

To reinvent the Real as Fiction

MARINA FATHALLA

Futurity;

Speculative futures in the genre of science fiction and the dystopian novel are based on data gathered from existing social realities, calculating potential futurities – a not-so unrealistic projection. “Traditional science fiction was that of the expanding universe; to the potentially infinite universe of production [in the post-industrial era]; science fiction adds the multiplication of its own possibilities.”¹ Several devices used through *Bidding War* point towards spatial probability, ambiguity, and the mysterious, opening up space to potential parallel/multiple realities; and ask, what happens when these different spaces of political and social simulation collide?

The relevance of the genre of science fiction within the context of our contemporary hyper-reality and the hyper-capitalist moment is the allusion to fiction, or perhaps, even the end of fiction altogether. The era of hyper-reality is characterized by satellites of global flows and constellations of systems governed by no one specific subject. “Zombie capitalism,” as theorists of late and corporate capitalism define it — phantoms of a deregulated free flow of the market permeating between real and unreal.

Disembodied and immaterial forces of colonization have moved far beyond the control of bodies, land, wealth and resources but much more fearfully, rooted in the phantoms of controlling systems, information, trade of commodities, and economies across borders and geographies. The disembodied voice of a real estate agent depicted as blue smoke in the video presents a multiplicity of voices, and the anonymity and impersonal nature of exchange and consumption at either end of the transaction. The language used throughout the piece demonstrate power impressed through language. We witness the performance of award reception speeches in the opening scene of the film. The language used in the performance parallels the anonymity of consumerism, devoid of authenticity and meaning, at once relating to everything and to nothing. The language of the real estate agent mirrors that of the bosses and allows for open inclusion, wherein neither subject is defined;

Hello, this is me.

We thank you for your time, interest and commitment to pursuing business with Authentic Innovations Capital Inc.

The property offers extreme potential with its 34 car parking spaces that is expandable up to 182 with your architectural plans.

The real estate agent’s promise of exponential space is a theoretical promise of wealth and the potential for an infinitely ideal version of that material embodiment. Rotating architectural models clouded by blue smoke are elevated and devoid of context relating to the mega city, the highway, or the parking lot, which feed the hypermarket. The models are a simulation of imagined futures and desires associated with winning a bidding war for 1345 Morningside Avenue. A material dreamscape, the property is a claim of ruling class notions of wealth manifested in lifestyle, status, and its outward display.

>>

¹ Baudrillard, Jean, and Sheila Faria. Glaser. *Simulacra and simulation*. Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 2014

We are in a space and time of post-property and land. It would be unsurprising to find a future where the original keepers of the land are completely unknown to us, or to imagine what it was prior to a concept of ownership and property – in that sense, the past becomes science fiction. In the context of hyper reality and simulacrum we know that the land is a coordinate or derivative of a political web, and that all land has been at one time, property.

When there is no longer a virgin territory, and thus one available in the imaginary, when the map covers the whole territory, something like the principle of reality disappears. In this way the conquest of space constitutes an irreversible crossing toward the loss of the terrestrial referential. [...] Terrestrial space today is virtually coded, mapped, registered, saturated; when a system reaches its own limits, a reversal is produced—something else takes place, in the imaginary as well.²

Awakening from a state of sleep (or death) in the epilogue scene, the subordinate or underclass characters, an unpaid intern and an underpaid worker, suggests a potential re-charting of that territory. The seemingly isolated land in the suburban context of Morningside takes the viewer to possible imaginaries in the emptiness and eeriness of the nighttime setting. The prefix “post” speaks to an alternative space alluded to in the film: to post-death, post-destruction and catastrophe, and political turmoil, to an unknowable futurity. The interns run across the space of the property, defining it through time and distance, and performing the embodiment of the land. In this imaginary, class has no physical boundary. The meeting of material and immaterial forces of labor is enacted when the workers enter the opened door of 1345 Morningside to reveal a cloud of blue smoke filtering through. The artists question what would happen if the ruling class and the bourgeoisie were to self-destruct.

The use of a black curtain as a visual device both at the opening and ending of the piece, cycles back to the concept of futurity, as a window into the other worldly. In the ending scene, the interns open the curtain to reveal the aftermath of the destruction of the architectural models, and incidentally the ideology of the ruling class. The threshold opens up to a potential universe—a spatial bend, which could signify many things from imminent death, to cyclical patters of existence. The fragments of simulacrum—the copy without an original—wherein there is no telling at what point of the universe’s development we find ourselves in. What are we left with when hyper-capitalist immaterial forces meet with precarious forms of labor, in the wake of interstitial experiences – perpetually in a state of pre—or post—work? In the opening scene of the film, the curtain prefaces our experience by presenting the concept of rehearsal; the space behind the curtain reveals microphones and technological supports exposing the invisible material of labor. Performative speculations repeat potential outcomes; and *rehearsal* alludes to traversing between fiction and reality, and with these gestures circling an Other spatiality.

² *ibid*