

Literature, System, Power: Postmodernism and After

I will talk to you today about postmodern literature and politics in the context of the post-Cold War years, a period widely seen as a *paradigm shift in U. S. and world culture*. This shift, in particular the change in the political meaning of postmodernism, is an issue that started nagging me as I was completing, in the mid-late 1990s, a book on postmodern literary rewriting and politics. The work I have done ever since addresses, one way or the other, the problem of this transformation. Now, Professor David also asked me to give you an overview of my scholarship on this subject. I will oblige by going all the way back to that book on rewriting—its main title *was Rewriting*, actually—but only as a jump-off point for a more specific argument about postmodernism, its defining logic of cultural recycling, and the evolving politics of intertextual reiterations in the twenty-first century. Before I begin, let me point out something that, I am sure, is obvious to us all at such a diverse gathering, where so many traditions, languages, and concepts, including political concepts, are in play: as a group, here, we are operating with a range of discrepant understandings of the political, of political effectiveness, of power and resistance thereto, of effective dissent and its illusion, of opposition and cooptation, of systems of power and anti-systemic pushback, of what all this stuff meant before 1989 under Communism and what it may mean today, of the various and asymmetrical ways of distinguishing between politics and the political, between macro- and micro-politics, and so forth.

Like French wines, these notions do not travel well, as we say in English. These are not universals; their value is contextual. They connect and interrelate—they are relational, and therefore inherently postmodern, if you will—but they do not transcend, or transcend

incompletely, the sites of their practice. There are no universal values in general, but this this is a discussion for another time. Closer to home now: in *Occident Express*, you come a funny scene about the dissenting politics of Western-manufactured shopping bags. Why is or was that funny? Can shopping bags or any packaging item for that matter be political, perchance subversive? Yes? No? When? Where? Romanian writer Radu Cosasu infamously published, in the late 1950s, a newspaper article on a schoolgirl who brought to class, on her birthday, an empty bottle of whiskey, filled it with water, passed it around to “celebrate,” and ended up in jail for it, where she committed suicide. How about that? Is the paper or plastic *dilemma*—a propos of what drives Visniec’s drama—a matter of ecology? Of politics? Should his PhD candidate in that play be ridiculed? Awarded his degree? Does he have a point at all? If not, maybe his committee has one. Again, when, where, under which circumstances?

In any case, I am going to tell you a story here, the recent and somewhat sad story of U.S. postmodernism. But this story may or may not be the same in the various necks of our planetary woods. “Pomo” used to be cool. Not any more, not where I live. I am also going to take my time and actually develop, as I say, an argument—this is going to get kind of “dense” at times, so thank you for bearing with me, all the more so that I am reading my off my laptop, which I have not done before. And, to get us started, let me note that I have attended to the thorny business of postmodern politics in the epistemologically challenging context of the *contemporary*, of its experiencing *and* of its study, which, historically speaking, have rarely been truly coeval or intellectually symmetric, if you will. What this means is that not only have we tended to get ahead of ourselves in our analyses and hypotheses—which is somewhat inevitable, I guess—but that the contemporary itself has been out of whack with respect to itself *and* us. For it no longer is what it used to be *as a cultural period* decades ago, when I began to reflect on it more systematically. As I have said repeatedly, the contemporary, today, is not the post-World

War II period any more. Neither is the *immediately* contemporary—the last two or three decades— basically synonymous with the postmodern, in the U. S. or in literary cultures such as Romania’s. This is not only because modernism—or “modernisms,” rather—and New Modernist Studies have spectacularly expanded over the past ten years to gobble up authors and phenomena previously considered postmodern and discussed as such—incidentally, this is very annoying to you especially if you have built a career glossing on postmodern stuff. But more substantial developments have been in play also.

For one thing, the word in the street is that postmodernism as we know it has been on the wane of late. There has been some evidence for this. Postmodernism peaked both globally *and* by taking up a quintessentially global thematics in the 1990s, as we will see momentarily; by the same movement, it simultaneously reached a moment of exhaustion. It all but became a “literature of exhaustion” itself, to press into service here the phrase by which, half a century ago, John Barth pointed not so much to the end of an era but to the rise of what would be the postmodern synthesis or the “literature of replenishment,” as he put it in another well-known essay, published in 1979. For another thing, the geocultural landscape I will survey in a minute—the planetary space of the 1990s—is not what it used to be, geopolitically, environmentally, and otherwise. The world has simply moved on and not necessarily in the right direction. If the end of the Cold War opened up the entire world to the postmodern, rendering the planet an intertextually integrated cultural ecology, *a literary world-system to build up and celebrate*, during the following decades different and worrisome ecologies take center stage; to those, it seems, the allusive indirectness of postmodernism seems less prepared to bear witness, less effective aesthetically and politically. As I will insist more emphatically later on, it is in this context of rising, worldwide geopolitical and ecological troubles, that the postmodern reprise of cultural history and literary stories went on and on, faster and faster, at nauseam, speeding up a

poetics of repetitiveness and the overall repetition of the same—and same old, same old—that further exhausted the postmodern and ended up all but cutting the umbilical cord tethering it to the contemporary and its urgencies, to *contemporary relevance*, one might say.

What I am talking about, then, is a postmodern Pyrrhic victory marked in the American postmodernism of the 1990s by this poetics of cultural redramatization—never boring, always with a cool twist, witty, ironic, or otherwise—that set up rewriting, complete with the cognate practices of adaptation, retelling, and so forth as a “dominant” literary-cultural technology of the decade. Let us note this: there is both value and risk in this technology as in any other.

Technology and form are what we make of them; we live and die by them, and so is—so did?—postmodernism as it relied on it more and more. For, to be sure, a steadily swelling cohort of authors were wielding it around this time, *rewriting to write their books* probably more than ever before in literary history. In the book mentioned earlier, I have described this rewriting as *extensive*. Rewriting is *intensive*, I have also proposed, insofar as the rewritten text’s avatar retells its ancestor in detail, oftentimes by means of recognizable narrative parallels, analogies, and related reconfigurations of plot, character, setting, theme, and so on; and rewriting is *extensive*—culturally extensive, that is—for what gets revisited is not just earlier literary works but also older, sometimes ingrown representations of nationhood, gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, etc. I would add here and will repeat later on that rewriting can also be, and was, like any excessively repetitive procedure, *exhausting*, and paradigmatically so.

Now, the cultural and political work done by rewrites is *not* to be underestimated. Those representations are deep-seated in the rewritten texts and have left their imprint on U. S. history and the American literary canon. Their *postmodern postmortem vitality*, as it were, is conspicuous in genres ranging from TV cartoons, avant-pop “graftings” such as Mark Leyner “heinous revisions,” Raymond Federman’s “playgarisms,” and Kathy Acker’s literary “piracy”

to full-blown renarrations of Herman Melville, Henry David Thoreau, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Walt Whitman, Louisa May Alcott, Edgar Allan Poe, and other American classics. The “intensive” appropriations and sequels, the “apocryphal” and permutational interpolations to which great American writers are subjected in the 1990s serve as vehicles of choice for a cultural rewriting that becomes increasingly *cross-cultural* on a global scale in what I have called the late-global era. The intertextual exchanges and, most revealingly, the geographic imagination of U. S. authors overlap less and less with the domestic archive and territory.

This discrepancy is no happenstance. It bears witness to a widening, epoch-defining asymmetry and is part of a revisionary project that characterizes twilight postmodernism and, as I have claimed elsewhere, the protracted transition out of the postmodern paradigm. Alongside literary critics, historians, sociologists, political scientists, global studies specialists, and other humanists, the decade’s American “rewriters” intimate that, as Arjun Appadurai contends in one of the most observant scholarly books of the time, “[n]ation-states, for all their important differences . . . make sense only as part of a system.”

Wrapping and dramatizing our globalizing planet in something that might be dubbed—à la Appadurai’s “globalscapes”—“storyscape,” the world-embracing fictional imagination of the 1990s both comes on the heels of this surging interactivity and ramps it up. Undergirded by this “worlded” imaginary of nomadic myths, stories, plot structures, and motifs, post-Cold War era cross-cultural rewriting literally and thematically operates transnationally: it effectively rewrites across national traditions and territories, but it also thematizes this textual de- and trans-territorialization by taking up inherited, territory-bound constructions and enactments of nation, national affiliation, and the like. Rewriting still obtains intra-culturally, but, generally speaking, it amplifies textually and contextually into a narrative ecology or *narratosphere* integrating national domains. Progressively and emphatically intercultural in a transnational and even

planetary sense, the rewrites stemming from this symbolic commerce take postmodern revisionism to another level, of more conspicuously and capaciously sociocultural and geopolitical significance. This is how they open up new spaces across, beyond, above, and sometimes against the nation's culturally and politically centripetal pull. Attesting to the post-Berlin Wall dynamic, velocity, and topology of global transactions, to the accelerating mobility of people, commodities, texts, ideas, and data, in brief, to the quintessential "interconnectedness" of the late twentieth-century world-system, the *world order of stories* that coalesces in the 1990s goes to show that this system is not only economic but also literary, textual and *intertextual*. The system is driven by a *will-to-repeat* that reaches across "deep" spaces and times. Its stage now is, more and more, the world as a whole; it is against this backdrop and in close relation to it that many American writers of the last century's final decade unfold the canvas of their re-visions.

I will provide a couple of examples of this revisionism, and I want to begin with Lee Siegel's 1999 novel *Love in a Dead Language* because it is an emblematic case for an entire postmodern culture caught euphorically in the sophisticated yet downward spiral of narrative reiterations. *Love in a Dead Language* incorporates the complex trope of narrative "travel" and translation to unfold an ampler, more ambitious, and inherently cosmopolitan panorama of stories, cultural, and erotic affinities, compatibilities, conversions, and traffickings, a vision otherwise attuned to our time's global-scale, cross-national developments. Both in his scholarship and fiction, Siegel shows how discourse works as an agent of communication and exchange that set up a dialogue between Western and Eastern traditions through planetary literary flows and narrative "vagrancy." His books pursue the role stories hold in the effective fostering of cultural languages that cut across idioms, locations, and political-economic systems. Not unlike Mircea Eliade, another historian of religions who turned to fiction to flesh out scenarios of intercultural encounters, Siegel suspects that "stories unify the world," as he puts it

in his 1995 novel *City of Dreadful Night*. “Real stories have no end,” one of his characters says. “None of the storyteller’s stories,” he goes on, “has a beginning or an end—the story he has just told is but an interlude in a larger story. . . . Though the weaver of tales often stops with *but that’s another story*, there are no other stories, no separate, discreet tales. There are no borders. . . . All of the stories, each one having limited versions, each with infinite recensions, are interlocked and interlinked episodes of a greater, amorphous epic.”

In Siegel’s storyworld, plots, motifs, characters, and images journey across the planet and make it one narrative continuum in the process. They cover the world so tightly that “there’s no way out of it”—notably, no way out of this narrative world bubble, and this will prove both enlightening and costly, as I will comment later. What is more, stories travel the world but not necessarily “well,” as we say of certain wines, for they themselves *transmigrate*; they move around, and, as they do so, they change as they are exported to unwonted locations. Thus, *City of Dreadful Night* places Dracula in India and redoes Bram Stoker’s work by detailing the “influence” of “Bra[h]m Stokerji” on Indian narratives of vampires, ghosts, ghouls, and ogres. *Love in a Dead Language* reenacts the *Kamasutra* at the same time that it rewrites, and relocates to India, *Lolita* and elements of Philip Roth’s *The Professor of Desire* and *Operation Shylock*. In Siegel’s transtextual and transcultural imaginary, Western stories and their characters turn up in Eastern garments and vice versa, swathing the world in “spirals of recursion.” Thus, *Lolita* is renamed Lalita (Gupta); one Leopold Roth, a Sanskrit scholar, does the “Humbert Humbert in India” routine; and the *Kamasutra* provides, funnily enough, the erotic ideal to which Nabokovian fantasies fail to measure up.

A variety of rewriting, transmigration is Siegel’s narrative and cultural recipe. In a fashion that becomes de rigueur in late twentieth-century postmodernism, he deliberately and ironically puts together an allusive, identifiable, intertextual, and transcultural plot by moving

extant stories around. The reader might, for instance, discern in it a basic metafictional convention, namely, the text and its “double” or “metatext,” in the form of a faux translation, critical “commentary” similar to Nabokov’s *Pale Fire*, or both. Significantly, Siegel weaves two different formal threads into this complexly nested structure, Western and South-East Asian, and, in this regard, he reminds one of recent international, multiethnic, and postcolonial writers who draw storytelling analogies and build narrative bridges between West and East and North and South while engaging with national identity and location: Maryse Condé, Salman Rushdie, Bharati Mukherjee, Arundhati Roy, Maxine Hong Kingston, Gish Jen, Édouard Glissant, Nicole Mones, or the Chinese-French novelist Dai Sijie. Alongside other authors of rewrites variously classified as postmodern, postcolonial, diasporic, transnational, or multiethnic, Siegel hints at what Emily Apter has called “an emergent internationalized aesthetics.”

But what his work reveals about the 1990s reaches beyond the aesthetic. Siegel may remind us of another crafty Nabokovian, Barth, who, in “Dunyazadiad” and elsewhere, indulges his humorous metafictional experimentalism and tackles issues of gender, culture, and power by lifting forms, settings, and characters from *The Arabian Nights*. More insistently than Barth, Siegel cobbles together a worldly discourse that forefronts, both in form and substance, the turn-of-the-millennium’s global assemblages, exchanges, and mobility. Acting out late postmodernism’s expanding intercultural relatedness, his rewrites reflect and reflect on the global age’s network culture—for better *and* worse. The homology between how his narrative represents, what it represents, and the world in which it does so becomes apparent in the book’s twin model of narrative and cultural interconnectedness. This is a fractal model—a variety of Barth’s “Arabesque”—that simultaneously shapes the novel’s fictional world and conveys the shape of the bigger, “real” world. In a sense, then, we are talking about a narrative apparatus that has to do with stories, what they are, and how they go around. But we are also privy to their

world metamorphoses, to the translation travail they undergo as they retell themselves into the world of the other. Thus, on the one hand, stories, authors, and narrators spread globally so that no place on earth is “safe” from them. But it is not just that no corner of the planet is left unclaimed by texts and representations, narrative-free. These are not representations. They are re-presentations of the previously presented; a restorying and a restoring of the already storied. Not only is a narrative oversaturation of the geocultural system thus underway, but so is also the using up of a literary formula pivotal to postmodernism: the reiterative, the obsessive-compulsive return of the same across landscapes of difference. The text is texture in which the ontological and aesthetic gap between primary source and gloss, influence, or echo closes and everything becomes commentary, fictional rather than scholarly, on originals themselves second-order. De facto, the whole world order of stories is second-order, metanarrative, apocrypha. With authors like Siegel, Leyner, Barth, and Acker, the 1990s become the moment in U. S. literary history when originality is re-afforded as an apocryphal act.

Barbara Kingsolver’s 1998 *The Poisonwood Bible* is another case in point by virtue of an apocryphal reworking that literally—and quite “leterally” too—scrambles the literary and cultural alphabets of the Bible and of the 1869 classic besides other world-renowned works. The central place of the precursor texts—their repetition—in the novel is conspicuous. Key to her project are the technique and cultural-political motif of the *palindrome*. A more pugnacious variety of Siegel’s anagrams, the palindrome is a “counter-writing” tool, a re-lettering that repeats backwards. It does so in a general sense, turning sequences of culture, mores, and discourse on their head, but also literally. Thus, Kingsolver rereads policies, documents, and representations against their grain, upsetting their rhetorical order by showing how their real-life offshots run counter to their purported or advertised meanings. But, through Leah’s twin sister, Adah, whose name itself is a phonetic palindrome, the author also inverts the arrangements of

letters in words, names, and texts, in a symbolic attempt to reverse, block, and otherwise derail the original's denotations. This is how, largely speaking, all of Kingsolver's intertexts are, sometimes under Emily Dickinson's tutelage, palindromically reordered or at least "anagrammatically" rearranged, from John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (which, for the Prices, regresses to disaster), to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, David Livingstone's famous travelogue, Alcott's book, to the Bible itself. To enforce the patriarchal strictures encapsulated by *Little Women's* domesticity discourse and, by extension, to enact an reiteration of American power in the home and world, Nathan Price, the missionary preacher, punishes his daughters by "giving" them the "Verse": he forces them to recite or copy biblical lines. But Leah, Adah and, arguably, all the Price women learn to piggyback on the "Verse"'s inherent re-versibility—*versus* comes from Lat. *vertere*, to "turn [back]." And so they give the verse back to him and to its sacred source. Eventually, Nathan himself "g[e]ts the Verse—the ultimate verse—as he perishes in the jungle.

Especially in the Adah chapters, the novel abounds with intentional misprints, anagrams, paronomasias, palindromes, and cognate linguistic plays. These both perform and allegorize the fate of Euro-American scripts, languages, spirituality, and economic-political designs in Africa as the intermeshing of worlds intensifies, rather than subsiding, under postcolonialism. The puns about the Bible, including palindromes such as Adah's "enema" for the "Amen" in her father's sermons, these sermons' (mis)translations into Kikongo by Leah's Congolese husband or by Nathan himself, and the syncretic adulterations of Christianity on African soil give rise to an other to the Bible and its religious routines. There is, accordingly, an anti-canonical, apocryphal dimension to women's anti-patriarchal and anti-(neo)colonialist dissent in Kingsolver. Her book retextualizes and dilates a "master" text of North-Atlantic culture so as to add new, less orthodox chapters to the Bible as well as to the world's books—the planetary *ta biblia*.

At least, this is the idea. And an important one, too, but fraught with ambivalences. Formed and reformed by extensive and intensive rewriting, the narrative world system is fueled by a self-reproductive logic that reached in the 1990s, as Wai Chee Dimock aptly stresses, across deeper and deeper spaces and times. Not only have the cultural critique—propelled protocols of revisionary rewriting *not* come to a grinding halt after the Cold War; not only have they spread across the new world-system. But they have multiplied exponentially inside and outside literature, *repeating other works and the repetitive formula itself* with a blinding vengeance that would ultimately raise, as I have noted, the question of postmodernism’s relevance to a world that seemed bent on making its real problems known with its own kind of vengeance. It is true that one strain of the 1990s postmodernism does resonate with, and is even a bellwether for, this tempestuously brave new world. On this score, Don DeLillo is my favorite example, with *Underworld* as both the ultimate chronicle and finale of the Cold War *and* eerily prescient forecast of the 21st century, a meganovel that is culturally allusive without being metafictionally ingrown, though. But, by and large, the ever-accelerating, intertextually inbreeding routine, geared chiefly as it was toward literary endogeny itself was just not sustainable, did not appear receptive to the world’s troubles, and so wound up making postmodernism look like a style of self-serving disconnect, an artsy site of disjunction between literary craftsmanship and the world. As I have already suggested, repetitive form and the “narratosphere” resulting from this form’s proliferation across American and other postmodernisms did capture as such—as form, that is, *formally*—the late twentieth-century global syntax of national juxtapositions and itinerant stories. The point, however, was to harness this Borgesianism to a truly worlded thematics as well, to a repertoire of urgent contents.

This did not happen. Thomas Pynchon kept putting out riffs on his earlier works, self-rewriting freely and disappointingly ever after—see, for instance *Bleeding Edge*, a *Crying of Lot*

49 remake if there ever was one. Moreover, as McHale and David Cowart have argued in their latest books, the 1990s postmodern generation rewrites the big names of the 1970s, producing all those Freudian pairs of love-hate symbiosis, with Pynchon, DeLillo, Robert Coover, Philip Roth, and Barth on one side, and David Foster Wallace, Richard Powers, William Gibson, Dave Eggers, Bret Easton Ellis, Jonathan Franzen, Jennifer Egan, Michael Chabon, and Mark Danielewski, on the other. Leyner, the quintessential avant-pop writer, cult figure on U. S. campuses in the late 1990s—an American Jasper Fforde on steroids—kept wondering about how Arnold Schwarzenegger might look playing the protagonists of *My Fair Lady* and *The Diary of Anne Frank*, while Woody Allen plays it again, and then some more—after all, making out with Emma Bovary can be somebody’s goal in life.

In a 1992 essay, Wallace called this kind of stuff “the metastasis of originality.” Was he immune to it, though? I do not think so. What is *Infinite Jest*, its infinite bulk, if not the remaking—the remaking and the unmaking—of *The Making of Americans*, the repeating of the hyperrepetitive Stein with an addictive twist quite literally? Wallace repeats the repetitive modernist and postmodern, the irony wrapped up in the irony he is sick of, and tired of it, and cannot get enough of it, until he gets so high that nothing—either formal gimmick or drug—works any more. In full swing, this metastasis, this paroxysm of “coming after” and the blasé déjà-vu chronicles affected not only the Romantic notions of novelty and creativity but also the apocryphal version—the originality counter-concept mentioned earlier. The same old, same old did become an old chestnut, out of sync with the new world, and so the young writers of the 1990s, some of them mentioned above, along with those coming after them, started turning away from the reiterative poetics and to things such as “new authenticity,” “realism,” “docufiction,” “autofiction,” “sincerity,” etc.—controversial as these things may be.

This shift—real or apparent—is the subject of another conversation. For now, the bottom

line is that one political and financial crisis after another, intertwined with a never-ending string of unprecedented political and ecological disasters made for an entire *negative* novelty of the real world out there in the post-9/11 era. All of a sudden, postmodern ontology seemed “old” to many, especially over and against the backdrop of this newness. It also looked both powerless *and* powerfully symptomatic of what was going on. This explains the survival and, in fact, the expansion of cultural discourse that “aggravates,” Wallace-style, the repetitive drive of the typical 1990s TV show, *The Simpsons*, in a whole host of rip-offs all the way to *Family Guy*, the cultural syndrome of the new millennium. *Family Guy* is to *The Simpsons* what Wallace is to Pynchon. Where *The Simpsons* usually alludes to, or fully retells, one classic or so per episode (Twain, Shakespeare, etc.), *Family Guy* is one big string of postmodern allusions and references, to the point that plot becomes parasitic on intertextuality, what with its “period period jokes” (on the Brontës no less), and so forth. These involve made-up things of people as well, including *The Simpsons*, in a *repetitive-citational frenzy* that ends up *un-referencing* the world and suspending past and future in an extreme present. This present is a variety of the “extreme temporality” about which Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht talks about in his 2004 and 2014 books *Production of Presence* and in *Our Broad Present*, respectively. Modernism, the time of aesthetic modo, of the now, equaled nowness with newness and so valued the now because that now was pregnant with futures, aspirational; in our prison-house of nowness, a sort of *faux presentness* is the only temporality there is, cocooned in the speech-balloon-like of an ever-more bloated time that brackets off what was and might be.

This is not what “historiographic metafiction” did—I do not think postmodernism is “ahistorical,” by the way. But it is what the hyperrepetitive does, what the overdose does; it is the overkill and what kills *you*, eventually, the murderous pleasures and the unhealthy diet of the same, like prime rib every night—like *Family Guy* in prime time every night. This is the

culturally high-density artifact that rescinds the future as the intertextual imagination cancels out—oddly enough—the shared cultural imaginary and by the same token jams the works of futurity, of the future’s possibility and future possibilities. Revealingly, this happens at the time that new world out there tells us loud and clear that envisioning plausible futures for the planet should be our top priority because we may have no future but just futures, in a stock-exchange sense and only for a limited time—for that landlocked time, time limited to a paradoxically unimaginative present, a present itself fraying into a plethora of discrepant presents, of un-coeval temporalities of the rich and the poor, the comfortable and the refugee, the human and the endangered species, the natural and the depleted or polluted, etc.

“The future,” memorably writes Derrida in his “Exergue” to *Of Grammatology*, “can only be presented in the form of an absolute danger.” The future, he goes on, “is that which breaks absolutely with constituted normalcy and can only be proclaimed, *presented*, as a sort of monstrosity. For that future world and for that within it which will have put into question the values of sign, word, and writing, for that which guides our future anterior, there is as yet no exergue,” he concludes. Indeed, nothing—no piece of the written archive—can serve as a preface to a future that, nonetheless, we badly need, and we need to build together, in the present. No legend is available for its map, and, in fact, no map for it seems to exist at all. No vision can make it legible in advance. Or worse. For this is how our moment in history seems to imagine—in fact, seems to bring about—what is in store for us: if not literally nothing, then the future as danger, as the danger of nothingness. But this no longer is Ulrich Beck’s “world risk society,” a runaway but manageable modernity ultimately capable of getting itself another lease on life. *Future as pure and collective danger* is, as ecocritics have insisted for decades now, the danger of the future itself. This is a futureless future or just another installment of a present—ours—in which, stuck in the second gear of instrumental rationality, the human species is failing to make

provisions, philosophically, politically, and otherwise, for a time to come other than under the modality of planetarily destructive monstrosity. And so, when this time finally arrives, it does so ironically, on doomsday, much like the Earth-looking blue planet in Lars von Trier's 2011 movie *Melancholia*, crashing into Terra to ending it all, in the ultimate repetition and repetitive grand finale—the return of the planetary repressed.