically so deficient that Darko Suvin, in his preface to *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* (1979), felt the need to justify the relevance of his book-length study. While admitting that “90 or 95 percent of SF production is strictly perishable stuff,” Suvin argues that science fiction is not only one of the largest genres, but “the most interesting and cognitively the most significant one” in what he calls “Paraliterature,” or “the noncanonic, repressed twin of Literature,” and “even this 90 or 95 percent is highly significant from a sociological point of view.”<sup>29</sup> In keeping with this sociological argument (reflecting the *zeitgeist* and political climate of the era) and his broader Marxist convictions, Suvin emphasizes the educational value of science fiction<sup>30</sup>, whose “potential cognitive tendency” he considers to be “allied to the rise of subversive social classes and their development of more sophisticated productive forces and cognitions.”<sup>31</sup>

Leaving aside for the moment the Marxist utopianism underlying this contention, it is important to note that Suvin’s still influential study not only delineates the history of the genre in great detail, but also provides a theory of its poetics, a theory, the most frequently quoted concept of which is probably ‘cognitive estrangement.’ Drawing on sources as diverse as the Russian Formalists, Bertolt Brecht, and Galileo, Suvin defines science fiction as “a literary genre whose necessary and sufficient conditions are the presence and interaction of estrangement and cognition, and whose main formal device is an imaginative framework alternative to the author’s empirical environment.”<sup>32</sup> According to Suvin, the experience of estrangement in science fiction is enabled by settings, plots, and characters that are “radically or at least significantly

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29 *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, vii.

30 See *ibid.*, 36.

31 *Ibid.*, ix.

32 *Ibid.*, 7-8, italics in the original.

different from empirical times, places, and characters of ‘mimetic’ or ‘naturalist’ fiction,” and “simultaneously perceived as not impossible within the cognitive norms of the author’s epoch.”<sup>33</sup> Suvin’s demand for the co-presence of estrangement achieved by a (in most cases techno-scientific) ‘novum’ and cognition as a guarantee of credibility (often termed ‘verisimilitude’ in science fiction studies) excludes both realistic fiction and the fantasy tale, a genre which, as Suvin puts it, is “committed to the interposition of anti-cognitive laws into the empirical environment.”<sup>34</sup> Suvin goes so far as dismissing “the commercial lumping of it [fantasy, S.W.] into the same category as SF”<sup>35</sup> as a “grave disservice and rampantly socio-pathological phenomenon.”

Far removed from such a pathologizing judgment on violations of rigid generic law (a rigor of judgment that may be ascribed to the fundamental rigor marking the founding of discourses, since Suvin’s study can, without doubt, be credited with establishing the laws of the genre in the first place), more recent studies of science fiction are less concerned with normative generic demarcation, although taxonomy still looms large in the field. A particularly interesting study, Fredric Jameson’s *Archaeologies of the Future*,<sup>36</sup> was published in 2005, the same year, strikingly, in which Atwood’s comment on Le Guin’s work had asserted the permeability of the membranes separating subdivisions of science fiction and the “osmotic flow”<sup>37</sup> between them. In focusing on theories of political utopia and on utopia as a socio-economic sub-set of science fiction in the first part of *Archaeologies*, Jameson also addresses what he calls “The Great Schism”<sup>38</sup> between science fiction and fantasy.

While, as this chapter title indicates, Jameson does not share Atwood’s assumption of permeable membranes and osmotic flow between subgenres of science fiction, his interest is in the structural characteristics of fantasy (and thus epistemologically motivated), and his investigation is descriptive and analytical rather than normative. Stating that fantasy has, in the past decade, conquered a bigger segment of the book market than science fiction in the narrow sense of Suvin’s definition (and insinuating with this statement that the vexed relationship between the two might, at least in part, be grounded in economic rivalry), Jameson delineates the structural particularities of fantasy without

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33 Ibid., viii, italics in the original.

34 Ibid., 8.

35 *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, 9.

36 *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (London and New York: Verso, 2005).

37 “The Queen of Quinkdom.”

38 *Archaeologies of the Future*, 57.

lapsing into the denigrating rigor of Suvin's attitude. For him, fantasy is defined by its "organization around the ethical binary of good and evil, and the fundamental role it assigns to magic."<sup>39</sup> Its historicism often draws on medieval, and sometimes Christian, material, and, while sharing with science fiction a "visceral sense of the chemical deficiencies of our present, for which both offer imaginary compensation,"<sup>40</sup> it is "technically reactionary" and "breathes a purer and more conventional medieval atmosphere."<sup>41</sup> According to Jameson, modern fantasy borrows from medieval struggles between the nobility and the peasantry; its variations on the battle of good and evil often combine incompatible cultural registers such as the feudal *chanson de geste* and the fairy tale that catered to the hopes and desires of medieval peasants.<sup>42</sup>

The most conclusive aspect in Jameson's discussion of the generic schism between fantasy and science fiction is, however, the omnipresence of the motif of magic in the former. Jameson understands the recourse to magic as a regression to the pre-rational, pre-technological era, a regression starkly contrasting the commitment to scientific reason that grants verisimilitude, according to Suvin, and thus allows for "cognitive estrangement" (the co-presence and interaction of estrangement and cognition) in science fiction. For both Jameson and Suvin the true utopia of science fiction lies in its potential of politicizing the masses, whereas the principle of cognition commits the genre to deploying "the certainties and speculations of a rational and secular scientific age."<sup>43</sup> While for Suvin, fantasy's nostalgia for pre-rational, yet otherwise ahistorical magic results in a form of non-cognitive estrangement, and thus merely caters to its audiences' escapist desires, Jameson contends that "history and historical change inscribe themselves in even the most ahistorical forms," and argues that "fantasy can also have critical and even demystificatory power."<sup>44</sup>

The most consequent form of fantasy never simply deploys magic in the service of other narrative ends, but proposes a meditation on magic as such – on its capacities and its

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39 Ibid., 58

40 Ibid., 59.

41 Ibid., 60.

42 See *Archaeologies of the Future*, 60.

43 Ibid., 63.

44 Ibid., 67.

existential properties, on a kind of figural mapping of the active and productive subjectivity in its non-alienated state.<sup>45</sup>

Jameson identifies the “mode-of-production aesthetic”<sup>46</sup> of fantasy as pre-capitalist, and magic as its expression of disenchantment with “the ‘Entzauberte Welt’ of capitalism and modern times;”<sup>47</sup> yet he concedes that the “most consequent form of fantasy” uses magic as the demystifying instrument of a cultural critique that is anything but ahistorical. Two aspects in his assessment are striking and point to the reasons for and, simultaneously, beyond the problems of generic definition: first, in speaking of a “form of fantasy,”<sup>48</sup> and in emphasizing that the texts he considers most distinctive are difficult to classify,<sup>49</sup> Jameson foregrounds a decidedly postmodern quality in texts that blend various aesthetic and generic registers, and whose deployment of magic does not signal generic affiliation, but serves as a self-reflexive meditation on magic; he thus implicitly relates the distinctive quality of the texts to an aesthetic paradigm shift whose prominent features are a programmatic challenging of the law of genre<sup>50</sup> and an equally programmatic, representational self-referentiality.

In describing the effect and the purpose of the use of magic as “a kind of figural mapping of the active and productive subjectivity in its non-alienated state”<sup>51</sup> – and this leads to the second, more complex aspect – Jameson points to the literary device of figurative language as a means of addressing a state of alienation that marks contemporary subjectivity. While, for Jameson, alienation is a consequence of the capitalist mode of production, Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht describes an epistemological alienation that might both at once explain the growing popularity of fantastic elements in contemporary literature, and help to identify more precisely the self-reflexive, meta-representational quality in a literary meditation on magic.

In his study *Production of Presence*,<sup>52</sup> Gumbrecht suggests a typology that juxtaposes what he calls “presence culture,” exemplified by medieval culture,

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45 Ibid., 66.

46 Ibid., 59.

47 Ibid., 71.

48 Ibid., 66.

49 See *ibid.*, 68.

50 See for example Jacques Derrida, “The Law of Genre,” *Critical Inquiry* 7.1 On Narrative (1980): 55-81.

51 *Archaeologies of the Future*, 66.

52 *Production of Presence: What Meaning Cannot Convey* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2004).

with “meaning culture,” exemplified by early modern culture. For Gumbrecht, “‘subjectivity’ or ‘the subject’ occupies the place of the dominant human self-reference in a meaning culture whereas in a presence culture, humans consider their bodies to be part of a cosmology (or part of a divine creation).”<sup>53</sup> While legitimate knowledge is, in a ‘meaning culture,’ produced, according to Gumbrecht, by the world-interpretation of a subject, knowledge can, in a ‘presence culture,’ only be revealed by “events of self-unconcealment of the world,” a revelation for which the body is the central medium. This implies, for Gumbrecht, that different conceptions of signs underlie the respective cultural forms. Contrasting the ‘meaning-culture’s’ privileging of meaning over the material signifier, in which meaning is encoded, the definition of the sign is in a ‘presence culture’ close to the Aristotelian sign concept where a sign is a coupling between a substance (something that requires space) and a form (something that makes it possible for the substance to be perceived). This sign concept avoids the neat distinction between the purely spiritual and the purely material for the two sides of what is brought together in the sign. Consequently, there is no side in this sign-concept that will vanish once a meaning is secured.<sup>54</sup>

The alienation of subjectivity and the nostalgia Jameson refers to might thus not only be the alienation by the capitalist mode of production and the nostalgia for the pre-rational ethics of a medieval battle of good and evil. The figurative language of fantasy – and specifically the use of magic – might as well express an alienation that comes with the prevalence of disembodied meaning, and cater to an ensuing desire for presence and an epistemology of embodied experience. The use of magic, defined by Gumbrecht as “the practice of making things that are absent present and things that are present absent,”<sup>55</sup> is thus not only an aesthetic device and, as has been shown above, even less a generic marker; it addresses both an epistemological crisis of modernity and the fundamental epistemological dilemma inherent to literature per se: how to make things that are necessarily absent from a text present by the use of signs.

The highly self-reflexive, meta-representational literary recourse to magic is encoded in a form of figurative language invoking a sign concept that, similar to the one by Aristoteles as quoted in Gumbrecht, conjoins the spiritual and the material. Given the emphasis on substance in the Aristotelian sign concept, the closest approximation to this concept possible in a literary text seems to be the trope of allegory. Significantly, Jameson describes the use of magic in fantastic narratives as a “figural mapping,” yet claims, at a previous point in his chapter,

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53 Ibid., 80.

54 Ibid., 81-82.

55 *Production of Presence*, 82.

that the “allegorical dimension” is “lacking in modern fantasy.”<sup>56</sup> This raises the question of what the allegorical dimension signifies for Jameson. It is obviously not the collapsing of the literal and the figural, their ‘magical’ coexistence in the trope of allegory against the grain of their differing rhetorical status, but rather a specific referentiality and temporality of allegory, a historicizing dimension that the ahistorical genre of fantasy, according to Suvin and Jameson, fails to represent. This suggests that Jameson’s understanding of allegory follows that of Paul de Man who discards a definition of allegory as a “sign that points to something that differs from its literal meaning” for its “lack in discriminatory precision,” because “this important structural aspect may well be a description of figural language in general.”<sup>57</sup> The “figural mapping” that Jameson ascribes to distinctive works of fantasy thus not necessarily refers to allegory, although, as the subsequent paragraph will try to show, allegory would seem the suitable trope to mediate not only magic in fantasy, but the epistemological particularities of the very utopian form that is at the center of Jameson’s study.

Strikingly, Jameson makes no further use of de Man’s concept of allegory, neither in the chapter on “The Great Schism” nor elsewhere in his book. This is all the more surprising, since allegory, identified by Jameson as “an extreme structure of language itself,”<sup>58</sup> could not only provide an aesthetic framework of analysis across generic subdivisions in the field; as Paul de Man’s theorization of allegory shows, it could also tie in with Jameson’s understanding of the utopian form as conditioned by a dialectic interplay between identity and difference. In his essay “The Rhetoric of Temporality,” de Man analyzes a discourse in European Romanticism on the representational potential of symbol/metaphor and allegory, and ultimately locates the difference between the two in different temporalities:

In the world of allegory, time is the originary constitutive [...] The meaning constituted by the allegorical sign [...] can consist only in the repetition [...] of a previous sign with which it can never coincide [...] since it is of the essence of this previous sign to be pure anteriority.[...] Whereas the symbol postulates the possibility of an identity or identification, allegory designates primarily a distance in relation to its own origin, and

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56 *Archaeologies of the Future*, 63.

57 “The Rhetoric of Temporality,” *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005) 187-228, 209.

58 *Ibid.*

renouncing the nostalgia and the desire to coincide, it establishes its language in the void of this temporal difference.<sup>59</sup>

Significantly, de Man describes as the defining characteristic of allegory a form of intertextuality, a double movement by which allegory draws on and, at the same time, distances itself from a previous signification. If one follows de Man's definition, allegory seems to be the trope ideally suited to capture the historical dimension and the structural ambiguities that Jameson identifies as characteristic of the utopian form:

Utopian form is itself a representational meditation on radical difference, radical otherness, and on the systemic nature of the social totality, to the point where one cannot imagine any fundamental change in our social existence which has not first thrown off Utopian visions like so many sparks from a comet. The fundamental dynamic of any Utopian politics (or of any political Utopianism) will therefore always lie in the dialectic of Identity and Difference, to the degree to which such a politics aims at imagining, and sometimes even at realizing, a system radically different from this one.<sup>60</sup>

Allegory suits the utopian form not only because it rests upon the temporal anteriority of the signification to which it refers, and thus historicizes both the previous sign and its relation to it, but also because it disambiguizes, since it is, according to de Man, "a sign that refers to one specific meaning and thus exhausts its suggestive potentialities once it has been deciphered."<sup>61</sup> What was widely considered a deficiency and even "non-art"<sup>62</sup> in the discourse of European Romanticism, acquires, in the context of utopian representation, the

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59 "The Rhetoric of Temporality," 207.

60 Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future*, 4.

61 De Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporality," 188.

62 Ibid. De Man quotes from Hans-Georg Gadamer's treatise on philosophical hermeneutics, *Truth and Method* (1960) where Gadamer, like de Man, traces the history of allegory over the last two centuries and subsumes the aesthetic verdict prevalent among European Romanticists as follows: "Symbol and allegory are opposed as art to non-art." It is worth noting that both Gadamer and de Man argue for a contemporary rehabilitation of the aesthetics, the meaning, and the potential of allegory, regardless of the fundamental differences between hermeneutics and deconstruction in general and the differences in their respective treatment of allegory in practice and theory in particular. See also Steven Mailloux "Hermeneutics, Deconstruction, Allegory," *The Cambridge Companion to Allegory*, eds. Rita Copeland and Peter T. Struck (Cambridge, et al.: Cambridge UP, 2010), 254-265.

status of an epistemological privilege. Moreover, inscribed in the language of allegory is always the mode of production of its origin, a feature privileging allegory to address the problem that, according to Jameson, troubles utopia as a form, and science fiction in general: “[...] our imaginations are hostages to our own mode of production (and perhaps to whatever remnants of past ones it has preserved).”<sup>63</sup>

Yet although his interest is not only in the social and historical conditions of the utopian construct, but also in “the representational relations between them – such as closure, narrative and exclusion or inversion”<sup>64</sup>, and is thus not only a political but also an aesthetic interest in science fictional texts, Jameson nowhere acknowledges the importance of allegory to the utopian form or science fiction in general. While his study provides a wealth of philosophical – and specifically Marxist – theorizations of utopia, interesting structural analyses of utopian (and dystopian) representations in science fiction, as well as some insights into the reasons for the generic struggles in the field of science fiction studies, its interest in aesthetic particularities or generic definition is subordinate to its focus on the political and social implications of utopian texts. Even the chapter on the “The Great Schism” between fantasy and science fiction ultimately concedes that the most distinctive texts cannot be easily classified. This seems to suggest that the relevance of generic classification to contemporary criticism of science fiction is waning, and that, in fact, Margaret Atwood’s notion of permeable membranes separating subdivisions of science fiction might be reflecting a general tendency.

One of the most provocative, recent contributions to science fiction studies, Seo-Young Chu’s *Do Metaphors Dream of Literal Sleep*, offers a radical “science fictional theory of representation”<sup>65</sup> that, at first glance, appears to conveniently affirm Atwood’s assessment. More precisely, what Chu calls a science fictional theory of representation not only programmatically questions generic subdivisions within science fiction, but endeavors to overturn the basic epistemological conventions upon which the generic division between science fiction and ‘realistic’ genres such as realism or naturalism rests. For Chu, science fiction is a mimetic discourse distinct from realism only by a higher degree of elusiveness, characterizing what she calls its “referent” or “object of representation.” Contesting the “pervasive characterization [...] of science fiction as a genre that operates beyond mimesis,”<sup>66</sup> and drawing on Suvin’s

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63 *Archaeologies of the Future*, xiii.

64 *Ibid.*

65 *Do Metaphors Dream of Literal Sleep: A Science Fictional Theory of Representation* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard UP, 2010).

66 *Ibid.*, 3.

definition of cognitive estrangement as achieved by way of “an imaginative framework alternative to the author’s empirical environment,”<sup>67</sup> the author outlines the project of her study as follows:

Transposing this paradigm [that science fiction is generally perceived as a non-mimetic discourse, S.W.] – discovering how it works from the other side – yields a strikingly viable paradigm for reconceptualizing mimesis, science fiction, and the relationship between them. *Do Metaphors Dream* is an argument for such a reconceptualization. Science fiction, I hope to demonstrate, operates fully within the realm of mimesis. The objects of science fictional representations, while impossible to represent in a straightforward manner, are absolutely real. My reconceptualization of science fiction can be understood, more specifically as Suvin’s definition turned inside out. Instead of conceptualizing science fiction as a nonmimetic discourse that achieves the effect of cognitive estrangement through “an imaginative framework,” I conceptualize science fiction as a mimetic discourse whose objects of representation are nonimaginary yet cognitively estranging.<sup>68</sup>

Chu thus not only sets out to offer a theory of science fictional representation, but, in a sweeping gesture, announces to ‘reconceptualize’ mimesis in the process. The conceptual foundation for this ambitious project is, however, flawed by an irritating theoretical confusion and lack of terminological precision, as Chu’s introductory chapter proves. To begin with, in the above passage, Chu ‘transposes’ Suvin’s idea of cognitive estrangement from its original conceptualization as an *effect* of science fictional representation to science fiction’s *objects* of representation: cognitive estrangement is for her not a receptive effect achieved through the dialectic interplay of estranging and cognitively familiar, empirical elements in the diegetic world of a narrative, but inherent to what she calls a text’s cognitively estranging, yet ‘real’ referent. Underlying this ‘transposition’ is an understanding of a fictional text not as a free play of multiple signifiers, but as a monolithic sign and its unambiguous relation to one determinate referent. This referent, a given science fictional text’s (one) object of representation, is, for Chu, in itself cognitively estranging, because its abstract quality challenges representation. Chu elaborates on this assumption by juxtaposing examples of what she considers cognitively estranging science fictional ‘referents’ with the ‘flat’ objects of representation that she ascribes to realism. For her, science fictional representation encompasses objects that resist “straightforward representation”<sup>69</sup> such as

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67 *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, 8.

68 Chu, *Do Metaphors Dream of Literal Sleep*, 3, italics in the original.

69 *Ibid.*, 7 and 8.

the sublime (e.g., outer space), virtual entities (cyberspace), realities imperceptible to the human brain (the fourth dimension), phenomena whose historical contexts have not yet been fully realized (robot rights), and events so overwhelming that they escape immediate experience (shell shock). Although impossible to access empirically – cyberspace cannot be weighed on a scale; a traumatic experience cannot be quantified in units of time – these referents can, have, and do become available for representation in SF. Accordingly, SF is distinguished by its capacity to perform the massively complex representational and epistemological work necessary to render cognitively estranging referents available both for representation and for understanding. Realism by contrast, is distinguished by the alacrity with which it can imitate certain kinds of objects, objects such as almonds and nickels, objects themselves distinguished by the alacrity with which they offer themselves up to flat description.<sup>70</sup>

This passage affirms that Chu's understanding of a fictional text is surprisingly unencumbered by theoretical knowledge. It demonstrates that the presuppositions upon which her science fictional theory of representation rests lack any concept whatsoever of fictionality; it painfully reveals that these presuppositions are devoid of a comprehensive concept of realism as a genre in general and of mimesis in realism in particular; and it testifies to her confounding of the concept of theme or subject matter (that is per se an abstract idea) with abstract phenomena that Chu designates as objects of representation; on top of that, Chu considers the capacity to represent such abstract phenomena to be unique to science fiction. In conjunction with the deluded conceptualization of a fictional text as a monolithic sign and its single extra-diegetic referent, this confusion of abstract subject matter with an abstract and, for Chu, therefore 'cognitively estranging object of representation' leads to multiple fallacies. In the first instance, the author, after positing that "all representation is to some degree science fictional because all reality is to some degree cognitively estranging"<sup>71</sup>, draws from this stipulative definition and her elaborations in the above passage the conclusion that realism

is actually a 'weak' or low intensity variety of science fiction, one that requires relatively little energy to accomplish its representational task as its referents (e.g. softballs) are readily susceptible to representation. Conversely, what most people call 'science fiction' is actually a high-intensity variety of realism, one that requires astronomical levels of energy to accomplish its representational task insofar as its referents (e.g., cyberspace) elaborately defy straightforward representation. In this book 'realism' designates low-intensity

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70 *Do Metaphors Dream of Literal Sleep*, 7.

71 *Ibid.*

mimesis, while science fiction designates high-intensity mimesis. Realism and science fiction, then, exist on a continuum [...] where every object of representation has its place – from shoelaces, dimes, and oak leaves to cyberspace, trauma, black holes, and financial derivatives.<sup>72</sup>

Chu's diction in this passage is telling in many ways. Her description of the representational strategies of a given fictional text as a "task," requiring varying amounts of "energy," again, betrays a striking avoidance of the analytical categories and tools available to literary criticism. The list of 'objects of representation' at the end of the paragraph, again, implicitly suggests that realistic fiction (or what Chu calls "low-intensity mimesis") is incapable of representing abstract ideas such as "trauma, black holes, and financial derivatives." This latter part of the list is in itself conclusive as it, again, confounds the abstraction of subject matter with the abstraction of disembodied empirical phenomena (such as trauma). Most conclusive in this positing of a theorem is, however, the normative vigor marking Chu's attempts to upturn the generic hierarchies that assign minor literary value to science fiction. It is, above all, the tension between her disparaging 'definition' of realism on the one hand, and the ostentatiously unbiased notion of a continuum, expressed in her use of the neutral "high/low-intensity"-modifier, on the other that allows this interpretation.

Built upon the idea of varying degrees of mimesis, Chu's construction of a neutral continuum, by which devaluing positionings of literary texts could be circumvented, reveals that what lies at the bottom of her attempt to reconceptualize mimesis is an anachronistic understanding of the concept. The author obviously ignores that the idea of mimesis (which has been a contentious issue since Plato and Aristotle) has become more complicated with the emergence of critical interrogations of the concept of reality and the relation between art and reality in the twentieth century. For Chu, mimesis clearly means *imitatio*, and her project is motivated by the desire to promote the value of science fictional representations as forms of *imitatio* that are privileged by their capability of depicting abstract subject matter. Ultimately, Chu seems to consider the adjective 'non-mimetic' a devaluing stain, from the traces of which the genre of science fiction has to be purged.

As a consequence of her positing of a neutral mimesis-continuum, on which any given text can be placed according to its "high-" or "low-intensity" mimetic quality, Chu feels free to abandon all generic distinctions. Her theorem not only allows the unproblematic inclusion into science fiction of subgenres such as

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72 Ibid.

surrealism, utopianism, gothic/horror, slipstream, fantasy, and magic realism,<sup>73</sup> but also the arbitrary designation as science fiction of such unlikely text types as travel writing or Korean American memoir.<sup>74</sup> The degree of Chu's vigor to undo the generic divisions that imply the ascription of minor literary value to science fiction, her eagerness to establish a science fictional theory of representation and science fictional representation as mimetic, equals, however, the degree of theoretical neglect and terminological imprecision impeding her project. This becomes particularly obvious when Chu, after her all-encompassing designation of every given text to some degree as science fictional, dismisses allegory as "What Science Fiction is *Not*"<sup>75</sup>, at the end of her methodological introduction. Again, her diction is conclusive in its imprecision:

A narrative in the allegorical mode need not be about something. The purpose of allegory is not to refer to a specific object but to incite the reader's mind to exegesis. Meanwhile, the purpose of science fiction is not to instigate exegetical activity in the reader's mind but to represent a cognitively estranging referent.<sup>76</sup>

Without so much as problematizing her understanding of allegory and its function either as a rhetorical trope, a genre, or a structural element in narrative and/or critical discourse, the author uses the term in this antithetical definition as a negative foil to highlight science fiction's capacity of representing "a cognitively estranging referent." How exactly exegetical activity can be instigated by allegory, if understood as a non-referential text, remains as obscure as the problem how a science fictional text and its representation of a cognitively estranging referent can be recognized and deciphered as such without exegetical activity. This 'definition' contradicts both Paul de Man's contention that allegory is "a sign that refers to one specific meaning"<sup>77</sup> and Chu's own that science fiction is a lyrical form of mimesis<sup>78</sup> marked by its extensive use of figurative language, a contention that she broadly elaborates on. It once more reflects the author's theoretically unencumbered understanding of literary fiction, genre, rhetoric, and, ultimately, fictionality, as well as the decidedly ahistorical and apolitical quality of her science fictional theory of representation. In keeping with the field's inclination towards taxonomy, Chu lists an impressive number of

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73 See *Do Metaphors Dream of Literal Sleep*, 9.

74 See *ibid.*, 69.

75 *Ibid.*, 76, italics in the original.

76 *Do Metaphors Dream of Literal Sleep*, 76, italics in the original.

77 "The Rhetoric of Temporality," 188.

78 See *ibid.*, 10 -63.

fictional texts as examples to substantiate her claims; yet this abundance cannot make up for or undo the theoretical deficiency that flaws these claims in the first place.

Given the terminological and conceptual imprecision in Seo-Young Chu's theory of science fictional representation, her subsequent abandoning of all generic distinctions does not provide solid ground for any definition of speculative fiction as either a genre on its own or a subgenre of science fiction. As the above exemplary discussion of three studies by critics of science fiction demonstrates, the problem of generic definition has encumbered the field from its beginning and will likely not go away anytime soon. The present study takes advantage of this lack of precise generic definition and resorts to the *OED* definitions of the terms 'speculation' and 'speculative' whose wide range of denotations and connotations permits their application to philosophical/literary and economic registers alike.<sup>79</sup> The study considers the fictional texts of its corpus speculative fiction, because their extrapolations from the society in which they originated are speculative and fictional, while the political-economic discourses and practices regulating this society are speculative and factual. This is not to argue that the factual discourses are more 'truthful' than the fictional discourses of the literary texts. Rather, the privileged status assigned to factual discourses in contemporary Western societies authorizes their powerful and effective construction of both meaning and a social reality that together assign an inferior, marginal status to literary fiction and culture in general. In locating the distinction between factual and fictional discourses in the workings of cultural and political institutions and practices, the present study follows a pragmatic approach to fictionality that is generally associated with the work of John R. Searle.<sup>80</sup> In the spirit of this pragmatic approach, recent theories of fictionality<sup>81</sup>

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79 *OED* definitions of "speculation" range from the neutral "contemplation, consideration, or profound study of some subject" (def.5a), or an "attempt to ascertain or anticipate something by probable reasoning" (def.5c), to the "disparaging use, usually with adjs., as bare, mere, pure, etc.; also simply= conjecture, surmise" (def.6c). The definition that most aptly captures the conjectural quality marking both the fictional and the factual discourses relevant to the present study is "as opposed to practice, fact, action, etc" (def. 6b). "speculation, n." *OED Online* (March 2012) Web, 20 Mar. 2012. <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/186113?redirectedFrom=speculation>>.

80 See for example *The Construction of Social Reality* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), and "The Logical Status of Fictional Discourse," *New Literary History* 6 (1974-75): 319-332. In this latter article Searle maintains: "There is no textual property, syntactic or semantic, that will identify a text as a work of fiction" (325), a claim that Dorrit Cohn contests in "Signposts of Fictionality: A Narratological

suggest an understanding of fiction as a complex cultural practice that is regulated by speech act conventions rather than a distinction along the lines of true or false, mimetic or non-mimetic representation.

While, according to speech act conventions prevalent in Western societies, factual discourses are expected to be truthful in that they renounce fictionalizing strategies, fiction is considered a “make-believe”<sup>82</sup> game resting upon an implicit contract or pact between the author of a fictional text and its readership. Alerted by paratextual and textual “signposts of fictionality,”<sup>83</sup> and tacitly acknowledging the specific status of the fictional text, as well as generic particularities (such as the prevalence of unfamiliar or fantastic elements in genres like science fiction), readers of fiction agree to subscribe to the extraordinary “make-believe” contract of fictional narrative. Since in contemporary Western cultures the practice of fiction treats the fictional text as a textual signification that is not committed to an extratextual referent, the notion of mimetic or non-mimetic representation becomes subordinate to coherence and logical consistence within the diegetic world created by fictional narrative. This liberation from extra-textual referentiality does not imply that fictional narrative cannot provide insights or ‘truth’ beyond its textual boundaries. On the contrary, freed from extra-textual referentiality, a fictional narrative can assume the function of a thought experiment, by which the validity of non-fictional discourses and practices that form the political, social, and cultural reality of a given society can be critically reflected, tested, and challenged. Fictional narrative can thus comment on factual discourses’ power of meaning making and subject formation, and it can spotlight contradictions and fictionalizing strategies in these so called discourses of truth.

To consider fiction a practice that is conditioned by speech act conventions and regulated by a given culture’s institutions and discourses of truth implies that the notion of degrees or scales of fictionality (which seems to be the assumption underlying both Seo-Young Chu’s model of a continuum of mimesis and Margaret Atwood’s perception that speculative fiction offers “a slight twist on the society we have now”) loses traction. It also implies that, instead, generic conventions and paratextual discourses gain pertinence, since they determine and

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Perspective,” *The Distinction of Fiction* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins UP, 1999), 109-131.

81 See for example Frank Zipfel, *Fiktion, Fiktivität, Fiktionalität: Analysen zur Fiktion in der Literatur und zum Fiktionsbegriff in der Literaturwissenschaft* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 2001), esp. 279-299.

82 Umberto Eco qtd. in Zipfel, *Fiktion, Fiktivität, Fiktionalität*, 283.

83 Dorrit Cohn, “Signposts of Fictionality,” 109.

navigate the reception of a fictional text. Significantly, the three texts at the center of the present study are hybrid mixes that play with the conventions of genre and elude easy generic classification. Their authorial paratexts even further complicate a convenient placement in terms of genre. It is important to note that the study's classification of the texts as 'speculative fiction' against the grain of their hybridity and complicating paratexts is based on their critical fictional negotiation of factual discourses, whose fictionalizing, speculative strategies they reveal, rather than on a random occurrence of fantastic elements in their diegetic worlds.

Although these fantastic diegetic elements – the elements that would be cognitively estranging *nova* in Darko Suvin's terms – present various defamiliarizing, imaginary divergences from the empirical framework of contemporary North American societies, they have in common that they highlight and comment on disembodiment as a specific epistemological condition characterizing and enabling the regime of globalized capitalism and its underlying ideology of borderless, global free trade. In Kathryn Bigelow's *Strange Days*, the fantastic element is a technical device that allows the recording and commodification of sensual input from the human brain; in Karen Tei Yamashita's *Tropic of Orange*, the fantastic encompasses such diverse instances as the magical warping of geography and an ambiguous cyborg figure whose representation oscillates between corporeality and digital coding; and in Larissa Lai's *Salt Fish Girl*, a mutated clone transcends her artificially manufactured, genetic code. In terms of temporality, the texts differ significantly: *Strange Days* projects a fictitious Los Angeles on the eve of the new millennium that is only five years ahead of the time of the film's production; the diegetic world of *Tropic of Orange* is set in a fictitious Los Angeles that is contemporaneous with the novel's production and can be regarded alternate history,<sup>84</sup> and *Salt Fish Girl* combines an alternate history

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84 Gary K. Wolfe designates as 'alternate history' a "narrative premise claimed equally by science fiction and fantasy," and refers to Darko Suvin's definition of the term as "that form in SF in which an alternate locus (in space,time, etc.) that shares the material and causal verisimilitude of the writer's world is used to articulate different possible solutions of societal problems, those problems being of sufficient importance to require an alteration in the overall history of the narrated world." "Coming to Terms," *Speculations on Speculation: Theories of Science Fiction*, eds. James Gunn and Matthew Candelaria (Lanham, et al.: Scarecrow, 2005) 13-22, 14. However, the idea of "different possible solutions of societal problems" in Suvin's definition insinuates an idealistic, utopian thrust that does not apply to *Tropic of Orange*'s rather

strand ,set in China, with a futurist strand, set in a near future British Columbia, where a corporation-governed city has replaced Vancouver.

Regardless of these differences in temporality, all three texts address risks the construction of which is enabled by a technology-driven disembodiment of experience. Conditioned by the encoding of information in signs that no longer have a referent this disembodiment of experience reflects the digitalized, semiotic immateriality that has become a hallmark of globalized capitalism. Beyond this critique, fantastic elements have in all three texts an allegoric, meta-representational and often self-referential function; rather than stereotypical ingredients of a generic formula, they are the medium of a reflection on the cultural practice of fiction, its production and reception, and its culturally coded devaluation vis-à-vis discourses whose authority in the symbolic order is based on their claim to immaculate factuality. This function of epistemological self-reflection, in conjunction with the texts' subtle criticism of an epistemological condition that enables a very specific political-economic rationality, motivates the use of fantastic elements in the texts' narratives among other literary devices. Given the enduring devaluation of fantasy and science fiction, this recourse to the fantastic is a risky endeavor, signaling an author's audacious challenging of the institutions, practices, and conventions that regulate the ascription of artistic value in contemporary Western societies.

Invariably set in a hyper-capitalist Pacific Rim, the critical dystopias projected by Bigelow, Yamashita, and Lai's fictional narratives refer to and position themselves against factual discourses and their utopian construction of irreal spaces and irreal subjects, a speculative, utopian construction whose future-oriented thrust is necessarily fictional and ties in with a general hyper-fictionality characterizing the global economy in the twenty-first century. This hyper-fictionality entails that the space of possibility that global capitalism is persistently carving out for itself is increasingly becoming a space of pure representation; in this space, all agents and operations are part of an endless chain of interacting, mutually referential signifiers, and leave only volatile traces. As fictional speculations on the formation of subjectivity in the North American Pacific Rim, the texts not only address a historically and locally specific manifestation of free market ideology, but tackle the social and political changes in North American societies that came with the growing currency of the ideal of a borderless world market; in other words, the texts highlight how an almost universal subscription to this ideal fosters the

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dystopian, and at best ironically motivated imaginary divergence from the social reality of an empirical L.A. in the 1990s.

tireless undoing [of] all the social gains made since the inception of the socialist and communist movements, [the] repealing [of] all the welfare measures, the safety net, the right to unionization, industrial, and ecological regulatory laws, [while] offering to privatize pensions and indeed to dismantle whatever stands in the way of the free market all over the world.<sup>85</sup>

Bigelow, Yamashita, and Lai's texts were produced and published within a decade around 2000, and thus at a point in time that, together with the topographical and temporal setting at a millennial North American Pacific Rim and the subtle negotiation of a thorough neoliberalization of governance in their diegetic worlds, suggests their close relation to the emergence of the North American Pacific Rim discourse that in the last decades of the 'American Century' euphorically announced the coming of a golden 'Pacific Century.' The fictional texts seem to respond to and contest a discourse, whose authority and power of meaning-making rests upon the cultural convention that designates the political and the economic as the realm of the factual. The subsequent delineation of this factual discourse and its critical reception hopes to demonstrate, however, that the political-economic utopianism expressed in the imaginary of a borderless Pacific region resorts to fictionalizing strategies that result in the "construction of an optical image from which existence itself [...] has been removed by a sleight of hand, a masterful feat of ideological prestidigitation."<sup>86</sup> Such a homogenizing optical image is, as Fredric Jameson argues, characteristic of early versions of the utopian form and essential to the form's requirement for narrative closure.

## 1.2 PACIFIC RIM UTOPIANISM

The utopianist Pacific Rim discourse emerged in the mid-1980s at the North American Pacific coast during a time of economic crisis and political-economic restructuring that affected North-America on both sides of the 49th parallel. In Canada, economic crisis was induced by oil shocks, economic slowdown and a federal deficit, whose growth was, in part, due to generous expenditure by the Canadian welfare state during the 1970s.<sup>87</sup> In the U.S., under the Reagan

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85 Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future*, 4.

86 *Ibid.*, 193.

87 See David Ley, *Millionaire Migrants: Trans-Pacific Life Lines* (Malden, et al., Wiley-Blackwell, 2010) 51.

administration, a huge military buildup sanctioned by the Strategic Defense Initiative<sup>88</sup> caused an enormous expansion of the federal budget deficit. Although the U.S. economy in general saw a favorable development during the Reagan administration and the reasons for restrictions on social welfare were, in the U.S., part of ‘Reagonomics’ and thus more openly programmatic than those in Canada, the outcome was the same in both North American nations: there was a “new emphasis on markets and in particular to finding new markets,”<sup>89</sup> which was accompanied by radical cutbacks on social programs, contracting out, massive privatization, and the general “re-direction of state power towards an entrepreneurial ethos.”<sup>90</sup> This re-direction towards an entrepreneurial ethos and the modeling of the state as a business enterprise is characteristic of the rationality of neoliberalism which, “sustained by a rising neoconservative culture,”<sup>91</sup> increasingly gained ground from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s in both Canada and the U.S.

For the social reality in both states, the ‘freedom’ epitomized in neoliberal rhetoric by the promised reduction of state power has proven treacherous, as it translated into substantial tax-cuts for the upper and middle-class, and into benefit cuts and the individual ‘freedom’ to take care of their own needs for the poor, whose expectations concerning public services have been pervasively disciplined.<sup>92</sup> The need to find new markets on a global scale has, in the legislatures of both states, motivated the removal of national restrictions to the free movement of capital (“such as tariffs, punitive taxation arrangements, planning and environmental controls, or other locational impediments”<sup>93</sup>) and to the mobility of a wealthy class of entrepreneurial migrants (exemplary representatives of *homo oeconomicus*, the ideal-typical actor of the neoliberal state), while “national barriers to the free movement of labour have if anything been strengthened, with more comprehensive and meticulous protection of borders.”<sup>94</sup>

The speculative fiction of the Pacific Rim was created during this time of neoliberal restructuring and intensified competition for new markets on a global scale. Incited by the soaring economies of East Asian countries (David Ley emphasizes that, while the burgeoning economies of Japan and the Four Tigers –

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88 See “Reagan, Ronald Wilson,” Thomas L. Purvis, *A Dictionary of American History* (Malden, et al.: Blackwell, 2002).

89 Ley, *Millionaire Migrants*, 51.

90 *Ibid.*, 53.

91 *Ibid.*, 52.

92 See *ibid.*, 52.

93 David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005) 66.

94 Ley, *Millionaire Migrants*, 64.

Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan – were praised as economic models, China was, at the time, still considered a target market for North-American export rather than a model) the business sections of North-American mainstream media, in the 1980s, increasingly covered East Asian economic success, and “the Pacific Rim dramatically entered public consciousness.”<sup>95</sup> It is important to note, however, that, in contrast to comparable “Atlantic networks which include also military, social and cultural relationships,”<sup>96</sup> “the Pacific Rim as a putative region was shaped in the North-American imagination as a business opportunity and little else.”<sup>97</sup>

Joining the praise in the mainstream media, a striking number of motivational guides by North American economists, published from the mid-1980s to the early 1990s, euphorically celebrated Asian economic success, and, conjoining in their rhetoric tropes like ‘miracle’ and ‘dynamism’ with ideas of transnational convergence and free trade, greatly contributed to the shaping of the unreal space of the Pacific Rim: books like *The Third Wave* (Alvin Toffler, 1980), *The Chinese Connection* (Michael Goldberg, 1985), *The Pacific Century* (Staffan B. Linder, 1986), *Pacific Destiny* (Robert Elegant, 1990), and *Megatrends 2000* (John Naisbitt, 1990) were highly influential to the general “talking up”<sup>98</sup> of the Pacific Rim, and coined a futurologist lingo that Bruce Cumings has termed “rimspeak.”<sup>99</sup> According to Cumings, rimspeak reflects a tendency to gloss over political and cultural differences (such as the ‘red scare’ of communism) that had seemed insurmountable before the 1970s. Cumings argues that with the emergence of rimspeak and its product ‘Pacific Rim,’ a thoroughly strategic reevaluation of these differences took place: “‘Pacific Rim’ invoked a newborn ‘community’ that anyone, socialist or not, could join...as long as they were capitalist. Rimspeakers of course continued to look with curiosity if not disdain upon anyone who did not privilege the market.”<sup>100</sup>

Cumings’s assessment reflects a widespread rejection by cultural critics of any positivist notion of the Pacific region. Published in *What Is In a Rim*,<sup>101</sup> an

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95 Ibid., 41.

96 Ley, *Millionnaire Migrants*, 41.

97 Ibid., 65.

98 Ibid., 46

99 “Rimspeak: Or, The Discourse of the Pacific Rim,” *What Is In A Rim: Critical Perspectives on the Pacific Region Idea*, ed. Arif Dirlik (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998) 53-72.

100 Ibid., 56.

101 *What Is In A Rim: Critical Perspectives on the Pacific Region Idea*, ed. Arif Dirlik (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998).

interdisciplinary volume edited by Arif Dirlik and dedicated to the historicization and deconstruction of the Asia Pacific myth, Cumings's article analyzes rimspeak practitioners' speculative construction of the Pacific Rim as a future capitalist paradise, a borderless, utopian marketplace. Like Cumings, other contributors to *What Is In a Rim* show the Pacific Rim as a construct depending on textuality, the latest narrative version of a historical "earth inscription"<sup>102</sup> whose older mythical narratives were centered around the term 'discovery,' while concealing their ideological agenda and economic interest in the region, as well as their orientalist marginalization and suppression of Asian others. As Arif Dirlik argues, differing perspectives on the Pacific region are contingent upon situated-ness and location within a network of historical relationships; particularly the Euro-American Pacific region idea has, according to Dirlik, always been "a competing set of ideational constructs that project upon a certain location on the globe the imperatives of interest, power, or vision of these historically produced relationships."<sup>103</sup>

While Consuelo Leon traces the beginnings of a Pacific image in American minds back to information about Asia which reached Europe in the thirteenth century and was communicated to Americans through British culture,<sup>104</sup> Arif Dirlik aligns the beginning of an Asia Pacific idea with the global expansion of Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth century.<sup>105</sup> Both Dirlik and Leon point to the crucial role of commerce as an incentive for the historical 'discoveries' in the Pacific area and the importance of traveler accounts, which were, according to Leon, immensely popular in European countries over several centuries. These early traveler accounts are interesting in the context of the late-twentieth century

102 Arif Dirlik, "The Asia-Pacific Idea," *What Is In A Rim: Critical Perspectives on the Pacific Region Idea*, ed. Arif Dirlik (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998) 15-36, 19.

103 Dirlik, "The Asia-Pacific Idea," 15-16.

104 Consuelo Leon, "Foundations of the American Image of the Pacific," *boundary 2* 21.1 (1994): 17-29, 18. As an early example Leon mentions Marco Polo's account of his *Voyage to the Orient* (1271). This idea of a mediation of the Pacific image by British culture may also account for the susceptibility to the Pacific Rim imaginary of economists and political leaders in Canada.

105 "The Asia Pacific Idea," 16. See also Dennis O. Flynn and Arturo Giraldez, "The Pacific Rim's Past Deserves a Future," *Studies in the Economic History of the Pacific Rim*, eds. Sally Miller, et al. (London: Routledge, 1998) 1-18. According to Flynn and Giraldez, the birth of European trading in the Pacific area – initiated by Spain and labeled 'Manila Galleon Trade' – can be exactly dated, since it coincided with the founding of the city of Manila in 1571.

Pacific Rim imaginary, because they reflect an inseparability of travel and trade, and, beneath a documentary demeanor, apply decidedly literary, aestheticizing strategies to create images of a Pacific cornucopia, a Pacific paradise inhabited by friendly savages waiting for civilization through European travelers and traders. Their attraction to European readers was based upon a predictable generic structure<sup>106</sup> that allowed a kind of discursive time travel to a stage of primitivism that Europeans had only recently left behind.

At once affirming Europe as their civilized place of enunciation and composing the Pacific area as an empty *terra incognita*, inhabited merely by promiscuous cannibals, fifteenth and sixteenth century traveler accounts laid the foundation for a hegemonic Euro-American strategy of appropriation by representation that was, on both continents, complemented by increasing mapmaking activity. In 1783, the publication of James Cook's *Journal of Captain Cook's Last Voyage to the Pacific Ocean in the Quest of a North-West Passage* ushered in a whole century of Euro-American trade and colonization, an era that historians would later term the 'Age of Cook.'<sup>107</sup> In the Age of Cook, immediately after the American Revolutionary War, the newly independent United States of America started to create a maritime American empire with a China a trade of its own, and intensified the Pacific whaling that played an

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106 In his reading of Montaigne's essay "Of Cannibals: The Savage 'I,'" Michel de Certeau describes the formulaic structure of sixteenth-century traveler accounts as consisting of three basic elements: a framing meta-discourse of the outbound journey to a strange, different place, "starting out in search of the other with the impossible task of saying the truth," followed by an 'ethnological' description of the savage society as seen by a true witness who idealizes the savage community as a beautiful organic body, transforming even cannibalism and polygamy into forms of beauty, and finally the homecoming of the traveler-narrator whose transformed perspective is "augmented with the authority to speak in the name of the other and command belief." "Montaigne's 'Of Cannibals: The Savage 'I,'" *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other* (London: U of Minnesota P, 1997) 67-79, 69. Tracing a pattern in eighteenth-century Pacific travel writing, Michelle Burnham argues that "accounts of Pacific travel are characterized [...] by modes of narrativizing risk that reflect a new eighteenth-century conception of numbers and time, and that work to conceal the violence and loss that often characterized these voyages." "Trade, Time, and Risk in Pacific Travel Writing," *Early American Literature* 46.3 (2011): 425-447, 431.

107 See Leon, "Foundations," 18. Michelle Burnham mentions that George Vancouver who explored the northwest coast and particularly British Columbia in the 1790s was a member of Cook's third expedition. See "Trade, Time, and Risk," 433.

important part in the New England economy,<sup>108</sup> long before the idea of a continental empire ‘from sea to shining sea’ was fully realized. Even Euro-American struggles over territorial claims on the American continent<sup>109</sup> were at least in part motivated by the quest and the international competition for direct access to and control over the Pacific coast.<sup>110</sup> The imperative to write the map of the new American nation in a quest for political cohesion was thus inextricably linked to the quest for economic growth and new markets, an interplay of nation-building and economically motivated imperialism that had characterized the capitalist market society from its beginning in the Early Modern era.<sup>111</sup>

Since U.S.-American nation-building hinged upon an idea of progress that included both the need to sever ties to the European mother country and an imperative for territorial expansion and economic growth, the American pursuit of hegemony over the North-West coast was doubly motivated and fuelled by cartography and literature produced by travelers, traders, and whalers. Consuelo Leon stresses the intense interest in mapmaking and in the exploration of the North-West coast of the Early Republic political elite, and particularly of Thomas Jefferson, “whose vast geographical knowledge was augmented by political pragmatism, [and who] fostered a metamorphosis of the American perception of the Pacific from a rich, but vague notion to one that demanded concrete governmental policies that protected American interests.”<sup>112</sup>

By 1820, cartography and literature, commerce and international rivalry about and around the Pacific had shaped the idea of an enormous wealth in the region, as well as the imperative of U.S.-American control over it. As Consuelo

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108 See Dirlik, “The Asia Pacific Idea,” 19.

109 See Paul Giles, “The Deterritorialization of American Literature,” *Shades of the Planet: American Literature as World Literature*, eds. Wai Chee Dimmock and Lawrence Buell (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2007) 39-61. While Leon reads smaller conflicts like the Nootka Sound controversy (1789) as instances of historical Euro-American rivalries that are indicative of “the real value placed on the Northwest coast and trans-Pacific commerce” (“Foundations,” 26), Giles points to similar reasons underlying the British-American War of 1812 and the Mexican War (1846). Giles emphasizes the importance of geography and maps to American education at the time; he stresses that the reciting of place names functioned as the imaginative appropriation of an unsettled continent. (See esp. 42).

110 See Leon, “Foundations,” 26.

111 See Christine So, *Economic Citizens: A Narrative of Asian American Visibility* (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 2008) 16.

112 Leon, “Foundations,” 26.

Leon writes, “The United States, as a new nation, understood that, regardless of its relationship to Europe, the Pacific Ocean would be the more decisive element in defining its future.” The futurist ring in Leon’s diction reflects the utopian fantasy involved in these early American ideas of the Pacific, a utopianist tone that foreshadows the utopianist rhetoric and narrative construction of the late-twentieth-century Pacific Rim ideology. In the formation of this ideology, California and its rapid development played a crucial role. Shortly before the formal incorporation of California into the nation in 1850, the discoveries of gold in 1846 and the ensuing gold rush had “kicked off an unparalleled movement of persons, animals and equipment,”<sup>113</sup> transforming the southern part of the North American Pacific coast region from a thinly settled frontier, controlled by Roman Catholic missions, into a new state, bustling with 250,000 people. Subsuming the impact and implications of the gold discoveries, Edward W. Soja writes:

Out of practically nowhere, a formidable capitalist presence emerged along the Pacific Ocean rim of the New World, beginning a Californian tilt to the global space economy of capitalism that would continue for the next century and a half. California gold significantly fuelled the recovery and expansion of industrial capitalism after the age of revolution, helped prime the pump for the territorial consolidation and rapid urban industrialization of the United States, and deposited in the San Francisco bay region one of the late nineteenth century’s most dynamic centres of accumulation. But the process, once begun, did not end there.<sup>114</sup>

With California having ended its frontier status and having turned into a “dynamic centre of accumulation,” the Pacific region had become the new “frontier of capitalist development”<sup>115</sup> What comes to the fore in this perpetual movement of the frontier to ever new territories is the inextricable relationship between the ideology of Manifest Destiny and the market character of the frontier. Emphasizing the centrality of the market to the frontier as a moving concept, Richard White describes the frontier as the middle ground of exchange

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113 Karen Clay, “Mexican California: Trade, Institutions and Law,” *Studies in the Economic History of the Pacific Rim*, eds. Sally M. Miller, et al. (London: Routledge, 1998) 197-209, 191.

114 *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London: Verso, 1989) 191.

115 Dirlik, “There is More in the Rim Than Meets the Eye,” *What Is In A Rim: Critical Perspectives on the Pacific Region Idea*, ed. Arif Dirlik (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998), 352-369, 352.

between different peoples “who engaged in trade [...] and had to arrive at a mutual understanding of what constituted a market, so much so that the exchange relationship could sometimes be indistinguishable from the way of life that surrounded it.”<sup>116</sup> This perception of the frontier as a market ties in with a late-nineteenth-century discourse on speculation as a driving force, propelling U.S.-American history from the Columbian expedition to the gradual ‘civilizing’ settlement and processing of the ‘waste spaces’ of the continent.<sup>117</sup> According to this discourse, the proverbial ‘vastness’ of yet unclaimed territories prompted the merging of geographic and economic imagination with the claim to exceptionalism, as a 1889 comment by economic historian George Gibson exemplifies: “The ‘magnificent distances’ in our country, and its boundless resources, opened a *vista* to the speculator which is not likely to occur again in the history of mankind.”<sup>118</sup> This discourse cast immigration as motivated by the speculative projection of future value, and, implicitly, the U.S.-American nation as a nation of speculators.

The official closing of the U.S.-American frontier in the 1890s did not stop the American imagination from projecting speculative vistas in search of “boundless resources”<sup>119</sup> and “the cult of Manifest Destiny never halted at the Pacific shores of California, Oregon, and Washington,”<sup>120</sup> as Arthur P. Dudden asserts. With the Pacific as the new frontier of capitalist development, American speculative vistas were now officially extended to the Pacific region, and the long-standing Euro-American claim to control over its homogenizing symbolic construction became key to frontier negotiations. That the need for symbolic hegemony had gained specific pertinence became evident by the late nineteenth century: not only had the “pacific shores of California, Oregon, and Washington”<sup>121</sup> become target destinations for migrant laborers from Asia and the South, but the American market had become the projection screen for speculative vistas and the target destination for Asian capitalist endeavors.

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116 Qtd. in William Cronon, George Miles, and Jay Gitlin, *Under the Open Sky: Rethinking America's Western Past* (New York: Norton, 1992), 13.

117 See Urs Stäheli, *Spektakuläre Spekulation: Das Populäre der Ökonomie* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 2007), 173.

118 George R. Gibson qtd in Stäheli, *Spektakuläre Spekulation*, 182, italics by Urs Stäheli.

119 Ibid.

120 “The American Pacific: How the West Was Also Won,” *Studies in the Economic History of the Pacific Rim*, eds. Sally M. Miller, et al. (London: Routledge, 1998) 94-103, 94.

121 Ibid.