



Battle: Los Angeles

Hollywood's Uncritical Dystopias

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Utopianism, Left to Right

Historical materialism aims to understand and change the world en route to the establishment of a different and better kind of society wherein people are free from the realm of necessity, substantively equal and able to fully participate in making the decisions that shape their lives. It is a method of hope and change that says “no!” to the same-old bad capitalist circumstances of the present, “yes!” to the different and possibly better post-capitalist situation that could lie ahead and “now!” to the formation of social movements that prefigure and move toward this future. In the mid-19th century, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels used the word “Communism” to describe this future in-becoming in the movements to transcend “the present state of things.”¹

From the Paris Commune of 1871 to the Occupation of Zuccotti Park in 2011, the “Communist” ideal inspired

millions of people to struggle to change the world, and for the better. But the ideal has also been used and abused by regimes that did tremendous harm to humanity.² Throughout the 20th century, the practices of the Soviet Union and its satellite states turned “Communism” into a much loathed symbol of autocracy, repression and inefficiently administered hells on earth, Gulags, killing fields and all. At the same time, the governments and corporations of Fascist and “Liberal” capitalist states further degraded Communism’s appeal with coercion (the systematic repression of the “reds” and their allies) and moral suasion (anti-Communist propaganda campaigns). Communists have been monitored, harassed, jailed, beaten, smeared, censored and deprived of employment because of the presumable threat their ideals and actions posed to the “national security” of autocratic and liberal states while the Communist hypothesis has been

routinely denounced as a Utopian ideology (an ideal of a perfect society that is impossible to achieve) that inevitably fosters a Dystopian reality (an actual type of society that is much worse than all others).³ States protect and promote the reigning economy on behalf of the interests of those who rule it against the Other Big “C” using a mix of force and consent.⁴

In the early 21st century, Slavoj Žižek, Jodi Dean, Alain Badiou, Alberto Toscano and others⁵ tried to enliven the Communist hypothesis, but the history of anti-Communism weighted upon their efforts to do so. In present-day capitalist societies, Communism remains a dirty word and “communist” is a risqué subject-position. Those who speak of Communism as a possibility in positive terms are predictably caricatured by defenders of the status quo as “Utopian” (i.e. people who suffer some kind of naïve idealism about a good society) or worse, “Dystopian” (i.e. people who harbour tyrannical ideas that will instigate an inherently bad society). *World Affairs*’ Alan Johnson, for example, says today’s communist intellectuals suffer a “Utopian Delusion.”⁶

In 2010, Fox News’ Glenn Beck tried to foment a new “Red Scare” with his frequent rants about Communism’s evils and ludicrous mislabelling of Commander-in-Chief Obama as a socialist determined to take America down the road to serfdom.

By defining the new communists negatively, journalists define those who hold a worldview that accords with the status quo in positive terms. The stereotype of the insane or evil-minded communist makes free-market ideologues appear to be rational and morally upright while the depiction of Communism as an un-realizable Utopia or an eventual Dystopia makes capitalism appear to be the most realistic and best system for humanity, now and forever.

We live in a time when the spectre of Communism haunts the capitalist system, even in the absence of visible mass opposition to it. In 2010, for example, Fox News’ Glenn Beck tried to foment a new “Red Scare” with his frequent rants about Communism’s evils and ludicrous mislabelling of Commander-in-Chief Obama as a socialist determined to take America down the road to serfdom.⁷ The news media’s pejorative framing of the Communist hypothesis and attacks on present-day communists are not surprising, nor are they the outcome of an independent thought process. They are routinely done, easy to do and derived from the ideological muck

of common sense “capitalist realism,” or, idea that capitalism is the best and only feasible system for humanity.⁸ The sense that “there is no alternative”(TINA) to capitalism has been woven into the common sense ways that many people think about and perceive the world. It is an absolutist proposition that aims to demolish Left Utopianism (“a post-capitalist system is possible and possibly better”) and cement Right Utopianism (“the capitalist system is all that is possible and is the best”).

Since at least the mid-1970s, the Right’s vision of a Utopian future society has outflanked the Left’s. Multi-national corporations, neoliberal politicians and some postmodernists expressed incredulity toward the Marxist meta-narrative of class history and struggle as a path to a different and better future while enthusiastically embracing the old totalizing story about the virtue of free markets. Indeed, the New Right’s “free-market Utopia” forecast the “rising of all boats and the wonder-working miraculous powers of worldwide unregulated global markets.”¹⁰ Propounded by neoliberal philosophers like Friedrich Van Hayek, Milton Friedman,

Robert Nozick and spread by the U.S. state and its allies via coercion (covert and overt wars) and persuasion (public diplomacy or propaganda) around the world, Right-wing Utopianism is the absolutist belief that laissez-faire capitalism will benefit all. Many proponents of Right-wing Utopianism take up a vanguard position and absent self-reflexivity, promote the one-dimensional idea that planetary and human well-being is best “advanced by the maximization of entrepreneurial freedoms within an institutional framework characterized by property rights, individual liberty, unencumbered markets and free trade.”¹¹

Following the collapse of “actually existing socialism” in 1989 and the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Right’s Utopians seemed to deal a near death-blow to the Left’s vision of a post-capitalist world. Francis Fukuyama’s treatise on the “end of history” made it appear as though a laissez-faire Utopia modelled on the United States was in the process of being achieved, everywhere.¹² In the 1990s, the Right imagined de-regulated capitalism marching over rationally planned economies, neoliberal

state forms liquidating autocracies, and postmodern consumer spectacles stamping out cultures of Difference while many “globalization” scholars celebrated a world united by “free-trade,” communication technologies, liberal democracy, human rights, peace and corporate cosmopolitanism. At the turn of the millennium, Terry Eagleton glumly observed the pull of this “degenerate Utopia”¹³ and its “fantasy that we no longer need to look to a future because the future is here already, in the shape of a perversely idealized view of the capitalist present.”¹⁴

Idealized it was. The terrorist attacks of 9/11 and the U.S. Empire’s pre-emptive and prolonged invasions and occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq cracked the Right’s Utopian mirror of global capitalism. The Global War on Terror and global peace movements which opposed it showed the world system to be more interdependent than ever before, but also more entrenched in the history of social antagonisms, territorial nation-states and imperialism. The 2007-2008 financial crisis and the worldwide revolutionary upheavals initiated by the Arab Spring of 2010 and Occupy of 2011 breathed new life into “ruth-



less criticism of all that exists.” *Critique* of the Right’s Utopian worldview spread around the world, revealing the contradictions between what neoliberals say about capitalism and what it actually is. The disjunct between the Right’s Utopian ideal of capitalist society and reality are illuminated each day by real material conditions.

For example, neoliberals equate capitalism with free-markets in a time when markets are not competitive, but oligopolistic: an ever-shrinking number of integrated conglomerates control the communications industries, sports, manufacturing, banking, retail, healthcare, insurance, transportation, arms, airlines, groceries, beer and more.¹⁵ Furthermore, the freedom to shop in the sphere of consumption obscures the unfree relations between corporations and waged workers in the realm of production (i.e. the price tags and brand images of commodities hide the commodity’s origins in exploited human labour).¹⁶ Neoliberals extol small, minimalist and de-centralized liberal states yet capitalism has come to depend upon large, maximalist and centralized national security states to facilitate and legitimize its expansion.

Neoliberals link capitalism to freedom and equality while the eighty-five richest people in the world who control more wealth than the nearly 3.5 billion poorest are subsequently more free and equal to do as they like than the rest of us, especially the poor. Neoliberals imagine that a world united by free-markets and political liberalism will result in peace but spread this blueprint for peace with wars, coups, occupations, shocks and drone attacks.¹⁷ Neoliberals see capitalism as the only and best system for humankind, forever, while the system’s infinite growth in a world of finite resources moves us toward planetary ecocide.¹⁸

At present, Right-wing Utopianism exists, but as pure ideology; it is a set of false or distorted ideas that idealize capitalism while obscuring true or objective knowledge about its real social relations and effects. The people who cling to the “truth” of this ideology are either naïve about actually existing capitalism, ignorant about how their credo legitimizes immiseration or just cynical.

A Dystopian “Structure of Feeling”? Name the System!

In a conjuncture in which the Left’s Utopia is inking in the rot of Right Utopianism, a dystopian “structure of feeling” has emerged. This “catastrophic texture of everyday life”¹⁹ is typified by a growing sense that the *longue durée* has not led humankind to a Utopia on earth, but to a Dystopia. Anxieties about the catastrophe-to-come, fears of civilizational collapse and panicked ruminations that the literal end of human history is near pervade civil society and the media. The news, for example, publishes stories titled “Highway to Dystopia: time to wise up to the looming risks,”²⁰ “Have We Sown the Seeds of Dystopia?”²¹ and “Dystopia: Corporate Rule Breeding ‘Global Class War.’”²² In 2012, the business elites who met at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland were made privy to a “Seeds of Dystopia” panel and the release of a *Global Risks Report* that describes the world of 2012 and beyond as dystopian, typified by misery, hardship and despair.²³ The *Report*’s authors cite global unemployment, rampant poverty, income inequality, market volatility, climate change, food and water shortages, population growth, slumification, terrorism and failed states as examples of the dystopic condition of the world.

The world system’s dominant states meanwhile strategize to ensure their national interests will be secure if the system collapses or a mass insurgency develops and tries to overthrow it. The National Security Agency (NSA) report, “National Security and the Threat of Climate Change,”²⁴ for example, frames climate change as a “threat multiplier that will intensify existing menaces to the system (failed states, resource wars and a rebellious underclass). A 2014 NASA-supported research project called “Human and Nature Dynamics

(HANDY): Modeling Inequality and Use of Resources in the Collapse or Sustainability of Societies” claims that the world system could collapse in the near future due to unsustainable resource exploitation, unequal wealth distribution and the failure of power elites to transform the system in order to avoid or mitigate its conflicts.²⁵

The above news stories, blog entries and reports recognize that the planet and humankind are in jeopardy, but what’s missing from this mainstreamed dystopian discourse is a properly historical materialist explanation of *why* and *how* the world system came to be the way it is. Too often, commentators identify real social problems but abstract them from the wider political-economy which shapes them. Capitalism’s horrifying effects are atomized and de-linked from the structure and its determinations. There is much talk of the dystopic effects of

The United States, for example, *is* a plutocracy where elite groups with the most money *do* have the most political power,²⁶ but this is not an entirely new phenomenon because the U.S. state has long facilitated and legitimized the development of capitalism and the executive branch of the modern state continues to be “a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie.”²⁷ There is an undeniable and growing divide between the rich and the poor in the United States and all over the world,²⁸ but the problem of inequality expresses and extends the fundamental division in capitalist societies between the owning class and the working classes. Rivalries, conflicts and wars between states exist and are deplorable, but they arise from the antagonistic structure of a world capitalist system which pits state against state and bourgeoisie against bourgeoisie in endless competi-

the melting of the polar ice caps and extinction of flora and fauna—is shaped by capitalism, a totalizing system that integrates all different and particular social relations into its logics. When totalizing, we try to grasp how “the structural features of the world political economy are such to make the problems we collectively face impossible to solve” within the capitalist system and that “causally inter-connected, mutually enhancing catastrophes” have happened and will continue to do so, so long as the system remains.³⁰

While the reigning powers see dystopic effects as manageable within the framework of national security states and economies, historical materialists totalize to show how plutocracy, inequality, inter-state conflict and environmental despoliation are effects of the capitalist system. These effects will be exacerbated unless the

the world’s dominant narrator of the future of the planet and its science fiction and fantasy genres are among its most globally popular and profitable forms. To appeal to as many viewers as possible and collect maximal box office receipts, Hollywood studios design films that address the collective hopes and anxieties, dreams and nightmares, and desires and fears of viewers.³¹ Studios co-opt planetary aspirations for a better future and horrors of a world changed for the worse and “transcode” them into entertainment forms.³²

The dialectical dance of the utopian and dystopian imagination in capitalism, however, has not been well represented by Hollywood studios or in the wider society in which they pursue profit. In the 20th century, the dystopian imagination was often counterbalanced by a utopian one but in the 21st, the dystopian story mode is



The Road

our time, not enough about the system which lies beneath. The result is an optimistic perhaps delusional hope that democracy can be deepened, divisions parsed, inequality ended, needs met, wars halted and the environment saved within a system ever-more hostile to these goals. In postmodern societies where present-minded thought obstructs historicity and microscopic mania negates holistic cognition, there is a need to relate the parts to the whole and to explain effects with regard to the determinations of the system that continues to weight upon the bodies and minds of seven billion people worldwide. To the extent that “naming the system” remains the precondition for all attempts to understand and change it, historical materialism continues to have tremendous political and analytical value.

tions for resource, profit and power. Climate change is a real threat to the survival of our species, but this is too often rendered curable via market-friendly technological bandages as opposed to movements to move beyond the capitalist system itself—the root cause of our malady.²⁹

By explaining grim contemporary circumstances as the outcome of the capitalist system and showing how the dystopic effects swirling in our collective unconscious relate, directly and indirectly, to the logics of capitalism, historical materialists demonstrate the explanatory power of *totalizing*. Each observable dystopic effect of our present circumstances—the transformation of democracy into “dollarocracy,” the widening gap between the rich and the poor, the re-emerging geo-strategic antagonism between the United States and Russia,

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system is substantively changed as it may not be possible to do away with capitalism’s dystopic effects without doing away with capitalism.

Hollywood’s Dystopia: Entertaining the End of the World

In a period in which people talk about capitalism’s dystopic effects without naming the capitalist system as their cause, Hollywood, or, the vertically and horizontally integrated media conglomerates that rule the trans-national production, distribution and exhibition of film commodities, sell viewers in the United States and around the world a plethora of images and narratives about the future of the world. Hollywood has long been

dominant and the utopian, withered. Today’s Hollywood science fiction films are disproportionately dystopian, which is not unusual given the diminished ranks of Left Utopianism and the still expanding numbers of those willing to join Right-wing Utopianism’s zombie march.

That said, all dystopian stories offer a generalized critique of Right-wing Utopianism. Tom Moylan explains how the “dystopian narrative is largely the product of the terrors of the twentieth century,”³³ those being, the monopolization and intensification of capitalist production, the expansion of state coercive apparatuses (i.e. securitization, surveillance and warfare) and the system’s failure to meet the world population’s subsistence needs. In this respect, all dystopian films work against the grain of capitalism’s meta-narrative

of universal human progress by showing viewers a near future that is not better than the past, but much worse. As Fredric Jameson says “the dystopian is always and essentially what in the language of science-fiction criticism is called a ‘near-future’: it tells the story of an imminent disaster—ecology, overpopulation, plague, drought, the stray comet or nuclear accident—waiting to come to pass in our own near future.”³⁴

In the 21st century, Hollywood sells viewers fictions of the global spread of nuclear weapons, artificial intelligence, comets, aliens, zombies, demons and disease obliterating much of the human species. These dystopian scenarios are almost always a rejoinder to Right-wing Utopianism in a general sense, but the particulars can be contradictory. Hollywood’s dystopian films contain a plurality of stories about near future catastrophes and circumstantial aftermaths that align with the ideologies of the Right and the Left, sometimes a combo of the two. Dystopian films can be regressive or progressive, conservative or radical, or both. We find the specific politics and ideology of these films in their “critical” or “uncritical” narration of the near future’s causes and effects.

Dystopian Films: Critical and Uncritical

Dystopian films may be “critical” or “uncritical” of the capitalist system of which they are a part.³⁵ The Left Dystopian film is critical of capitalism and the Right-wing dystopia is “uncritical.” Left-wing filmmakers may use dystopia to attack existing capitalism and push for a world beyond it while those on the Right may script dystopia to encourage viewers to identify with the capitalist present.

The critical dystopia film addresses dystopic effects that derive from the capitalist political-economy of our time and transcodes them into stories of global collapse and world disaster. It explains how the effects of the dystopian near future society came about with regard to capitalist determinations and interrogates the negative effects of capitalism in the present to suggest that if the system persists, its catastrophic effects will only get worse and ultimately, doom us all. These types of films try to totalize the world-historic problems we face and may be galvanizing. They carry popular stories about a post or worsened capitalist society that serve to de-legitimize the existing system and point beyond it by showing us what might be done to struggle against and through dystopia toward a different and better future.

The “uncritical” dystopia film transcodes the dystopic effects of contemporary capitalism into near-future stories that stage a world system in shambles, but unlike the critical dystopia film, it obscures the catastrophe’s capitalist determinations. It recognizes that something is fundamentally wrong with the world and that things are getting worse, but it fails to name the system

as the culprit. The “end” never comes about in the near future *because* of capitalist determinations, but by miscellaneous agents and terrors that come from outside the system and have little to nothing to do with its logics. The uncritical dystopia fails to name the capitalist determinations of its existence and dissuades viewers from contemplating a life after capitalism that is possible and possibly better than the present. These films foster apathy, demobilize and maintain inaction with “popular images of post-capitalist society” that serve to “reassure the legitimacy of the existing system.”³⁶

In a period in which it is “easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalism,”³⁷ many dystopian films—critical and uncritical—do the difficult work of imagining the end of the world *and* the end of capitalism. Some may even show us a near future in which present-day capitalism’s most brutalizing forces and relations have been exacerbated. The politics of dystopian films can be sussed by concentrating on how they explain the cause of the end and its effects and by analyzing their contrasting visions of “what’s to be done” in response. Some dystopic futures align with the worldview of our present’s reigning powers and others look beyond. While critical dystopian films imagine the end or a drastic worsening of the present as being caused by capitalism, uncritical dystopian films depict this worse future without naming the system. Critical dystopias show a world ruined by capitalism but which might be changed in some way or transformed into something else through struggle; uncritical dystopias show us wicked post-capitalist circumstances devoid of the hope that things could and should be otherwise.

Today, the few critical Dystopias that exist inspire thorough “redemptive” and “affirmative” readings³⁸ while the many uncritical dystopias circulating in this conjuncture invite opposition. The remainder of this paper thus critiques the “uncritical” dystopias of a few recent Hollywood films.

A Critique of Uncritical Dystopian Films

In *Battle: Los Angeles* (2011), a hostile alien civilization tries to annihilate the human race and colonize earth to gain control of its scarce water supply (presumably due to the exhaustion of this resource elsewhere). The aliens destroy the world’s major cities, including Los Angeles. Existing fears of resource depletion and collapse are addressed by the film through sequences in which oceans are drained and the world’s major cities, the creative and financial hubs of global capitalism, are spectacularly obliterated. In response to extra-terrestrial resource theft and devastating attacks on cities, retired U.S. Marine Sergeant Michael Nantz (Aaron Eckhart) and other Iraq War veterans (many played by actual U.S. soldiers) spring into battle, organizing a resistance movement to take back the earth. The film moves forward through



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fight sequences toward the climax of soldiers trying to retake occupied Los Angeles by disassembling the alien’s weapons technology. The security response to the alien threat is a new global military alliance between world powers.

Battle: Los Angeles (2011) shows the end of the capitalist system, but puts in its place a global totalitarian military regime committed to planetary resource security and permanent war against extra-terrestrial threats. Though the film addresses current fears of resource depletion and unsustainable urban sprawl, the cause of these dystopic effects is not a world system wherein imperial states and corporations compete and conflict to control finite resources, but aliens. The alien force that the capitalist system exerts over humanity is externalized and then mystified. Furthermore, what is the global military alliance for beyond securing the earth’s resources for future exploitation? There is no sense that once

the aliens are defeated or stopped from colonizing the earth that the newly formed global totalitarian military regime will try to develop an ecologically sane approach to development. The film’s promotional tagline—“Our Fate. Our Fight. Our Future”—is completely uninspiring because the future Our heroes fight for is identical with the present. War is permanent and boundless and there is no sense that a defeat of the aliens would change our relation to Nature: it would likely return to bourgeois humanity its privilege to continue pillaging earth.

The film adaptation of Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road* (2009) names global nuclear war as the cause of the world ending, but never links this war’s trigger to the explosive and growing inter-imperial rivalries of our time combined with the profit-motive of the global nuclear arms industry. In this film, a father and son struggle to subsist in a world of nuclear fallout, gray skies that drizzle ash, the total extinction of flora and fauna, mass starvation



and cannibalism. Life at the end of liberal capitalism here is basically a Hobbesian state of nature. In the absence of government, humanity devolves into barbarity; life is “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short.” There is no solidarity, just a “war of every man against every man.” The film affirms a cynical view of “human nature”: people are essentially selfish, competitive and power seeking. The father is armed with a revolver and two rounds of ammo; he and his son rob, scavenge and kill to survive. *The Road* implies that self-reliant, self-organizing and self-governing communities based on values of kindness, compassion and solidarity would be impossible in the absence of a security state and capitalism. The film’s dystopian future, then, invites viewers to feel nostalgia for an idealized capitalist present, perhaps encourages them to long for the national security state and more importantly, consumerism.

The lost pleasure of consumerism is depicted in a one minute and thirty-two second product placement scene starring a rusty old can of Coca-Cola. The father comes across a dilapidated soft drink machine and wrenches out a single can of Coke. The father gives the Coke to the son, who says “it tastes good” and the son gives the Coke to the father, who smiles and takes a sip. This is the one moment in the film in which the father and the son register some kind of happiness on their dirtied, desperate and hollowed out faces. The maudlin Norman Rockwell-esque ritual of father and son opening and sharing a can of Coke seems to temporarily transport these destitute characters backwards in time, from their post-capitalist dystopia to a seemingly happier consumer moment. As the father and son sip away at this scarce and long lost secret formula—perhaps the last can of Coke on Earth—viewers are invited to feel nostalgia and perhaps gratitude for the capitalist system’s production of an abundance of Coca-Cola commodities which tell them to “Open Happiness,” “Twist the Cap to Refreshment” and that “Life Begins Here.” In our time, Coca-Cola is an anti-union corporate monopoly that gets rich by selling unhealthy sugar-liquid, but in the film’s Dystopia, Coca-Cola symbolizes the virtue of the system, a reminder of all that has been lost. At the film’s end, the father is killed and the son is soon after adopted by a man and his wife who are struggling to carry on as a family with two children and a dog. Life after capitalism is one without Coca-Cola, but one in which the power of restored “family values” might lead us beyond inhumanity. This markedly New Right way out of dystopia is regressive.

The Colony (2013) represents climate change as the cause of the world’s end. In this regard, the film shuttles viewers from a present in which fears of eco-cide grow into a near future, 2045 to be exact. Between now and then, humans tried to stop the effects of climate change by building weather machines to control the warming climate, but this technological fix was not ineffective.

The weather machines broke down, snow started falling and eventually covered the entire planet, bringing about the end of the capitalist system. In this new Ice Age, millions die by famine, lethal viruses and cannibalism. Those who survived the system’s collapse live in militarized underground colonies equipped with makeshift greenhouses where they cultivate food. Soldiers rationally allocate this scarce resource. But this societal arrangement and attempt at rational planning fails. The remaining humans bicker and fight about who gets what, try to control each other, face ongoing threats by marauding cannibals and by the film’s finale, all but a few have been eaten alive to death by famished others. The Colony system is destroyed, and the few survivors rise from this planned society into a brutalizing Nature in pursuit of some mythical thawed-out land where they hope to plant seeds and begin anew.

Though this film speaks to the dystopian anxieties of our time by contending that the effects of global warming are now irreversible and will eventually bring about the system’s demise, it does not depict climate change as being caused in any way by capitalism. Climate change seems to develop naturally from an Earth without CO₂ emitters, big polluters and ecological despoilers. Furthermore, the film suggests that attempts to organize social life after capitalism in ways that rationally plan resource allocation will lead to flesh-eating: forced scarcity motivates people to literally consume each other. Finally, the film’s kernel of hope (planting seeds on small plots of thawed out earth) does not take us beyond the hetero-topianism of “Small is Beautiful” projects. The Old Left’s praxis was guided by the prospect of Utopia—a fundamentally different and better post-capitalist society. But as Jameson observes, the “Surviving Utopian vision” of most scattered postmodern left projects “mostly center on the anti- or post-communist conviction that small is beautiful [...] that the self-organization of communities is the fundamental condition of Utopian life.”³⁹ Indeed, *The Colony* stages the rise, failure and fall of a large and organized post-capitalist society; from this collapse emerges self-reliant farming projects.

Conclusion

The three dystopian films analyzed in this paper address anxieties about planetary competition for dwindling resources, war and ecological disaster, but they do not relate and connect these dystopic effects to their cause: the capitalism system. Furthermore, these films imagine the end of capitalism while simultaneously eliciting nostalgia for the conditions imagined by present-day neoliberal Utopians. Hollywood’s uncritical dystopias recognize the dystopic effects of contemporary capitalism, but fail to name the system and certainly fail to offer viewers a way out or way beyond. They are resigned to the badness of the world and unwilling to



contemplate a better future. Furthermore, by turning capitalism's dystopic effects into consumable entertainment, these films may diffuse pent up anxieties stemming from the widespread recognition that something is awry. In this respect, Hollywood's uncritical dystopias encourage consumer pleasure and enjoyment where dread and horror ought to be. The end of the world as we know it comes in the near future to make the present world seem fine.

Notes

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