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Mining for Reality in Late-Stage Capitalism: Reading Murakami Haruki and Don DeLillo Towards a New Literary Realism

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Mining for Reality in Late-Stage Capitalism: Reading Murakami Haruki and Don DeLillo Towards a New Literary Realism

Gabriel Chin

In his short story, 'A Folklore for My Generation: A Prehistory of Late Stage Capitalism', Murakami Haruki's nameless narrator, a novelist, addresses the reader with the following words:

[w]hen you listen to somebody's story and then try to reproduce it in writing, the tone's the main thing. Get the tone right and you have a true story on your hands [...]. Turn this around, and you could say there are stories that are factually accurate, yet aren't true at all.¹

Murakami here gestures towards what, for him, constitutes the essential quality of fiction. He makes a clear delineation made between fact — that is, clear, itemizable, unambiguous knowledge — and truth. For Murakami's narrator, fiction is the body which navigates between these two islands, that which ventures to cross the sea between the knowable, on the one hand, and reality on the other, and in the crossing, discovers truth.

In Don DeLillo's novel, *Mao II*, Scott, aide and assistant to reclusive writer Bill Gray, delivers the following commentary over the dinner table:

[t]he novel used to feed our search for meaning. Quoting Bill. It was the great secular transcendence. The Latin mass of language, character, occasional new truth. But our desperation has led us toward something larger and darker. So we turn to the news, which provides an unremitting mood of catastrophe. This is where we find emotional experience not available elsewhere [...]. We only need the reports and predictions and warnings.²

More than anything else, DeLillo centres upon the play between the public and the private, the expressive and the withheld, the hidden and the visible. The news, the eminent form of knowledge in public, becomes the locus of the search for meaning, the 'great secular transcendence' in late capitalist America. The

¹ Murakami Haruki, 'A Folklore for My Generation: A Prehistory of Late Stage Capitalism', in *Blind Willow, Sleeping Woman*, trans by Philip Gabriel (London: Vintage, 2007), pp. 75-102 (p. 81). In this article, I preserve the Japanese convention of placing the surname before the forename.

² Don DeLillo, *Mao II* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1991), p. 72.

novel is the medium of the interior, the withheld, that which only succeeds if it remains hidden from the public. Scott expresses this in a deft turn of phrase: ‘the withheld work of art is the only eloquence left’.³

This article argues that Murakami and DeLillo have a more-than-passing commonality in their writing, especially in relation to the phase of history Murakami calls late-stage capitalism. This work crosses productively between these two bodies of literature, finding at their intersection a fertile ground for a recontextualization of both writers’ *oeuvres*. I focus specifically on one aspect of Murakami’s and DeLillo’s writing, the one picked out above: the play between fiction and fact, between the novelist and the newscaster, between thought in private, and knowledge in public. Through a consideration of this dyad in Murakami’s and DeLillo’s writing, this article suggests a new and unusual opening for the return of the study of realism in literature. What I mean by realism here is literature as a representation of reality in a philosophical context: literature as an attempt to address, portray, and refer to a world ‘out there’. This model of literature (and the arts more widely), has been much maligned in philosophical work for at least the last hundred years, with Jacques Derrida perhaps being the standout example in recent literary theory. In ‘The Double Session’, Derrida argues that there is no essential reality or world to be found in literature, only ‘mimicry without imitation [...], a miming of appearance without concealed reality, without any world behind it, and hence without appearance’.⁴ This claim that there is no referent, no world, and no reality hidden behind the level of representation is emblematic of the current paradigm of continental philosophy which remains prevalent in associated bodies of literary criticism. My contention is that reading Murakami and DeLillo together in terms of realism not only allows a departure from this style of critique, but also presents a much needed alternative mode for addressing the concerns of late-stage capitalism.

Murakami’s narrator diagnoses late-stage capitalism thus: ‘[n]owadays if you try to grasp the reality of anything, there’s always a whole slew of convoluted extras that come with it: hidden advertising, dubious discount coupons’.⁵ By contrast, he describes the 1960s as a time in which ‘cause and effect were

³ DeLillo, p. 67.

⁴ Jacques Derrida, ‘The Double Session’, in *Dissemination*, trans by Barbara Johnson (London: Continuum, 2004), pp. 187-315 (p. 221).

⁵ Murakami, p. 77.

good friends [...]; thesis and reality hugged each other as if it were the most natural thing in the world'.⁶ Whether or not the 60s really did function as a time in which causality was direct and self-evident, it is clear that Murakami's narrator characterises late-stage capitalism by the inaccessibility of reality, or rather, by its mediation. In other words, reality itself on any scale — be it societal, individual, or global — is obscured by an excess, a proliferation of mediating entities which make impossible any direct relation to reality as a whole.

Bill, the protagonist of *Mao II*, relates his thoughts on the intellectual age to photographer, Brita: '[authors] are giving way to terror, to news of terror, to tape recorders and cameras, to radios, to bombs stashed in radios. News of disaster is the only narrative people need'.⁷ Bill's position is that the novel and the writer were once capable of 'alter[ing] the inner life of the culture [...] before we were all incorporated', but this role has been taken over by news providers and terrorists, the novel robbed of its power through the act of mass-production, through becoming part of the capitalist machine.⁸ In becoming incorporated, absorbed within a larger whole, the novel loses its power to access the inner life of culture, its interior reality. In the age of mass-production, the terrorist is capable of producing the event within which other narratives are absorbed; it subjugates the forces of media and mediation to its power. In this reading, the relation to reality is lost through the holism of mediation; the power of mass-production to rule public knowledge as mere parts in a larger machine.

How do these views on fiction, on writing, on the novel in the eminently public and image-saturated world of late-stage capitalism correlate? For both texts it is clear that a layer of mediation obscures a private reality hidden beneath. Whether it be the mediation of the photographic image, or that of the newsreel factoid, the loyalty card, the TV advertisement, or the mere repetition inherent in mass production, reality is hidden behind this glut of fascias. To put it in other words, in Murakami's and DeLillo's models, reality is that which is private, that which is left unexpressed by any given possible form of public expression. Reality is that which is not present in the newsroom or the banal hourly radio update. To return to Murakami's words; 'there are stories that are factually accurate, yet aren't true at

⁶ Murakami, p. 77.

⁷ DeLillo, p. 42.

⁸ DeLillo, p. 41.

all' -- factual representation is fundamentally incapable of creating a direct relation with reality.⁹ For each of these writers this is the condition of late-stage capitalism. Bracketing the question of whether this condition could exist in other circumstances, it can be argued that, for Murakami and DeLillo, the imperative of fiction in late-stage capitalism is that of retrieving reality without reducing it to facts; to relate that which is private without denuding it in the mass public.

There is one aesthetic theory equipped for the task of examining this play between the private and the public, reality and its appearances: the new realist metaphysics of Object-Oriented Ontology (OOO). Founded by philosopher Graham Harman, OOO's central tenet is that 'genuine tool-being withdraws even behind *causal* contact with other entities'.¹⁰ We cannot elaborate on Harman's full ontology here, but in simple terms, every entity (a 'tool-being' or 'real object') in the world possesses a withdrawn or withheld in-itself reality, a zone kept thoroughly private. This zone, the reality of things, is only reduced to knowledge by two methods, overmining and undermining. Overmining is the position that 'a thing's existence consists solely in its relation with other things', or that an object has no private reality, but, rather, exists based on its function in a larger system, or its meaning in a context.¹¹ For example: a thing's economic function in a marketplace reduces its reality to its exchange value in a system of economic relations; a linguistic signification within a discourse reduces a thing's reality to its meaning-giving function in a system of representations. Undermining is the position in which objects are seen as 'too shallow to be the fundamental reality in the universe', or, rather, that there is something deeper than object.¹² As in overmining, undermining strategies hold that objects have no private reality, but reality does exist in something deeper than objects, for example, atoms or matter, or some primordial flux or energy out of which objects emerge. In undermining, objects are mere aggregates of fundamental pieces, or surface effects of a more essential singularity.

Overmining and undermining are the only two ways that knowledge of a thing is gained in Harman's OOO. What use is such a theory for literature if it holds that the only way of expressing reality

⁹ Murakami, p. 81.

¹⁰ Graham Harman, *Tool-Being*, Kindle edn (Chicago: Open Court, 2002), p. 294 (emphasis in original).

¹¹ Graham Harman, *The Quadruple Object* (Alresford: Zero Books, 2011), p. 12.

¹² Harman, *Quadruple*, p. 10.

is to reductively transform it into one or another kind of crude caricature? OOO does hold that there is another way of getting at reality, neither reduction, nor knowledge, and it is at this point that OOO becomes much more interesting to literary work. Harman draws on the aesthetic theory of José Ortega y Gasset, particularly his study of metaphor. Harman claims that the structure of metaphor is the structure by which all entities in the universe communicate; a mode by which the two terms in the metaphor come together to form a new object which does not reduce the identity of its constituent parts to mere caricatures. Whether those two objects be a lover and a summer's day, or the evening and a patient etherised upon a table, 'in the case of a successful metaphor, we are able to experience a new entity which somehow combines [the two terms]'.¹³ Tim Morton, another advocate of OOO from an English literature background, elaborates on how, for OOO, all interactions between entities constitute a kind of translation, or metaphor.¹⁴ Morton, through Percy Shelley, argues that 'humans are like Aeolian harps', in the sense that all perception resembles the metaphoric structure in which entities combine in a form of expression while retaining their withdrawn realities.¹⁵ We never hear the wind in itself, only translations of it in leaves, in doorways, on harpstrings. Walter Benjamin, with startling similarity, argues that, in translations of the highest calibre, 'the harmony of languages is so profound that sense is touched by language only the way an [A]eolian harp is touched by the wind'.¹⁶ This is because every work has a 'nucleus [...] the element that does not lend itself to translation [...] even when all the surface content has been extracted and transmitted'.¹⁷ A true original, like all objects, always retains an element withdrawn from public expression.

In summary: for OOO, reality is composed of objects, discrete finite things. Each thing has a reality which is withdrawn from public expression, and is withheld from relation. That an object retains some nucleus irreducible to relation is what makes it real. Metaphor is the structure by which objects may, nevertheless, interact, through which objects relate to one another *without* reducing each other

¹³ Graham Harman, *Object-Oriented Ontology: A New Theory of Everything* (London: Pelican, 2018), p. 73.

¹⁴ Timothy Morton, 'An Object-Oriented Defense of Poetry', *New Literary History*, 43.2 (2012), 205-224 (p. 206) <<https://doi.org/10.1353/nlh.2012.0018>> [accessed 12 April 2014].

¹⁵ Morton, 'An Object-Oriented Defense', pp. 205-224 (p. 205).

¹⁶ Walter Benjamin, 'The Task of the Translator', in Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, trans by Zorn (London: Pimlico, 1999), pp. 70-82 (p. 80).

¹⁷ Benjamin, 'The Task', p. 76.

to crude caricatures. As in Benjamin's model of translation, reality holds some level which simply does not lend itself to translation, but, nevertheless, a translator must 'liberate the language imprisoned in a work in his re-creation of that work'.¹⁸ Like the metaphor, the translation produces a new entity which somehow combines its two terms: the original and the translator.

How does the writing of Murakami and DeLillo reproduce this effect? How do they translate reality such that it is represented without being reduced to the level of mere fact? Consider again the passages which opened this article: Murakami's passage foregrounds the division between the overall tone of reality and any itemizable list of facts which might be given about reality. DeLillo's passage foregrounds the division between reality in private and reality in public. Both of these passages describe the work of metaphor or translation as given in OOO, a way of relating to reality which does not reduce it to bare information or the lowest common denominator of public expression. In other words, OOO's aesthetic theory of objects corresponds precisely to the way that both Murakami and DeLillo attempt to diagnose and interrupt the condition of late-stage capitalism.

Further allegiances are to be found in the distinct modes through which Murakami and DeLillo tackle the relation between reality and representation. Murakami's passage corresponds to what Harman calls 'fusion'. This is an anti-empiricist mode of translation in which 'an entity is described as having certain properties while also being said to resist description by those very properties'.¹⁹ To clarify, if empiricism contends that any given entity is really a set of empirical observations -- a number of properties, qualities, or facts joined by cognition into a whole, -- then fusion is the aesthetic form in which properties and facts are connected to a whole which is altogether other than the sum of these facts. Harman is most lucid here in his discussion of H. P. Lovecraft's cosmic horror monster, Cthulhu: 'for every object, including Cthulhu, there is a "spirit of the thing" and "a general outline of the whole" irreducible to cheerful bundles of octopus, dragon, and human'.²⁰ Harman here defends Lovecraft's rendition of the monster, not merely as an aggregate of the properties octopus, dragon, and human, but rather, as a metaphoric description

¹⁸ Benjamin, 'The Task', p. 80.

¹⁹ Graham Harman, *Weird Realism* (Alresford: Zero Books, 2012), p. 237.

²⁰ Harman, *Weird Realism*, p. 58.

which is ‘not unfaithful to the spirit of the thing’.²¹ Like Benjamin’s translator, the literary work is carried out in the allusion to a reality which does not lend itself to translation, into mere facts or itemizable properties. When Murakami’s narrator contends that you ‘get the tone right and you have a true story on your hands’, he defends the same position as Harman’s fusion; that reality is found in the general outline of the whole, not in empirically observed qualities.²²

This reading runs contrary to typical interpretations of Murakami, even those which place focus on the metaphysical/ontological aspect of his writing. Matthew Strecher, for example, reads Murakami’s metaphysical aspects by according language ontological status, claiming that in Murakami’s writing ‘language fulfils the extraordinary and necessary function of constituting reality nonstop’.²³ Strecher is overtly indebted to the anti-realist style of reading in Derrida, which contends that no external reality exists beyond mind or language, and as such is unable to do justice to the way that Murakami explicitly addresses the relation between reality and representation.²⁴ Similarly, Rebecca Suter, when she addresses Murakami’s relation to American modernity and globalization, contends that Murakami’s use of Western literary techniques and tropes suggests that ‘Western literature is an instrument to bring order to chaos, to give sense to the world’ in his writing. She argues that the use of Western literature in the context of a Japanese audience (and vice versa), ‘allows the construction of identity through a process of separation and reconnection of the different layers of reality’.²⁵ What this reading (like Strecher’s), misses is the way Murakami refuses to reduce reality to either a language/mind construct, or to layers of cultural and literary tropes. Instead, reality in Murakami’s writing is that which cannot be reduced to facts and information; it is that which resists the melting into air of things, things which resist description by their own properties.

On the other hand, DeLillo’s work corresponds to what Harman calls ‘fission’, or a kind of metaphor or translation, in which ‘the qualities of the thing break off from the thing as a whole and seem

²¹ Harman, *Weird Realism*, p. 24.

²² Murakami, p. 81.

²³ Matthew Strecher, *The Forbidden Worlds of Haruki Murakami* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), p. 29.

²⁴ Strecher, *Forbidden Worlds*, p. 30.

²⁵ Rebecca Suter, *The Japanization of Modernity: Haruki Murakami Between Japan and the United States* (London: Harvard University Press, 2008), p. 179.

partially distinct from it'.²⁶ DeLillo's characters lament the impossibility of literature to remain private, to remain in the withdrawn, undisclosed state OOO accords to reality. Instead, we have the literary work as a 'mass of language, character, occasional new truth', a body of representation which somehow separates itself from its own features. This is the root of the tension between literature and photography throughout *Mao II*, the work as a unit ('great secular transcendence'), and the many given images of the work broken off from it.

This tension is made no more explicit than in the tension between Bill, the author as figure of the literary object, and his photographs. When poring over the shots Brita has collected of Bill, Scott muses that '[she] was trying to deliver her subject from every mystery that hovered over his chosen life. She wanted to do pictures that erased his seclusion'.²⁷ Yet he further notes that 'the differences frame to frame were so extraordinarily slight that all twelve sheets might easily be one picture repeated'.²⁸ Is it such a stretch to rearrange DeLillo's prose to state that all twelve sheets of photographs might easily be one *object*? The object cannot remain in private when it is brought into the realm of representation, but there nevertheless remains a fission between the object in public and the snapshots by which it is known. When Scott argues that 'the withheld work of art is the only eloquence left', what he is really pointing to is the position that the work has to find some way to break apart from the mass of its reproducible images. To refer again to our Object-Oriented reading of Benjamin, the writer is akin to the translator, and the translator must 'liberate the language imprisoned in a work in his re-creation of that work'.²⁹ The writer *must* transform private reality into a public expression, but must produce it with the dignity of its own originality, transform it into its own object, which is irreducible somehow to its myriad public images.

This ontological reading is not so far-fetched in DeLillo as might be expected. Silvia Bizzini, for example, reads *Mao II* through the lens of a Foucault-inspired position which does away with an 'essentialist and universal subject', yet at the same time makes the claim that 'the subversion of the text [...] consists in its capacity [...] to create its own *chiaroscuro*, to change the perspective we get of the

²⁶ Harman, *Weird Realism*, p. 242.

²⁷ DeLillo, p. 221.

²⁸ DeLillo, p. 222.

²⁹ Benjamin, 'The Task', p. 80.

known phenomenological world'.³⁰ Her argument hinges on the need for literature to have a withheld or obscured element, something which is impossible to translate into the public space. Unfortunately, her dependence upon a Foucauldian philosophy — which excludes the possibility of a reality existing beneath phenomena — makes this argument tenuous at best. Even as she argues that DeLillo's writing is able to 'represent another reality', she immediately reduces this reality to configurations of history, subjectivity, and writing, defaulting to an anti-realist position with no power to resist the cultural forces she critically locates in DeLillo.³¹ Similarly, Peter Boxall contends that 'DeLillo's novels posit a world in which the nonexistent, the unnameable, the unthinkable, have been eradicated', and that 'the novels look for a spatial and a temporal ground [...] upon which difference, singularity, and resistance to US cultural imperialism might be based'.³² In *Mao II*, he discovers this ground as 'silent, withdrawn spaces that prevent the automatic self-duplication of culture, spaces which might harbour a new future', which are, of course, encapsulated in the 'withheld work of art', literature, the novel.³³ However, as with Bizzini, it seems contradictory to call this a 'ground', since Boxall argues that DeLillo's writing only finds these withdrawn spaces in their orientation towards a future, a yet-to-come that is based, again, on an anti-realist position found in Derrida, amongst others. The mobilisation of an Object-Oriented reading alongside DeLillo's writing not only offers a far more tenable ground for the withheld zones resistive to the public space of globalisation (reality itself), but also breaks the dogmatic deadlock of criticism which consistently rejects the idea that DeLillo refers to a reality 'out there' at all.

Murakami's 'A Folklore for My Generation' and DeLillo's *Mao II* unambiguously centre upon the condition of late-stage capitalism, an age of consumerism, the mass-production of commodities and culture, and globalisation. While OOO, at least in Harman's case, has no strong commitments for or against capitalism at this stage in its ongoing development, reading Murakami and DeLillo through the

³⁰ Silvia Bizzini, 'Can the Intellectual Still Speak? The Example of Don DeLillo's *Mao II*', in *Critical Essays on Don DeLillo*, ed. by Hugh Ruppersburg and Tim Engles (New York: G. K. Hall & Co, 2000), pp. 245-257 (p. 247, p. 248).

³¹ Bizzini, p. 255 (emphasis in original).

³² Peter Boxall, *Don DeLillo: The Possibility of Fiction* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), pp. 5-6.

³³ Boxall, p. 165.

Object-Oriented lens does offer a point of constructive resistance to the machine of globalised capital, at least as Murakami and DeLillo diagnose it.

‘A Folklore for My Generation’ is a parable, typical of Murakami’s fiction, revolving around the failed relationship between two characters, Mister Clean and Miss Clean. Described as ‘right out of a toothpaste commercial’, it is hard to imagine two characters more well-adapted to the phase of late-stage capitalism, particularly in late twentieth century Japan.³⁴ Mr Clean describes his life as ‘following a well-laid-out highway with signs telling me which were the exits [...]. Follow the directions, I reckoned, and life would turn out OK’.³⁵ Miss Clean is characterised by her insistence on ‘the way things are done’.³⁶ Their relationship together is defined by ‘a lack of change’, ‘like a pendulum gradually grinding to a halt’.³⁷ These two characters are therefore defined by their total belonging to their historical moment: that of late-stage capitalism. Between Mr Clean’s reduction of reality to operable rules and pathways and Miss Clean’s obedience within the status quo, the two are caught in a sterile zone, not outside time, but entirely given over to a single period of time — the end of history — a possibility-space with a null value for imagining alternatives.

The reader will already have noted that this is a form of undermining in Harman’s sense, the reduction of reality to more fundamental units (in this case, facts, rules, and dogma), a stripping away of supposed extraneous entities. When Murakami contrasts the art of fiction with stories composed of mere facts, he is drawing attention to the way aesthetics act as fusion in OOO’s terms; a mode of translation which unites objects with unfamiliar qualities, which generates new realities with heretofore unseen properties, the possibility of change and novelty in the world. For Murakami, it is the writer’s responsibility to represent the world in this way, to remain ‘not unfaithful to the spirit of the thing’ and refuse the dull, prosaic sterility of Mr and Mrs Clean, resisting the undermining impulse: ‘there are stories

³⁴ Murakami, p. 80.

³⁵ Murakami, p. 84.

³⁶ Murakami, p. 88.

³⁷ Murakami, p. 90.

that are factually accurate yet aren't true at all. Those are the kind of stories you can count on being boring, and even, in some instances, dangerous'.³⁸

Mao II opens with a mass marriage ceremony conducted by the leader of the Unification Church, Sun Myung Moon. This prologue ends with the line 'the future belongs to crowds' -- a line which crystallises the novel's concern with mass culture and the status of representation in public life in late-stage capitalism.³⁹ The crowd leaves its constituent parts 'immunized against the language of the self' -- it is the quintessential form of public representation which divests the individual of its interiority, which empties out its private reality.⁴⁰ Each single object is reduced to its mere function as a part within a whole; 'a mass of people turned into a sculptured object. It is like a toy with thirteen thousand parts'.⁴¹ The crowd as a whole becomes the dominant object, ruling over its various pieces. Like the mass media produces news and like the terrorist produces events, this crowd produces identity. Here we see Harman's concept of overmining writ large across an epoch: things reduced to their relations to larger wholes; individuals are lost in the mass marriage; 'love and sex are multiplied out'; child soldiers are unified under the image of their leader -- 'they are all children of Abu Rashid. All men one man'; Chinese citizens donate their individuality away to be a part of Mao's nation, '[i]n Mao's China a man walking along with a book in his hand was not seeking pleasure or distraction. He was binding himself to all Chinese. What book? Mao's book'.⁴²

The question of literature and representation rises here. The congregation at the mass marriagespeak a half-language, a set of ready-made terms and empty repetitions. All things, the sum of the knowable, everything true, it all comes down to a few simple formulas copied and memorised and passed on.⁴³ 'In China the narrative belonged to Mao. People memorized it and recited it to assert the destiny of their revolution'.⁴⁴ This is how the undermining gesture present in Murakami -- dangerous stories made entirely of reproducible facts -- reverses into overmining, (its opposite), in DeLillo. The

³⁸ Murakami, p. 81.

³⁹ DeLillo, p. 16.

⁴⁰ DeLillo, p. 8.

⁴¹ DeLillo, p. 7.

⁴² DeLillo, p. 162.

⁴³ DeLillo, p. 7.

⁴⁴ DeLillo, p. 162.

play between photography and literature posits *Mao II*'s solution to resisting over/undermining forces. While the photograph can 'neutralize the event, drain it of eeriness and power', and while it can also successfully strip an object from its parent object — as Brita does when she photographs the face of one of Abu Rashid's child soldiers, resulting in a violent outburst — it only does so by turning the forces of over/undermining back on themselves, reducing the thing to its image.⁴⁵ By contrast, the novel is capable of OOO's fission: bringing an object into public representation while maintaining its separation from any of its given qualities, parts, or relations. Quoting Bill, the great novel represents 'one thing unlike another, one voice unlike the next. Ambiguities, contradictions, whispers, hints'.⁴⁶ Would it be so odd to conclude this list with 'the general outline of the whole': that allusive mode of representation which grasps the tone of the thing while holding it irreducible to facts; like Benjamin's translator, that which 'liberate[s] the language imprisoned in a work in [the] re-creation of that work'; a non-reductive aesthetics, not unfaithful to the spirit of the thing?

This article has demonstrated the possibilities for reading Murakami's and DeLillo's work through the lens of OOO. The similarities between these two writers run throughout their *oeuvres*, particularly in their mutual concern for the conditions of living within late-stage capitalism and in their commitment to literature as a kind of faith to the spirit of things: a non-reductive, allusive literary *realism*. This conception of realism — as faith to the spirit of things — is a far cry from the realisms of the past in that it is defined by a stylistic imperative of OOO: the 'ambiguities, contradictions, whispers, hints' of metaphor. Whether dealing with both natural and man-made disasters in *After the Quake* (2001) and *White Noise* (1985); examining institutions of knowledge and information production in *Hard-Boiled Wonderland* (1985) and *Ratner's Star* (1976), or looking at belief, terror, and violence in *1Q84* (2010) and *Mao II*, Murakami and DeLillo are unflinching in this realism, affording a whole new understanding of their work, a recontextualization of genre, and a rich field for further work.

⁴⁵ DeLillo, p. 6, pp. 236-237.

⁴⁶ DeLillo, p. 159.

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