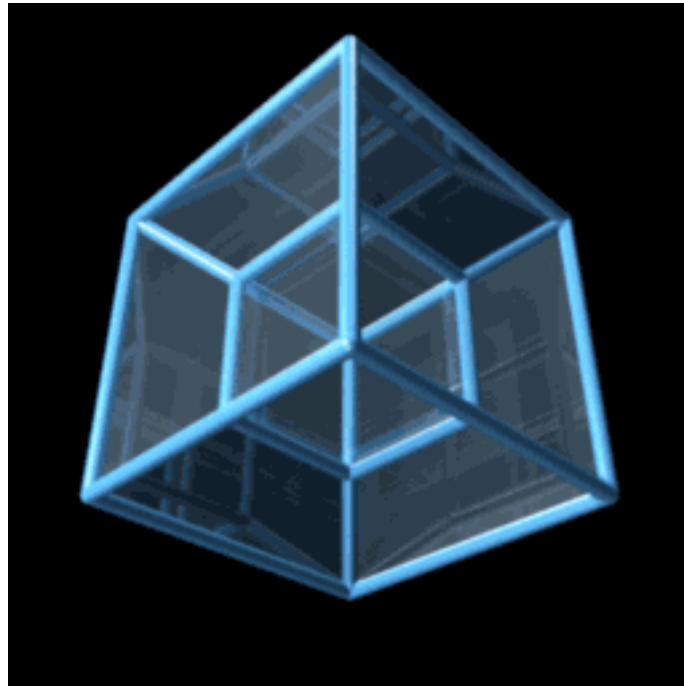


## Models, Knowledge, post-Fordism – all that Crackpot Science Fiction...

Some memos on How to Do Things with Worlds as overheard in a squat  
15 minutes into the future

daegseingcny. Translated from the originals by Ralo Mayer



a 3D projection of an 8-cell multiplex performing  
a double rotation about two orthogonal planes

The other week I had the opportunity to take part in an event in a deserted entertainment center – a place we used to call *Multiplex* at the end of the 20th century. The countless spaces inside the vast building are now squatted by a self-organized group of people who refuse to take on an explicit and non-ambiguous name and use the spatial structure of the architecture for different forms of research and presentation. At the time of my visit, the space was dedicated to a performative exploration of the notion of model worlds, a scope and diversity of discussion which did more than credit to the multitude of rooms in that crooked monster of a house. Below, I shall mostly try to recollect a kind of guided tour, as provided by a self-proclaimed private scholar by the name of Roni Layerson, and through a collective exchange during and after that tour. The re-reading of the last sentence actually implies to "g-e-t l-o-s-t".

I should add at this point, that I myself have been involved, over the course of the past years, in a collective endeavour, mostly an adventure of sorts, connected to the production and sharing of knowledge between artists, architects, theorists and other cultural workers. After a while some of us stumbled upon the notion and practice of performative research, which has been initiated eons ago and coined a bit later. We interpreted it by using the dramatic troika of script, setting and cast, i.e. a conscious use of staging processes. Such processual approach to knowledge production neither aims at production of traditional art objects nor of concepts or theories. Performative research produces subjects.

Only as such it radically performs knowledge production, which at the same time constructs and deconstructs knowledge and situates it in persons rather than in collections of texts or other museum cabinets, be they dusty, chrome-plated or based on Ones and Zeros. (I'd like to stress this again before stumbling into this specific multiplex tour, as it is of vital importance to see the difference between building up (or visiting) museums or using them as a mere pretext for performative self-education acts. *Herstellen einer Situation*, not *Darstellen*.)

"You must follow me carefully. I shall have to controvert one or two ideas that are almost universally accepted. The geometry, for instance, they taught you at school is founded on a misconception. Not only geometry! Everything they taught us at school is wrong, utterly wrong. I mean, perhaps not wrong in the empiric way. But highly useless, at least inadequate and possibly made up in order to keep us away from researching social reality or – behold – acting upon that reality.

"So this is about models. You want to know about models? Let me tell you about models. If anything, they're closely linked to the human history of learning and teaching. Models have always been used for the production and transfer of knowledge. As objects or concepts they enable us to handle realities – by downsizing huge dimensions to handy size, blowing up the tiniest rinky-dink and relations to make them comprehensible or describing utterly immaterial layers of our lives. At the same time these tools of enlightenment can be turned into most powerful instruments of deceit and manipulation. A key term of modelling seems to be *scrutinizing*. When we want to learn about models, we have to scrutinize countless settings, in which people are building models to investigate and manipulate them. And finally we have to simplify these investigations again, focus on few elements that could depict the whole, so others could have a look at our findings, like from above. Indeed, recursivity – the outcome generated by repeating a particular mathematical operation – is a main feature of models; not only since Rutherford and Bohr depicted the atom as a miniature solar system.

*(First page, you read)* "Only a cynic would say that no one could have guessed in the last years of the 20th century that this world was being watched keenly and closely by intelligences greater than a human and yet as mortal as any single human; that as human beings busied themselves about their various concerns they were scrutinized and studied, perhaps almost as narrowly as someone with a microscope might scrutinize the transient creatures that swarm and multiply in a drop of water. With infinite complacency humans went to and fro over this globe about their little affairs, serene in their assurance of their empire over matter. It is possible that the minute organisms under the microscope do the same. It is curious to recall some of the mental habits of those departed days. Some fancied there might be other life out there, perhaps superior to themselves and ready for a colonial enterprise. Yet across another gulf of space, the space of cybernetics, minds that are to our minds as ours are to those of the beasts that perish, intellects vast and cool and unsympathetic, regarded this earth with envious eyes, and slowly and surely drew their plans against us. And early in the 21st century came the great allusioning."

Zooming in on the Nile-Delta, Google Earth provides a link to Central London, WC1B3DG. In the North-West wing of the British Museum we find some of the earliest examples of human model building. The cabinets of Room 63, Egyptian life and funerary, are extraordinary: We look into the model of a house, a granary. We can scrutinize the little figures in their everyday life. On the ground floor a woman kneads dough. A man sits on the floor above, maybe a supervisor or the owner. Other models include tiny boats. The Egyptians saw the blue sky as a celestial river, on which the sun-god Re travelled every day in his own boat. One of the aspirations of an Egyptian king was to travel with the god across the sky in the Afterlife. To help achieve this, models of boats as well as essential scenes of life were put into the tombs."

"Now this is one of the earliest known shabti figures," she continued indexing the next cabinet, which presented a collection of small mockup sarcophagus' and mummies. " These figures were intended to work on behalf of the deceased in the Afterlife. They may have developed from the servant figures associated with the provision of offerings, common in

wealthy tombs of the Middle Kingdom (about 2040-1750 BC)."

"Second Life Avatars," someone giggled in the background.

"Your world. Your imagination."

"They're dead. They're all messed up."

More canned laughter.

## **6 INT. ABANDONED ENTERTAINMENT CENTRE – NIGHT. (SPECIAL AFFECTS)**

A group of people strolling through the diverse spaces of the squat. Roni Layerson acts as a kind of guide, but most of the participants are autonomously investigating the spaces on their own. Some are making out in dark corners, we hear their affectionate moans etc... others try to watch them, but when they get closer, all they see is porn movies. In a way a sexed up atmosphere? YES.

### LAYERSON (Voice Over)

There are too many ideas and things and people, too many directions to go. I was starting to believe the reason it matters to care passionately about something is that it whittles the world down to a more manageable size.

### LAYERSON

Such sweet, sad insights. So true. Every film is a miniature cosmos. In some way. And sure thing they have been using models in film for quite some time.

A display on the wall pops out and shows footage of *King Kong* (the 1930s version), in between an interview with Willis O'Brien, the Special Effects artist who pioneered the technique of stop motion animation in that feature.

She briefly zaps through some related footage, Special FX and models, then shuts the displays off.

### LAYERSON

But what is much more interesting, is the role of film production in the 20th century. As a prototype of new forms of organizing labor. Flexible time management, motivation through the promise of a creative working environment. Social Engineering. This is what "film as model" really means. A script for post-Fordist production processes!

Some stagehands prepare the next scene and sing along:

### STAGEHANDS

We work all day and night  
(but no need to fight)  
'cause we're – on – the – set  
and we cre – ate!  
(no need to fight)  
(On the set!)  
and we mani – pu – late!  
(On the set!)  
We work all day!  
We work all night!  
(On the set! On the set! On the set!)

Someone trips over a cable, causing a short circuit. BLACK.

For the following 15 minutes or so a noteworthy phenomenon developed (it could have been hours as well... who remembers time in such a *Merzbau* Darkroom): While one part of the participants continued discussing the sociopolitical influence of film and especially its affective turn out – in the production process, on screen, in "real" life – others got turned on themselves by the blackout and joined the orgiastic ranks. A true mash-up.

MUSIC: *Slip Inside This House*, 13<sup>th</sup> Floor Elevators

– So you mean film has been the role model of today's production processes? – (aahhhh) – All this talk about film – (UH!) – Come on, that's so last century! – (Yes!) – Sure, but from a historical perspective! – (YES!) – Aren't you generalizing, I mean, what if – OH! – Creative Industries – AAHHH – YES!!! ... processing emotions, I mean that's a central point (oh!) affects are the motor (uh! uh!) like a Special Affect (suck me) YES! (like an industry of special affects) (giggles) mmmhhh... social engineering... – fuck this alienated production of subjectivity (try this) (aha!) Come on! – and post-Fordism is based on the exploitation of subjectivity (AAHHHH!) – ...yes... up my ass! – I think I forgot the safeword, haha... – now THAT'S better! – say that again, about power relations... I see (AH!) we all deal in and (mmhhh) with feelings (OH!) Uhhhhhhhh...

After a while it felt useless a try to distinguish the two parties, or even particular voices; it was more like all people discussed and made out at the same time. Like one huge monster on cocaine losing itself in masturbation, a hundreds of tentacles all over, winding, sucking, a thousand slimy threads of discursive ectoplasma, in all directions, a singularity high on its own multisubjectivity.

I *really* don't know for how long this went on. At one point I dazed away – we all did.

Finally someone lighted a match. And looked into sleepy faces, scattered all over the floors. In the little tumult that followed, people were getting up again, arranging clothing; I witnessed a small conversation, concerning our guide, who had appeared again and switched on some cozy light.

"Film? I thought she'd worked in the Game Industry?"

"Yep! Game Design. Simulation Stuff. Hi Level. Probably Top Level."

"And then?"

"Then she dropped out. No one knows why. Before resigning, she'd work on a new generation Sim. So you can guess why she left... Started all over. Like here."

"I see... some Second Life of hers."

*(Canned laughter)*

"If I might return your focus to some of the movie clips shown before: A lot of Science Fiction. Documentaries in disguise... hunting down reality like a wolf in Dolly the Sheep's clothing. Miniature worlds are a common topos in SF. The view from above... already part of the classic *War of the Worlds*, by H.G. Wells, which starts with a description of Earth being watched by the Martians. Scrutinized by distanced eyes."

Roni Layerson holds up a sign:

## **SCIENCE FICTION AS A ROTATING HALL OF MIRRORS**

There are two prominent figures within the wide boundaries of SF which I would like to discuss here: One is the model, the miniature, the other is the time machine. Both narrative figures are often employed to negotiate social, political, ethical questions of the present time of the author, and quite often they fold into each other, forming multi-dimensional textures of immense beauty and narrative power. In the following, I shall try to outline some features of this binary phantom and suggest how both model worlds and time machines are essential script engines of the socio-political global complex which is often subsumed under the term of post-Fordism.

Both models and time machines are recurrent plot elements in the work of two highly

influential SF-writers: H.G. Wells and Philip K. Dick. Wells is a pioneer of the genre, his *Time Machine*, published in 1895, is considered the first work of modern SF. Before the end of the century he would continue publishing other seminal texts, like *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, *The Invisible Man* and *War of the Worlds*. The second writer is Philip K. Dick, known to a wider public mostly through films like *Blade Runner*, *Total Recall* or *Minority Report*, all of which are based, more or less faithfully, on some of his texts. Most of Dick's work contemplates on the concept of reality, which breaks down into often hallucinogenic layerings at the hands and eyes of his protagonists. In his mapping of SF's development, Frederic Jameson presents Dick as as the leading figure of what he terms the *stage of subjectivity* in the 1960s.

### **143 WHITE TEXT ON BLACK SCREEN**

I suppose I could go on with these pseudo-academic style trying to sum up some ideas about Science Fiction. But it won't come close – not even as a model.

A time machine can be an actual device like the DeLorean sports car in *Back to the Future* as well as any abstract diegetic mechanism which enables time-travelling, i.e. a re-positioning within the normal flow of time. The latter, more general case could occur accidentally or as a mere subtext for parallel-world scenarios. In a way this interpretation of the time machine could be broadened to any narrative form: images, novels, theatre, film, etc. In other words: the time machine in Science Fiction exemplifies a general narrative instrument.

Soon the engineers of time machines became obsessed with the variety of paradoxical settings such a device might provoke; this is not at the focus of our attention.

*(Beware: The next part may be skipped. If the budget's limited, jump to scene 144 directly.)*

### **INSERT**

A special case of SF's time manipulations is the subgenre of alternative histories. Its stories don't take place in the future, but in a parallel world to ours, with a variant history, departing from ours in one or more points. Another term for this might be *uchronia*, a non-time in contrast to the non-place of *utopia*. One of the best-known examples is Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle*, set in the time of its writing in the 1960s: Germany and Japan have won World War Two and divided the territory of the US. Instead of indulging in some revisionist what-if stories, Dick once more explores through this plot concepts of reality, heavily influenced by Asian philosophies. Within the narrative an author, the eponymous title figure, has written a forbidden book. In this he describes an alternative reality, in which Japan and Germany have lost the war...

From today's viewpoint, we might consider most SF stories from the 1950s and early 60s *second order* alternative histories: for example, other planets have not been visited, let alone colonized. *(More about space age dreams later; so actually it's a good idea I have not skipped this part, I thought to myself while Layerson continued:)*

Or think of all the post-apocalyptic scenarios of a world after thermo-nuclear war. We have to consider that such plots have been considered quite realist in Hermann Kahn's time. On the other side, I'm pretty sure no one back then had the guts to write a stupid story about hi-tech wars stemming from a mixture of religious and economic motives, lead by a cowboy dynasty. At least no self-respecting publisher would have printed this idiocy of alternative reality in the 1950s.

### **144 INT. A LONG HALLWAY WITH DOORS ON EACH SIDE**

(We call it the linking room, in case you don't know)

MUSIC: some Steve Reich phasing stuff.

SUBTITLE: Spezialität des Hauses

From behind the doors we hear the choir of the stagehands, who sing a simple canon (if there is such a thing). Now and then a door opens up and we see and hear one of them on-

screen.

STAGEHANDS (Off Screen / On Screen)

Films are not shot in or – der  
Bullet Time or Time Bullet?  
line The not is in or – der  
Yes: Para – llel Tours is the  
Spe – ci – ality of the house  
Spe – ci – ality of the house  
(Repeat)

Door 144A opens and a woman pops her head out.

FEMALE STAGEHAND

Sometimes there are parallel crews at work –

Door 144A is shut again and Door 144B opens.

ANOTHER STAGEHAND

– and shoot at parallel sets. It's all about project management.  
Logistics and optimizing, you know.

Door 144B shuts.

*(Possible contextual commercial: Intel's Multiply yourself – campaign from 2006/2007)*

**144A INT. DINING ROOM AT THE TIME TRAVELLER'S HOME**

Wells has worked on the comparatively short Time Machine for many years. It's social critique has been well discussed: The book projects the British class system into a future where the beautiful little Eloi live an apparently carefree life in a pastoral landscape. Ruins attest to a former high level of civilization. Only after a while we learn about the Morlocks, albino-ape like cannibals that have evolved from the former working class. They live underground and keep the machinery going, breeding the Eloi as their flock. But beside this obvious social comment by the the socialist author, the text is as exquisite a device as the eponymous invention in it: The first modern SF-story about the future mirrors its own revolutionary narrative operation in a machine! The book starts with its inventor challenging the geometry taught at school and introducing time as the 4th dimension. (The machine's first appearance is in the form of a miniature model, which the protagonist let's drive off into another time in front of the selected audience.)

Some pages afterwards the time traveller finds himself trapped in the world of the future, step by step learns about its double-layered nature and seeks refuge in a gigantic ruin.

TIME TRAVELLER

I found the Palace of Green Porcelain, when we approached it about noon, deserted and falling into ruin. Within the big valves of the door — which were open and broken — we found, instead of the customary hall, a long gallery lit by many side windows. At the first glance I was reminded of a museum. The tiled floor was thick with dust, and a remarkable array of miscellaneous objects was shrouded in the same grey covering. Then I perceived, standing strange and gaunt in the centre of the hall, what was clearly the lower part of a huge skeleton. Further in the gallery was the huge skeleton barrel of a Brontosaurus. My museum hypothesis was confirmed. Going towards the side I found what appeared to be sloping shelves, and clearing away the thick dust, I found the old familiar glass cases of our own time.

So what will literature's first time traveller do in the future? He visits the past – enters a building that, in our limited range of technology and understanding of the space-time continuum, probably resembles a sort of time travelling operation the most. As Sefik Seki Tatlic points out, a museum and its more recent revenants in cyberspace are places where actually nothing is going on, and to which – for that reason? – the lower classes feel attached. No wonder, that rather soon our future noob time traveller is driven away by a Morlock that has made the museum its home; a literary lower-class avatar acting as what they termed a "griever" in online worlds like Second Life; a pain in the ass for dedicated players of the game.

*(Canned laughter of Morlocks, i.e. field recordings of a hyena pack watching an episode of I.M. Weasel)*

If there is one later work of fiction with equal influence on the public's knowledge about time travelling, it is most certainly the *Back to the Future* trilogy of the 1980s. Starting in 1985, Doc Brown and Marty drive their DeLorean back to 1955, later to 2015 and back to 1885. Once more, the time travelling act is pre-enacted through the use of models, through which Emmet Brown explains Marty's return from 1955 respectively 1885 to his date of departure.

#### DOC BROWN

Please excuse the crudeness of my model, it's not painted or to scale.

In the second installment of the series, we see another of Wells's narrative operations at work: What does Marty do first thing he's arrived in 2015? Off to Café 80s! In this Future Retro Café he is served by Max Headroom-alike avatars of Reagan and Khomeini and enjoys a short video game on a vintage arcade machine. Needless to say that this as uncanny as cheap postmodern forecast of the year 2015 was anticipated in reality by more than 10 years. Rarely have time travel stories predicted the future as accurately as in this postmodern loop: Capitalism exploiting cloned remnants of culture and creativity ad nauseam and zombie politics cannibalizing on its own hegemonic fictions. (As usual the flying gadgets didn't happen. Outside Second Life.)

#### INSERT

*The Golden Man* is a short story by Philip K. Dick, in which he describes a mutant who can see the future, just as we remember the past: the further away, the more blurry. In his descriptions of the mutants sense, Dick makes use of a spatial metaphor of a miniature doll's house. Roni Layerson reads from her clipboard:

#### LAYERSON

The myriad of tableaux that surrounded him were an elaborate maze, a web which he now considered bit by bit. He was looking down into a doll's house of infinite rooms, rooms without number, each with its furniture, its dolls, all rigid and unmoving. The same dolls and furniture were repeated in many. He, himself, appeared often. The two men on the platform. The woman. Again and again the same combinations turned up; the play was redone frequently, the same actors and props moved around in all possible ways.

*(Hotlink this to the next page on the clipboard, which will come up in scene 152)*

#### **144B INT. THE ROOM OPPOSITE THE ROOM THAT WAS DESCRIBED IN 143A**

Everything looks breathtakingly symmetrical in here; some kind of higher dimensional super symmetry, as laid out in string theory. Super, but not quite perfectly explored yet. Well, probably never to be grasped at all in its proposed unifying theory of everything. But, as said, looks and sounds just great.

MUSIC: At 40,000 Kelvin, it's Dr. Octagon (with the Emperor General)

DR. OCTAGON

Can science achieve a unified theory of complex systems?  
Psychology is not applied biology nor is biology applied chemistry.  
Whats the issue?

The year's 1898 and H.G. Wells has established himself as a leading author of what he himself calls *Scientific Romance*. In a documentary series, we would now see an actor playing Wells sitting in his study and writing the first page of *War of the Worlds*. While the narrator tells us about the basics of the story and its later radio adaptation by Orson Welles etc. etc., we could clearly make out some key phrases in the closeup of the manuscript: "watched this world keenly and closely", "as a man with a microscope might scrutinise the transient creatures that swarm and multiply in a drop of water", etc – you know this, " Layerson added with a voice a bit weary of self-reference. "But that's how these models work. They're all the same in a way."

**149 INT. MAIN GLASS STRUCTURE OF BIOSPHERE 2, ARIZONA DESERT**

*Biosphere 2 was built in the 1980s an artificial closed ecological system. It was used to test if and how people could live and work in a closed system, exploring the possible use of closed biospheres in space colonization.*

In his short story *The Trouble with Bubbles* Philip K. Dick describes a society obsessed with miniature worlds in glass bubbles, which the players can develop from a barren planetoid to advanced civilizations in fast-forward mode. But Dick adds an uncanny background to this common motif within SF:

PROTAGONIST

It began when we failed to find life on any of the other planets. We waited a long time for rocket travel, flight to other planets. And then to find nothing... People had counted on new worlds, new lands in the sky. Colonization. Contact with a variety of races. Trade. Minerals and cultural products to exchange. And instead of that nothing but dead rock and waste. A vast disappointment set in on all levels of society. There was no place to go, outside of Terra. No other worlds to visit. You couldn't leave here and go to another world. So instead, you stayed home and put together your own world."

This has been written in 1953, four years before Sputnik, still in the haydays of SF's space operas – intergalactic wars and romances... And then Dick comes up with the heretic idea that all we will find there is dead rocks. And instead people will play some Sim-game. Probably one of the few SF-stories of that time which were truly prophetic.

From outer space to cyberspace: Jon McKenzie follows a similar trajectory in his book *Perform or Else*. He investigates the notion of *performance* in its cultural, technological and organizational contexts, using the catastrophical performance failures of the *Challenger* Space Shuttle disaster as a narrative hub. McKenzie argues that performance has increasingly become the primary socio-economic paradigm after the Second World War and the rise of post-industrial production imperatives, very much like discipline had been described by Foucault as the key to the dawning industrial age.

From behind a banana tree, McKenzie steps forward as the narrator of another episode of our docu-mini-series, professionally delivering his introductory text.

JOHN MCKENZIE

For corporations, nonprofit organizations, government agencies and



other institutions, performance reviews have long meant something other than theater criticism.

He goes on – an impressive performance, but we move on to the next room. These studio tours are scheduled tightly, indeed.

The next exhibit on display is the charred command module of the Apollo 10 mission, the dress rehearsal for the actual moon landing. The inscription reads: "Many 'spin-offs' have been claimed for the Apollo flights, including the miniaturisation of computers and a huge boost to US technology. It also represented a huge industrial effort which engaged 390.000 people and took over five percent of the US Federal budget in 1965. The project generated enormous passion. North American Aviation, the contractors for the capsule, estimated that some 20 per cent of the 500 millions man-hours in the project were contributed as free overtime by staff."

"You see, space exploration has indeed been an important area to test and interweave various strategies for project management, information technology and social engineering," Layerson commented. "These are the very real Teflon pans and velcro fastenings of today's society."

Another image appears: It's the famous Earth rise photo of Apollo 10. The blue planet behind the lunar horizon looks like a miniature model carefully attached to the background of a film set. In a way, I think to myself, the moon hoax accusations have a point. In terms of project organization and affective embedding, it has been one enormous film set, for sure.

Only now I recognized that our group had significantly decreased in number, probably due to this confusing parallel tour gimmick. That's ok, I said to myself. It's fragmentary knowledge by definition, so it's fair enough to drop out at any point you like. And anyway, I just love boring lectures, because then my mind can aimlessly wander around, and often I come up with great ideas when I'm totally off the actual subject. Or jobs. Imagine working at a big theatre production, video department. Early in the production, not much to do. You and your buddy sit in front of the rehearsal stage. The actors and the director try to transform written language into 3-dimensional space. Add another dimension: time. And now with more empathy: 5D. You notice a red fire extinguisher in the middle of the improvised stage design. Just in case something goes wrong... haha. In between they discuss the play, which is about language, staging and time itself. In a way it can't get better anyway, you think. The monitors where later the videos will be screened are only wooden dummies for now. But all of a sudden they flash up and repeat well-known slogans. One by the anti-capitalist movement, the other one an essence of post-Fordist production.

## **ANOTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE**

### **JUST IN TIME**

And with a flash I'm back in that squatted Multiplex.

" – And she built a crooked house – ," someone next to me said, seemingly continuing an earlier conversation about Roni Layerson's background.

"You mean in Second Life?"

"Also. She added canned laughter when you entered, as well. Spooky."

I couldn't but think of all these weird people with their made-up dialogues as ghosts. Maybe they were haunting the place after it had become deserted. Real houses have real ghosts, but perhaps these entertainment centres had produced imaginary ghosts. Second order phantoms.

## **150 INT. BIOSPHERE 2, MUSEUM SHOP**

The participants browse through the shop. Someone buys a banana-cookbook, or a DVD of

Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*. Most people will bring home a small glass bubble, containing air, water, algae, and shrimps: a closed eco-system, a miniaturized merchandise of Biosphere 2.

I take up another DVD: *Welt am Draht* (World on Wires), originally aired in 1973, is a two part made-for-TV science fiction movie by German director Rainer Werner Fassbinder, based on the novel *Simulacron Three* by Daniel F. Galouye. The *Institut für Zukunftsforschung und Kybernetik* has developed a computer that simulates a whole tiny world for socio-economic forecasts. Problem is the artificial inhabitants don't know about their artificiality; the further narrative logic is quite obvious (recursivity!), earning the film the label "*Matrix* for the advanced"

#### SISKINS

Welcome! Come in! My co-worker, Dr. Stiller, and I would like to make a statement regarding the simulation model. After that we've got some refreshments for you. Owing to a misunderstanding some confusing reports got public. We'd like to use this occasion to clear that misunderstanding. Dr. Stiller, together with Prof. Vollmer has developed the simulation model. Dr. Stiller will now make a few statements about that new model.

#### STILLER

Just to be very precise: It's not a computer in the common sense of the word. It's rather an electronic simulation system with immense memory capacity. As Prof. Vollmer used to say: with our system we have created the first entirely autonomous computer. We've built a unique artificial miniature world – using relays, circuits, electric impulses, reflexes... – which is capable of leading its own existence. According to our rules... but following its own dynamic processes.

The paradigmatical narrative setting of *Welt am Draht* combines the miniature model and time-travelling, as the simulation model is used for prognosis of the future. The very same procedure has today become an essential operation for optimizing technological and economic processes, both small-scale as in globalized transfers of goods and information.

### **151 EXT. THE WIDE PLANES OF THE SECOND LIFE GRID**

A bunch of daft avatars typing away into the empty air.

#### AVATAR OF FREDRIC JAMESON

The Utopian calling, indeed, seems to have some kinship with that of the inventor in modern times, and to bring to bear some necessary combination with which a series of solutions are proposed and tested. There is here some affinity with children's games; but also with the outsider's gift for seeing overfamiliar realities in a fresh and unaccustomed way, along with the radical simplifications of the maker of models. But there is also the delight in construction to be taken into account, something wonderfully conveyed by Margaret Cavendish in 1666.

#### AVATAR OF MARGARET CAVENDISH

For every human creature can create a immaterial world fully inhabited by immaterial creatures, and populous of immaterial subjects, such as we are, and all this within the compass of a head or scull; nay, not only so, but he may create a world of what fashion and government he will, and give the creature thereof such motions, figures, forms, colours,

perceptions, etc as he pleases, and make whirlpools, lights, pressures and reactions, etc as he thinks best; nay, he may make a world full of veins, muscles, and nerves, and all these to move by one jolt or stroke: also he may alter the world as often as he pleases, or change it from a natural world of ideas, a world of atoms, a world of lights, or whatsoever his fancy leads him to. And since it is in your power to create such a world, what need you to venture life, reputation and tranquility, to conquer a gross material world?

## **152 INT. ENTERTAINMENT CENTER, INFO BOX**

Roni Layerson is gone. Only her clipboard remains, a last trace of information, structure and direction. Miraculously it floats above the main exhibit of this room – a maquette of the Multiplex, built long ago to impress money laundering investors and later displayed in this room to create some form of spatial identity for the visitors. The clipboard turns around and I get a glimpse of what seems to be the final page. Somekind of an animated diagram, depicting aspects of models within a multi-dimensional continuum. I can read some of it:

### SPACE

smaller, same, greater  
non-spatial (abstract, structural)

### TIME

before: archetype model, role model  
concurrent: example  
after: replica, reproduction  
out of time?

## **CYCLIC TIME – CYCLIC SPACE**

### KNOWLEDGE

descriptive  
educative  
manipulative  
*(interesting example interlinking both poles: quantum physics)*

The diagram had a peculiar design. It almost curved the paper it was drawn upon, longing to break out of its two-dimensional limits. My eyes could not focus on details. The individual subparts seemed constantly in motion, slowly morphing into each other. An unknown symmetry. A perfect symmetry of immaterial dimensions.

And then I had to think of the the first humans. The first models probably were immaterial. Mental worlds. It makes sense from an evolutionary perspective. Creating subjectivity. It's hard to imagine how personal recall alone might be evolutionary useful, but if remembering how cold and hungry you were last winter helps you realize the benefits of putting food away for the next one, or convinces you to plant a few of your grains instead of eating them all, you stand a much better chance of surviving than someone who cannot project themselves backwards and forwards in time.

MUSIC: *(fades in)* *Life is Life*, Laibach's version. Fanfares, "Every minute of the future / Is a memory of the past" etc...

Someone next to me speaks up: "Scientists have found out that the very same brain regions are activated by remembering the past and imagining the future. Mental time travels seem to rely on the same neurological processes. A suspicion first observed by the old greeks and later detailed by french philosphers Henri Bergson and Gilles Deleuze is finally confirmed! Without any doubt! Authorized by publication in the Proceedings of the National Academy of

Sciences!!!"

Only recently political theory has taken up Bergson's and Deleuze's thoughts in order to study the specific time manipulations within today's socio-economic regime. Join us for next week's episode, when we will see how left theorists try to analyze what's really going on in society and in your mind!"

Short clips of Negri, Lazzarato, Virno etc. as talking heads in a Blue Box follow.

#### INSERT:

Post-Fordism is often characterized by a transition to immaterial labor, variably defined as work that produces and/or manipulates signs and symbols, data, information, knowledges, affects and biological life. Under the post-Fordist regime distinctions of time – work/leisure, ages of life, etc. – break down. All of lifetime becomes integrated into production: Production is said to become biopolitical, struggles occur on and over biological and social life itself.

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According to Marx labor is time and its product is crystallized time. In post-Fordism the whole of lifetime is absorbed within this transformation processes and thus the production of subjectivity is at the centre of these new capitalist production layouts.

"Other studies show that the mental time travel mode is the default activity for the idle brain. The article ends like this: It seems that unless called upon to do something specific, your brain is busy recalling the past or projecting into the future. So next time you catch yourself staring into space instead of getting on with your work, or drifting into reverie as you try to read a book, don't beat yourself up about it. Your daydreams will pay off in the long run."

"Now that's quite something. Pays off... Post-Fordism is mining on creativity and imagination, which are based on our subjectivity, growing on everyday experiences and their processing into memories. In *The Golden Man* Philip K. Dick described the mutant's ability to see the future as an evolutionary advantage. But it's not Science Fiction... this happened hundreds of thousands years ago! The real Science Fiction is that today this default brain activity is being integrated into capitalism. Subjectivity is turned into a simulation model to optimize production processes. The current socio-economic regime is based on time machines. Subjectivities. Our own time machines!"

"What about re-appropriation?"

"*The War of the Time Machines*. Would be a good title for a Science Fiction story about exactly these struggles going on in a world set about 15 minutes into the future."

"Next time. Next time is the best time, we all know. But if there is no next time where to go?" I came home early in the morning. And hell was I fucked after that *helter skelter* at the Multiplex ghost ride. Wandering around restless the whole day, I was unable to make sense of what I had experienced. No chance for writing a review or summary. So in the evening I visited two friends who will have a baby in some months time. We didn't talk about models, at all. Almost.

*(...) indeed, for those only too wary of the motives of its critics, yet no less conscious of Utopia's structural ambiguities, those mindful of the very real political function of the idea and the program of Utopia in our time, the slogan of anti-anti-Utopianism might well offer the best working strategy. (Fredric Jameson, Archeologies of the Future)*

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Another rendering of this text has been published in the popular SF magazine *Multiplex Fiction* in its spring 2006 issue (available through [daegseingcny.net](http://daegseingcny.net) or [amazon.de](http://amazon.de))  
Thanks to Philipp Haupt, Christian Töpfer, Marina Grzinic and Christina Linortner.

Ralo Mayer lives and works as artist in Vienna and Drippsdrü. He investigates aspects of social reality, breeding unruly monsters in various substrates like film, performance, installation and text.

Since 2023 he has been a Fellow at Manoa Free University, initiating collective projects about artistic research practices and self-organisation, like the exhibition *W...WirWissen* and the semi-public facilities of MFU in Vienna. For the past thirty years he has shown considerable interest in HOW TO DO THINGS WITH WORLDS, a widespread quirk that has led to a dedicated research series last year at MFU.

Mayer works out of a background in design and agency, frequently collaborates with Philipp Haupt and speculates if making up bios could be a first step to wave good-bye to the grind. (no)

<http://manoafreeuniversity.org/howtodothingswithworlds>

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