

Nikolina Nedeljkov

International College Beijing, China Agricultural University

CULTURAL TRANSFER AND ITS DISCONTENTS: AGAINST NOISE, AND IN THE SERVICE OF THE REMIX

Abstract: The article looks at the potential of the remix in the Europe-Serbia cultural transfer context. Anchored in the idea and practice of reciprocity and genuine exchange, the remix poses questions about the distinction between an intercultural dialog and political oppression. It further situates the debate within the oscillations between tradition and experimentation, the change-preservation nexus. The discussion addresses the questions of gentrification, gender, democracy, free speech, and sustainability. It highlights the area of noise—diverse forms of oppression as a threat to the vibrant flow in the communication channel, including distorted manifestations of potentially progressive and nurturing phenomena. The debate is delivered through a glance at the fictional writings of Stewart Home, Ian McEwan, Irvine Welsh, Dennis Cooper, and Casey McKinney, coupled with the theoretical apparatuses of Fredric Jameson, Steven Connor, Terry Eagleton, Hannah Arendt, and McKenzie Wark. It demonstrates the significance of critical thinking, creative immersion, and distance in encounters with the refashioning of social fabric through either cross-cultural exchange or politically imposed cultural and social paradigms. One of the key points the article aims to elucidate is pluralist discourse, its distortions, and the potential for the recovery of its authentic playfulness. The channel through which this message is delivered is Jameson's idea of counterculture as the power of oppositional thinking, otherness, and thinking differently from mainstream expectations. Accentuating imagination and (self-)consciousness as the basis for utopian and revolutionary thought, Jameson celebrates grassroots, where the power of diversity genuinely recuperates postmodernist pluralist discourse through play. Accordingly, the article seeks vibrant critical and creative voices against noise, and in the service of the remix.

Keywords: Cultural Transfer, Noise, Oppression, National, Global, the Remix.

How to Read It

The idea of cultural transfer Europe-Serbia may be perceived as modernization in the sphere of culture, entailing advancement of the economy, technology, and thought. It could be expected to ensure consolidation and implementation of democratic principles, as well as an influx of politically progressive ideas and their integration into the social fabric. Thus, it may contribute to the reconfiguration of the cultural realm and society as a whole. These might be authentic, realistic, and feasible features of the cultural transfer integrating safe, environmentally friendly, sustainable, and green programs. Yet, they can also be distorted.

This article looks at the problematic through the fictional lens relying on the idea presented in Steven Connor's book *The Madness of Knowledge: On Wisdom, Ignorance and Fantasies of Knowing* (2019), referencing *Faust* as a challenge to knowledge and the epistemological through its communication with the realm of imagination. Presumably, this enables knowledge

to question itself from the outside and by means of the vocabulary, which is, by definition, subversive of it.¹ Reverberating with Connor's idea of epistemopathy—the notion that captures the feeling of and about knowledge, thereby reinstating communication between these two spheres--the approach in this article implies a nonexclusionary relationship between imagination and the critical/theoretical. This resonates with Fredric Jameson's thought in *Valences of the Dialectic* (2009), proposing the recuperation of the social, political, and cultural through a utopian-revolutionary framework as a method rather than a program or a political platform. It is based on the imagination-consciousness composite and grassroots potential, thereby accentuating the power of diversity genuinely redeeming postmodernist pluralist discourse through play. Available to everyone as the possibility to preserve and/or restore the capacity to imagine, it is constitutive of the potential of/for revolution.

This can be inferred from Jameson's consideration of different utopian or dystopian scenarios where the economic would be either eradicated or, alternatively, it might usurp totality. More implied than verbalized, the latter can also be understood in the light of the "postmodernist threat." Jameson offers potential unfoldings of the base-superstructure tension and the disintegration of the boundary between them:

(1) a dystopia in which everything will have become labor; (2) a regime of automation in which no human labor is any longer necessary; (3) a society in which work has become play in the philosophical sense, or has at least been aestheticized; (4) a society in which all aspects of what was formerly called leisure have been commodified and priced.²

Jameson has different approaches to the collapse of divides. The one that he sees as the potential for the recuperation of society is the dissolution of the dichotomy between high and low culture since it can enable grassroots resistance channeled through the collectives building on pre-existing communities and (self-)generating unity.³ The capacity of grassroots solidarity to endure the threat of uniformity and individualism, as the corrupted versions of unity and individuality, respectively, is regarded as key. Jameson illustrates this through the evocation of the leftist thought that praises community, yet refrains from communitarianism, fascism, or Nazism; engages in the Marxist critique of social solutions in capitalism by relating the economic and the social; and draws a parallel

1 Steven Connor, *The Madness of Knowledge. On Wisdom, Ignorance and Fantasies of Knowing* (London: Reaktion Books, 2019), 68.

2 Fredric Jameson, *Valences of the Dialectic* (London: Verso, 2009), 277.

3 Ibid, 471–472.

between decentered personal identity in the contemporary world and the potential of the communal identity.⁴ The benefits of this method could include free education, healthcare and retirement. The right to work as a form of resistance to structural unemployment and the right to free time “uncolonized by the formal stereotypicalities and standardizations of current commercial ‘mass culture’”⁵ are among the fruits of the rediscovery of imagination.

This article presents some aspects of the problematic through the prism of diverse cultural contexts and offers a reading of the situation in Serbia either as resonating or diverging from the depicted fictitious ones. Transforming the threat of “no future” into vibrant critical and creative responses, it invokes the punk attitude as the countercultural and subcultural voices of resistance and reverence. It celebrates experimental endeavors while acknowledging both the significance of tradition and its remixable nature. It understands continuity with heritage yet refrains from glamorizing it. Demonstrating the importance of communication between and among human beings in the hybrid key combining resistance and reverence, it seeks wholesome responses to the questions of individuality and communality. It is also a manifestation of the vitality of the remix.

Originating in music, the remix is perceived and deployed as a hybrid expressive mode focusing on the fusion of quest narratives, social activism, and peaceful/peaceable resistance against oppression. Reflecting some of the permeating modernist and postmodernist concerns, it contextualizes contemporary idiosyncrasies historically. Rather than radically abandoning tradition, it exposes its malleability and galvanizes the change-preservation nexus. The remix investigates alternating cycles of noise and silence in the communication channel as a basis for the disambiguation of the misconception about the totality of discourse. The approach delineates a vision of refacement: rebirth of the human face through subtonic solidarity of selfless, yet re-individualized, fellow humans engaged in enduring the hindrances to patient, persistent creation of a free culture based on trust and love.

Pump It Up: Soundscape as the Vehicle of Agency

In the movie *The Blues Brothers* (1980), there is a scene at a club where Elwood and Jake Blues--played by Dan Aykroyd and John Belushi, respectively--are supposed to perform with their band. The waitress kindly informs them that the club welcomes both kinds of music — country

4 Ibid., p. 472.

5 Ibid., p. 384.

and western. This in many ways resonates with the approach to music in Serbia nowadays. Many people tend to classify music into two genres: national and foreign. Within the former, there are both subgenres on the menu: “country and western.” The tyranny of folk music in Serbian sociospace is supposed to confront the imposed foreign culturemes by investing in local cultural capital and building the social fabric out of local structuremes. Yet, it is nothing but dislocated resistance used by the local political and cultural establishment as a means of oppressive control.

That is why this article cannot entirely adopt the rhetoric frequently suggested in cultural transfer research insisting on avoiding the use of the terms such as nation and country and instead suggesting the use of the concepts of cultural zones, cultural transmission, cultural exchange. That would obscure an important aspect of the reading of the current cultural realities in Serbia regarding the phenomenon addressed. Likewise, the problem cannot be read in transnational terms, which is how gender inequality, for example, is contextualized in Zaharijević and Lončarević (2020), featuring the perception of nationalism as the vocabulary that exceeds the boundaries of a particular national idiom and operates at the transnational level, whilst enabling the perpetuation of the patriarchal paradigm and gender discrimination. In the case of cultural transfer contextualized within the role of the entertainment industry, nationalism *per se* can hardly have a transnational character, although parallels and synchronicities can be tracked in international and cross-national contexts. The reason is that the position and the role of nationalism in that scenario differ from the gender-related situation presented by Zaharijević and Lončarević, where nationalism is a vehicle in the service of discriminatory, sexist politics. By contrast, there is a mutually conditioning relationship between the entertainment industry and nationalism, where the synergy between them may be the channel for demonstrating the supposed antiglobalist views, but where nationalism is also a self-sufficient entity—a multipurpose political tool.

The two-genre system is an element of the political vocabulary, everyday life, and social relations, and it indicates a questionable capacity for genuine resistance to oppression. It is noise---literally and figuratively speaking. It appears — typically, at very high volume — in public discourse, public places, cars, and houses. In a metaphorical sense, it threatens to outvoice critical thinking and freedom of speech. It is a major pollutant in the communication channel threatening sustainable modes of social, political, cultural, and everyday functioning. Although a key ecological problem, it occupies very little space in public discourse, which exposes its undemocratic nature.

Dislocated resistance might signal the normalized potential for subversion. Nationalism and xenophobia fueling and sustained by the entertainment industry leave little room for maneuver. Yet, little might not be insufficient countercultural potential, as Jameson teaches, suggesting the oppositional thinking confronting the mainstream expectations.

Internal Cultural Transfer: Visibility and Transparency

Noise pollution is, in a certain sense, part of the world in Ian McEwan's novella *The Cockroach* (2019), capturing a futuristic vision of the UK ruled by a government consisting of insects disguised as humans. The narrative invoking current political scenes plays with the levels of thinking and the text, thereby making a point about distinctions. One of them is the distinction between the object level and metalevel, while the other is that between the metaphorical and the literal. The blattodean political elites discard their native shells to be dislocated into the human body and to rule. They are parasites feeding on darkness and human distractions into that realm:

Where they have embraced poverty, filth, squalor, we have grown in strength. And by tortuous means, and much experiment and failure, we have come to know the preconditions for such human ruin. War and global warming certainly and, in peacetime, immovable hierarchies, concentrations of wealth, deep superstition, rumour, division, distrust of science, of intellect, of strangers and of social cooperation.⁶

It could be said that the PM James Sams and his government wear masks. So do we within the complicated network of social relations. As Hannah Arendt reminds one in *On Revolution* (1977), actual masks were constitutive of the theater in ancient cultures.⁷ Wearing masks was constitutive of performing certain characters. So is it key to our social roles. We play. There are rules. Some of them are coercive. We rebel against oppression. Some help us navigate complicated social relations with fellow humans. We adopt them. Consciously “wearing masks,” we play roles, thereby transcending being merely our biological selves, just bodies.

Sams' crew adopts the ideological fluctuations ensuring political power and material wealth, notably a doctrine called Reversalism. It is a political, or rather economic, program integrating the conflated political, cultural, and moral planes. Addressing his government, the PM presents it as follows:

6 Ian McEwan, *The Cockroach* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2019), 98.

7 Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Penguin Books, 1977, 1st ed. 1963), 97.

Let the money flow be reversed and the entire economic system, even the nation itself, will be purified, purged of absurdities, waste and injustice. At the end of a working week, an employee hands over money to the company for all the hours that she has toiled. But when she goes to the shops, she is generously compensated at retail rates for every item she carries away. She is forbidden by law to hoard cash. The money she deposits in her bank at the end of a hard day in the shopping mall attracts high negative interest rates. Before her savings are whittled away to nothing, she is therefore wise to go out and find, or train for, a more expensive job. The better, and therefore more costly, the job she finds for herself, the harder she must shop to pay for it. The economy is stimulated, there are more skilled workers, everyone gains.⁸

The program enables self-sustaining reversibility of funds and ensures that the elite social and political strata unavoidably benefit from the systemic exploitation of the laboring population.⁹

And so it goes around in circles. The song “Roc around the Clock”¹⁰ keeps rocking, the money flows keep reversing, and the “revolutionizing” role of the economic program reverberates with the effect of the French Revolution that Arendt problematizes. Namely, on July 14, 1789, Frédéric de Liancourt explained to Louis XVI that the revolt that led to the storming of the Bastille was, in fact, revolution.¹¹ The revolt initially aiming to redeem injustice, exploitation, and inequality ended up in the restoration of totalitarianism: it had gone full circle.

Once Sams’ fraternity were the lowest of the low. Now, they rule. Tyrannically so. They impose inequality on others as enthusiastically as they were discriminated against. They emerged from invisibility and established prominence. They made themselves visible, one would think. However, Steven Connor’s observation complicates this supposedly clear-cut view by warning against the erroneous synonymous use of the terms transparency and visibility resulting from the misconception of the meaning of the words transparent/transparency. More precisely, in order for something to be visible, the environment, rather than the thing itself, needs to be transparent.¹² Secrets and “transparency” in Sams and his government are transparent, which ensures their (“invisibility”). Now, it is enabled by privilege rather than imposed by marginal status. It is through this bewildering coincidence of visibility and invisibility that secrecy permeates.

8 Ibid, 25–26.

9 Ibid, 26.

10 The title of the song references the abbreviation ROC which stands for “Reversalism in One Country” (McEwan, *The Cockroach*, 31).

11 Arendt, *On Revolution*, 38.

12 Connor, *The Madness of Knowledge*, 145.

Objection Ruled Out: Pornocopia of Voices

The question of change and preservation emphasizes reactionary tendencies that also concern gender issues. In Serbia, there are numerous potential indicators of an emancipatory stance toward sexual orientation including clinics offering sex/gender reassignment surgery, as noted in James Caspian's article "My Battle with the Transgender Thought Police" (2019) and *The New York Times* celebrating the prosperity of Serbia in Dan Bilefsky's article "Serbia Becomes a Hub for Sex-Change Surgery" (2012). The lesbian Prime Minister should also signal a progressive, non-discriminatory approach to gender.

However, the everyday and the lives of ordinary people bear witness to patriarchal oppression where sexism is more a rule than an exception, and sexual abuse, domestic violence, and human trafficking are part of the social and economic dynamics. This can reflect conservatism, but also mechanistic implementation of international laws in the local context, which ambivalently oscillates between the ossified traditional paradigm and European, legally defined liberties.

Some aspects of the thematic framework can be pondered through Irvine Welsh's novel *Porno* (2002). It can be read through the lens of women's liberation as indiscriminate sexual conduct and engagement in the porn industry, albeit within the eerie dynamics of objectification and discrimination. The group of sex and drugs enthusiasts in the novel makes a porn movie *Seven Rides for Seven Brothers*, featuring some of them playing themselves. The movie enters the Cannes Film Festival's adult entertainment competition.

Nikki, the main female protagonist and actress is on a junkless junk trip. Stardom is her high of choice. Can she be trusted? Simon, the director and her partner, is mesmerized by her appearance: "You are the very essence of femininity, he says, seeming almost awestruck in admiration."¹³ He further discriminates: "Pot's a great drug for chicks, pot and E. I'm so glad you don't do coke. It's a boy's drug, girls can't take it."¹⁴ While arguing that his supposedly feminist stance recognizes "woman's autonomy,"¹⁵ he claims that fatness is degradation and a mental illness in women, and somewhat of a charm in men.¹⁶ He calls his hospitalized, immobilized friend "*FAGGOT ASS*."¹⁷

13 Irvine Welsh, *Porno* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002), 454.

14 Ibid, 445.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid, 289.

17 Ibid, 482, emphasis original.

The character's worldview featuring elements of sizeism, ableism, and sexism poses a challenge with regard to the question of free speech. William Burroughs (n.d.) observes: "when ever Iago comes on to the stage, Shakespeare must stand up and say: 'I disapprove of this man'. No writer does that. On the other hand..."¹⁸ Do people still think like this in the time of sociospace darkly sanitized by political correctness? At times, it seems that the advancement in perception and beliefs coincides with the reconfigurations in the legal sphere. Sometimes, they seem discrepant, and the relationship between them hollow. However, there is a ray of hope. In the interstices spiking the darkness, it glistens through the thick haze of pain, violence, and inner turmoil. It is called resistance to junkless junk and (self-)dissolving noise.

Architects of Void: Between the Flesh and Flash--CA\$H

The oscillations in the realm of free speech complicate the possibility of progressive critique. They may impede questioning some instances of the distorted struggle for equality and questionable antidiscriminatory activism, practically perpetuating the paradigms originally confronted. This might further obscure the idea and practice of free speech. The reason could be a hypocritical implementation of the politics of inclusion, where equality is more a matter of rhetoric than social relations. Also, some demands that originate in the protection of the rights of marginalized demographics lean toward rigid sanctioning and extreme limitations of the public debate. Regardless of the shape and form, instances that allow for the normalization of the critique by reactionary politics and occlude open exchange in public discourse are instrumental in the oppressive political regime, ideology, and social fabric built on discrimination, exclusion, inequality, and suffering.

The problems with progressive critique can be explored in the context of the modernization of Serbia, notably concerning renewal and economic growth based on the reinforcement of and investment in infrastructure. The reconfiguration of urban spaces is constitutive both of the approach to and consequences of this strategy. Gentrification of particular segments in urban areas is its integral part, and it often implies the real estate industry enabling the mushrooming of owned, yet uninhabited, properties. These ghost apartments are part of money launder-

18 William Burroughs and Alexander Trocchi, Transcript of the interview with Daniel Farson for *Something to Say*. William S. Burroughs papers. Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection of English and American Literature, The New York Public Library, n.d., p. 18.

ing schemes frequently channeling corruption-based profiteering, where the postsocialist accumulation of capital features both traditional capitalist and modern “postcapitalist” financial and speculative streaks. Clearly, investment in the infrastructure in Serbia might be a quick fix, but it is questionable what kind of benefit it can generate in the long run.

The idea and the phenomenon can be tracked through Stewart Home’s short story “The Cripplegate Blockchain Massacre” (2020). It provides a glimpse of the glamour and blues of the club of the superrich. One of its members is the protagonist of Home’s story. He owns multiple luxury ghost apartments worldwide purchased with the money he inherited from his grandfather and invested in cryptocurrency. One of those ghost apartments is located in a fictitious version of Taylor Wimpey’s notorious “The Denizen aka Clarendon Court aka The Turd”¹⁹ at 43 Golden Lane in London, which in this book is deployed to “stand in for what’s wrong with property speculation pretty much anywhere.”²⁰

The development and construction of the actual building were subject to vigorous disputes, objections, and protests. The book itself is part of the rebellion against the real estate industry that sweeps people’s everyday and forces them out of their neighborhoods due to rising rent and the cost of living. Some of the consequences of this reckless entrepreneurship include the deprivation of light caused by the height of the building, blocked views, and a mindlessly refashioned horizon.

The protagonist of Home’s short story is a solitary rider: “Having huge liquid holdings, I had assets falling out of my asshole and I was self-reliant, so I didn’t need anyone else working on my enterprises.”²¹ He made a plan prior to his arrival in London with intent to transfer his cryptoprofit into actual US dollars to pay off his mortgages and continue investing in property. His plan is flawed. Hence, it fails. Having landed at Heathrow, he experiences a blackout that keeps him unconscious and bedridden for two months. Having recovered, he is dismissed from the hospital and he learns that “his” property no longer belongs to him because of the unpaid mortgage during these two months. Due to hospitalization related expenses and disrupted trade, he is facing bankruptcy.

His response is revenge on the system by shooting from a window in his ghost apartment random visitors to the nearby park with the illegal guns he kept in his buy-to-leave apartment. This would cause major costs to the National Health Service and, consequently, strike a blow to the

19 Stewart Home, “The Cripplegate Blockchain Massacre”, in Stewart Home (ed.), *Denizen of the Dead: The Horrors of Clarendon Court* (London: Cripplegate Books, 2020), 7.

20 Ibid, 11.

21 Ibid, 46.

British economy. He ends up trapped in limbo, surrounded by police helicopters and planning to blow himself up, which would supposedly help him recuperate his “dollar losses in pounds of flesh.”²²

Between the body and the flesh — ca\$h. Like many members of his club, instead of dwelling in the owned apartments, he inhabits the void, thus epitomizing McKenzie Wark’s apt point from her book *Capital Is Dead: Is This Something Worse?* (2019): “The human becomes thinglike and passive in order to impart something human into the passivity of the thing.”²³ The world is atomized and populated by dispersed insular, self-absorbed wandering particles. Just as ghost homes are haunted by the absence of dwellers, so are the owners haunted by the absences of that what is supposed to be constitutive of who they are. As such, they embody junkless junk.

Rather than by name, nationality, or citizenship, the character in Home’s story identifies as follows: “My name doesn’t matter. I have five different passports and many other types of fake ID. I hope the authorities never identify me. I am a denizen of our financialised world!”²⁴ As Wark notes, in these boring times bereft of substance, abstraction is supposed to do the job.²⁵ When everything is melting in sweeping alienation, entertainment is not a viable response. Re-hacking the abstraction *is*.

Junk, Junkless Junk, and Other Highs

If cultural transfer is about the exchange of ideas, objects, and lifestyles, drugs are probably part of that trade. Whether they come to Serbia from the West or East, North or South is an issue that exceeds the scope of this article. One thing is rather certain, though: there is junk, junkless junk, and other highs. That distinction is being blurred by the socio-political fluctuations moving toward: a) legalization and/or decriminalization of drugs; and b) proliferation of junkless junk—compulsive, obsessive, and addiction-like patterns that characterize certain portions of contemporary cultures.

In an interview with Daniel Farson, Alexander Trocchi and William Burroughs are answering the questions related to the legalization of substances. The latter lays a rather decisive claim: “no-one is fit to drive if they’ve —er—if they’ve smoked or taken marihuana — it upsets your sense of timing.”²⁶ Although well aware of the possibility of abuse, Burroughs

²² Ibid, 50.

²³ Wark McKenzie, *Capital Is Dead: Is This Something Worse?* (London: Verso, 2019), 113.

²⁴ Home, “The Cripplegate Blockchain Massacre”, 50.

²⁵ Wark, op. cit., 83.

²⁶ W. Burroughs and A. Trocchi, op. cit., 15.

is nevertheless supportive of legalization.²⁷ In that scenario, the change in the relationship between the underground and overground imposes the question about legality generally and, above all, human relationships. Getting high becomes a matter of a legal, revenue-boosting machinery, ensuring jobs and economic flourishing. Everyone is free to choose their world at the price of a safe, guiltless, state-provided product. The world is a better place. The question is: which one?

Burroughs's remarks in *Naked Lunch* (2005) shed light on the issue: "I have heard that there was once a beneficent non-habit-forming junk in India. It was called *soma* and is pictured as a beautiful blue tide. If *soma* ever existed the Pusher was there to bottle it and monopolize it and sell it and it turned into plain old-time JUNK."²⁸ The short story entitled "The Great Hindu Cow Conspiracy" (n.d.), co-written by Dennis Cooper and Casey McKinney, further reveals the intricacy and possible ramifications of the situation. The connection between science, academia, and the military-entertainment complex is the context for challenging the inverted image of authority and offering a glance at a historical trajectory of supremacy and exploitation. It interrogates the arcane interstices between legal and illicit highs. It also investigates the potential of language through the prism of fellowship and critical thinking.

The opening portrays a liberal art college in a fictionalized New England in a fictitious year 1992. The scene featuring students and an educator addresses the questions of substance, mind, and control. In an effort to enlighten the students' uninformed, disaffected, and uninterested minds, the professor delivers a message that casts light on some aspects of the colonial past of the British Isles--centuries of perpetual daytime in the shadow of the hegemonic night.

A fictitious prediction presented in Cooper's and McKinney's story concerns the rise of the novel high called POP (pituitary opiate peptides) produced from the pituitary glands of cows. It is legal, accessible, affordable, *organic*, and ...well, kind of mandatory. In the meantime, pushers keep pushing. Were an urban arcadia possible, it would be embodied in an idyllic megalopolis in the guise of utopia that no one believes in because there is nothing to resist, to reimagine, since your dreams have been chosen for you. In a world where the shift in drug policy, rather than drug abuse, renders governments and police redundant, crime is nearly nonexistent. When peptide labs--integrating the corporate mindset and a deviant image of authority--are running the show, oppression reigns.

27 Ibid, 15.

28 William S. Burroughs, *Naked Lunch* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2005, 1st ed. 1959), 201.

Now, in the future safely distanced from that hellish past, research continues, as a student testifies: “my research proves what we’ve always suspected. That for all its great holiness—Arnie crossed himself—heroin’s fucking dogshit. It’s SUPPOSED to enslave us. which. as we both know too well. it does.”²⁹ By contrast, POP is unrivaled: “there is no addiction. way way way fewer fixes. less ratty looking veins.”³⁰ And yet, just why the next fix is craved to start with remains a nut as hard to crack as POP itself.

Polyphony, Play, and NO to “No Future”: From Cacophony to the Remix

In the world where distinctions tend to blur, fully-fledged awareness is needed. Countercultural thinking and activism that oppose the politics of distraction can be the source of resistance to oppression. It could be contextualized within globalization integrating cultural, social, technological, and political components that Jameson explores, emphasizing both the formative and subversive potential of these spheres. He emphasizes the way in which globalization has redescribed people’s habits. As it is reminiscent of some characteristics of the old school socialist authoritarian regimes from the Soviet and Chinese past, the phenomenon may be perceived as a cultural revolution of global dimensions.

Globalization thrives on the military-entertainment complex: through the cultural climate of artificial, forced pleasure and fun, it operates as anesthetization of the nations. In the midst of global warming, civilization is frozen in the perpetual present, incapacitated by the torpor of the absent past, and hindered by the occluded reimagining of the future. If revamped, the past threatens to dissolve the current dynamic in reactionary modes of social functioning. In that scenario, the future remains obscured.

When Jameson investigates the possibility of thinking and acting against that what is in this article perceived as the “no future” threat, he summons up a “reawakening of the imagination of possible and alternate futures, a reawakening of that historicity which our system — offering itself as the very end of history — necessarily represses and paralyzes.”³¹ This should enable reawakening of the atrophied capacities of revolutionary, utopian, futural thinking.

29 Dennis Cooper and Casey McKinney, “The Great Hindu Cow Conspiracy” (TS. New York University, Bobst Fales Library, Downtown Collection, Dennis Cooper Papers, n.d.), p. 18, emphasis original.

30 Ibid, 19.

31 Jameson, *Valences of the Dialectic*, 434.

In order to sustain the awareness of consumer logic and to devise oppositional thinking, one needs to be reminded of the components that accompanied the introduction of capitalism to the former socialist countries:

The fundamental misunderstanding which lends Eastern European stampede towards the market its tragicomic resonance also omitted any sense of the difference between the simple availability of commodities and the frenzies of consumerism itself, something like a collective addiction with enormous cultural, social and individual consequences which can only be compared, as behavioral mechanism, to the related addictions of drugs, sex and violence (that in fact tend to accompany it).³²

Junkless junk. In a globalized world, one desires nothing, but craves everything. In the maze of a worldwide cultural revolution of the commodity acting “as it were becoming its own ideology,”³³ the political, social, and cultural spheres integrate the corporate paradigm mainly governed by compulsion, coercion, and utility-oriented oppressive *modus operandi*. Sitting comfortably with postmodernist discarding the idea of authenticity, such discourse disqualifies the idea of false consciousness.³⁴ Similarly, it shuns alienation, as Terry Eagleton suggests in *Against the Grain* (1986) while ruminating about the postmodernist predicament: “there is no longer any subject to be alienated and nothing to be alienated from, ‘authenticity’ having been less rejected than merely forgotten.”³⁵

In postmodernism, dystopia is an impossibility because there is no utopia, either. The imagination has been impaired, thereby obstructing the possibility of social vision:

Utopia, I argue, is not a representation but an operation calculated to disclose the limits of our own imagination of the future, the lines beyond which we do not seem able to go in imagining changes in our own society and world (except in the direction of dystopia and catastrophe).³⁶

In such a world, there is no falsehood. Nothing is wrong. No need to mask. No role play. Everything is “transparent.” There is no alternative because there are no distinctions. The proliferation of oppositions has created an illusion of the disappearance of exploitation, discrimination, and divides, including that between good and evil. This encompasses nearly everything “virtually from the beginning of history to its far future, if it has one (but let’s not omit future versus past).”³⁷ (18). Rather than

32 Ibid, 381–382.

33 Ibid, 448.

34 Ibid, 413.

35 Terry Eagleton, *Against the Grain: Essays 1975–1985* (London: Verso, 1986), 132.

36 Jameson, op. cit., 413.

37 Ibid, 18.

bringing prosperity through multiplicity, such a situation has inhibited the possibility of imagining. Postmodernist culture features a paradoxical mixture of constraint and unrestrainedness. Weird valences of inertia both block and propel. However, one should always be reminded that it is possible to re-hack the abstraction.

The problem with globalization is its ubiquitous geographical, political, cultural, technological, and social tendencies: its totalizing aspirations. Its free market economy promise of freedom is a disguised enslaving strategy. The free market is neither free nor is it freedom. Its coercive grip can be understood in the vein of Alex Trocchi's statement: "It's very difficult to use opiates in a casual way. You are either on or you are off. That's the trouble with them."³⁸ The problem with capitalism is that the clear-cut distinction between on and off is blurred. Our choices are limited by the opportunities the system allows. One adopts the way of life. There is always a possibility to imagine and play.

In the play *The Ash Gray Proclamation* (2009), Dennis Cooper depicts the totalizing tendencies of both junk and globalization logic. The dots on the map of the world are connected by drug trafficking: "Josh: Afghanistan is where heroin comes from, right?"³⁹ The characters epitomize subjecthood decentered in the cacophony of falsehood (if it hasn't been discarded): "Josh: If it's not about heroin, I don't care."⁴⁰ They condemn violence, but only if it's inflicted on them. Their communication is severed: "Josh: (*angrily*): Friends don't do that. So we aren't friends. I don't know what to call this, though. We like categories over here."⁴¹

Cooper's play mirrors the post-truth cacophony of the military-entertainment complex and the chimera of misconstrued epistemologies: "Mackerel: I'm bored. / Psychic: I don't know that term. / Mackerel: Boredom is what we call knowledge over here. The idea is that we never quote-unquote know, you just stop caring if you quote-unquote know. That's when you know. / Psychic: Sounds interesting."⁴² This might seem to resonate with Steven Connor's observation about the limits of knowledge and the ambiguous character of that insight:

There is a secret majesty in the humility of the mind that abases itself before the certainty that the cosmos is infinitely beyond the powers of knowing: for it hides from itself the knowledge that, if this were absolute-

38 Burroughs, op. cit., 14.

39 Dennis Cooper, *The Ash Gray Proclamation in Ugly Man* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2009), 212.

40 Ibid, 212.

41 Ibid, 222-223, emphasis original.

42 Ibid, 223.

ly true, there would be no occasion for it to occur to that mind that it might be so.⁴³

To humbly acknowledge one's limits is the confirmation of the power of weakness. Manipulation of decentered categories is something else. The distinction is manifested at the level of the tone. Connor invokes light, while Mackerel's potentially nihilist indifference might not: no agency in the atrophied social fabric, no desire in the afflicted imagination, no passion in a need-driven, goal-ridden, derevolutionized business of culture/culture of business.

It characterizes the world in which, as Jameson remarks, the artificial absence of boundaries does not necessarily indicate equality. It merely masks that what it claims to redeem, thereby perpetuating dominance, injustice, and aggression. However, it can enable re-hacking by virtue of the change of valences: "it was necessary for human society to have gone through the experience of consumerism as a way of life, if only in order more consciously later on to choose something radically different in its place."⁴⁴ It calls for the remix.

Postmodernism is not merely the cultural logic of late capitalism, but the vocabulary of playfulness relying on versatility and diversity, where distance and exchange, critical and creative vernaculars coexist, where the capacity to imagine, the potential of/for revolution endures. The limits of the imagination indicate both human weakness and power. Acknowledging them ensures reinstating the power of weakness. According to Jameson, utopia enables the change of valences that transforms the current negative situations into vibrant socioscape. He suggests the grass-roots potential of play as a response to both nationalist and globalist oppression.⁴⁵ To enable the wizardry of the dialectic, peaceful/peaceable resistance is needed. It is integral to and resonates with the remix thriving on the idea and practice of recuperating the past, reimagining the future, and resurrecting the present.

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43 Connor, op. cit., 19.

44 Jameson, op. cit., 382.

45 Ibid., p. 454.

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