
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

A Historicity in Contemporary Pseudohistorical Narratives: Typological Permutations in Matt Ruff's *The Mirage* (2012)

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| ABSTRACT

This essay examines Matt Ruff's "The Mirage" (2012), which relies on theoretical resources related to the typological and generic expectations of the alternate-history genre. Written in the years following the events of 9/11, the novel incorporates the event into the popular genre of pseudohistorical novels. The paper explores how the counterfactual developments of history presented in the novel not only introduce an alternative to the event and its aftermath—thus, succeeding to narratively normalize them—but also exemplify attempts in contemporary pseudohistorical narratives to deconstruct the genre's poetics. As a mirror satire, the text focuses mainly on the transposition of temporal and spatial dimensions of contemporary historical evolutions while the deformation of the past becomes a complex, multifaceted phenomenon; however, despite the apparent presentist character, the irrelevance of the deformed past, the novel fails to exert a normative force for the future in its world-building since the narration does not present history in terms of determinism and contingency, rather it collapses past, present, and future in the form of ahistorical postmodernism.

| KEYWORDS

Alternate history, Matt Ruff, post-9/11 novel, the Mirage.

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

Among the many literary traditions that fervidly emerged during the second half of the 20th century along science fiction—and its various utopian trends—is the subgenre of "alternative history" (alternate history, AH, althist, allohistory, historical science fiction, speculative history, uchronia, pseudohistorical or quasi-historical novel, parahistorical novel, virtual history, and several other terms have been employed by scholars and authors.). According to Rosenfeld, "Since the end of World War II, and especially since the 1960s, alternate history [...] has gained both in popularity and respectability" (2005, 5); hence, alternate history entered literature as a typologically recognizable term, both in the academic circles and the general readership, and the proliferation in the genre allowed it to gradually develop a popular status. Moreover, after the massive commercial success of Henry Turtledove's novels, even authors outside the science fiction genre began to experiment with alternate-history narratives with otherwise marginal genres such as techno-/political-thrillers. The artesian prestige was further cemented in 1995 when the first *Sidewise Awards for Alternate History* were announced; ever since, they recognize and declare the best allohistorical genre publications of the year. Now, websites like www.uchronia.net offer a comprehensive database of alternate-history narratives—the catalogue categorizes the text not only by author, language or date of publication but also identifies the divergence or the temporal and spatial dimensions chosen as the narrative premise.

Matt Ruff's *The Mirage* (2012), as a contemporary American alternate history, presents one of the most peculiar examples as it radically differs from previous iterations of the genre, both in content and execution. For Pei-chen Liao (2020), Matt Ruff's novel exemplifies growing attempts in contemporary pseudo-historical narratives to manifest such post-modern strategies as

universalization, aestheticization, and relativization. Whereas the assumptions acknowledge some formal appeals of the novel, they fail to acknowledge the typological permutations in the novel and how they break the divide between literary and genre fiction.

2. Literature Review

First, I addressed a more general poetics of alternate history for the sake of theoretical perspective since it seems to me to be a much more practical means of discussing the representative text. The emerging corpus of secondary literature theoretically assessing the poetics of alternate history remains dubious—partly as a result of the subjective logic of scholars in the demarcation of boundaries and partly due to the relative actuality of the academic discourse on the subject itself. While some critical gaps may be identified, and despite the lack of consensus for a definitive generic term, there is a general consensus in the research on the genre poetics and only dizzying inconsistencies in its relatively consistent attempts for definition. According to Hellekson (2001, p. 28),

[Alternate histories] take a historical base, accurate in our world, synthesized from eyewitness accounts, letters, and other primary sources, and historical repercussions of the event (war, peace, an important treaty, lands exchanged, and so on) and add fictional characters and events to it. The difference between the reality of the event and the alternate history creates tension that keeps the reader interested. The writer tells a story in narrative form and uses the narrative techniques that fiction and history share.

In summary, the definition provides three basic characteristics: historicity, fictitiousness, and speculation. As a genre concerned with history, it presents a historical fact—alternate histories are exceptional among other literary genres in that they unavoidably reference something outside of them by incorporating text-external knowledge; as fiction, the genre employs literary tropes to articulate certain issues, and as a genre of speculative fiction, it extrapolates a “what-if?” conjecture derivative of historical fact. Hence, from the perspective of generic permeability, alternative histories are considered historical and speculative fiction. These observations confirm the first rough impression that we have of such texts: alternate histories are “written as if [they] were historical fiction” (Spedo, 2009, p. 7). Hence, the most often practiced approach of analysis utilizes historio-graphical terms, and the speculative aspect further explores the metaphysics of history as a subject on the one hand and the character of its employment in narrative on the other. The explicit reference to history may be regarded as the most apparent intersection with a historical novel, but if historicity and fictitiousness should be distinguished by functional terms rather than in terms of referentiality when discussing intersections with science fiction. Furthermore, history and science have a rather complicated relationship. The problem closely connected with this fact is that history is a temporal- and spatial-specific construct. Thus, its study is a particular kind of science that cannot be based on direct observation, nor can hypotheses be tested since even historiographic writing itself is “twice removed” from its object: history (Spedo 2009, p.50). The issue has been an apple of discord and baffled both authors and scholars of alternate histories. For example, in Ward Moore’s *Bring the Jubilee*, which essentially dramatizes the thesis that the Battle of Gettysburg determined the outcome of the Civil War, a historian, Hodge Backmaker, who time-travels to the Battle of Gettysburg, inadvertently changes its outcome, and ultimately create our timeline, faces the same pressing questions:

‘History? But certainly, Hodge. It is a noble study. But what is history? How is it written? How is it read? Is it a dispassionate chronicle of events scientifically determined and set down in the precise measure of their importance? Is this ever possible? Or is it the transmutation of the ordinary into the celebrated? Or the cunning distortion which gives a clearer picture than accurate blueprints?’ (Moore, 2001, p.59)

In a study on postmodern historical fiction conducted by Elizabeth Wesseling’s (1991), a more sophisticated term, “canonized history”, “the reservoir of established historical facts and standard interpretations of these facts” (p.93), is proposed. Such application to alternate history, unfortunately, is inconsistent: alternate histories are “fictions which [...] change canonized history in ways one cannot ignore” (p.100), and since history is dynamic and flexible, for the analysis of alternate histories as historical fiction, the formation of ‘history’ is of equal importance as its “deformation” (Durst, 2004, p.220). Here, it seems necessary to discuss further the generic permeability of science fiction and alternate-histories as well as their borders. Unlike alternate histories, science fiction texts can be systematically discounted as such depending on the date of publication, authorial intentions, and reader’s reception. For example, the outdated dystopias—like Sinclair Lewis’ *It Can’t Happen Here* (1935)—set in past seem to be alternative histories from the perspective of contemporary readers; however, taking into consideration their publication dates and their temporal ramifications, they were composed as future narratives. Hence, for the sake of typological understanding of alternate history as a whole from the standpoint of science fiction, I recognize alternate history as less a homogenous area of texts than the genre of historical fiction derivative of their point of divergence/ convergence.

Generally, three prerequisites are required for an alternate history: a point of divergence from the actual history existing before the composition of text, alternation of the historical development, and the scrutiny of consequential ramifications. Since the history is manipulated or diverges from its actual course at a specific nodal point (which allows for more than one continuation), the point

of divergence as a *novum* of alternate histories foments their epistemological tensions and organizes their internal logic (other terms employed include nexus, nexus point, nexus event, nodal event or point, Jonbar hinge, temporal crossroad or bifurcation). Here, I deem it necessary to emphasize that the paper adheres to Dannenberg's division between divergence and convergence, which references plot structures: "Convergence involves the intersection of narrative paths and the interconnection of characters within the narrative world, closing and unifying it as an artistic structure. Divergence, conversely, concerns the bifurcation or branching of narrative paths and thereby creates an open pattern of diversification and multiplicity" (2008, p.2).

3. Methodology

For the purpose of this essay, I deem necessary to interrogate typological permutations and generic expectations of Matt Ruff's novel whereas employing a variety of taxonomical approaches of pseudohistorical fiction—for example, Darko Suvin (1983, 150) contrasts "the serious Alternative Histories" with "the comico-satirical", Helbig's (1988, p.114) constitutes his subdivision of parahistories upon the number of years between the nexus event and the beginning of the plot (See the table "Zeitlicher Abstand zwischen historischem Wendepunkt und Handlungsgegenwart in parahistorischen Texten (in Jahren)" ("Time interval between historical turning point and object of action in parahistorical texts [in years]"); Collins' (1990) typology—corresponding with Hellekson's (2001)—differentiate between categories of the "pure uchronia", which offers no competing reality, and the "plural uchronia", in which the "reader's reality expressly or implicitly coexists with that of the altered continuum", and the third category of an "infinite present"—a work where the multiplicity of possible universes coexists simultaneously; and". Moreover, I will engage the novel along the generic corpus of texts known as "alternate histories" in a cooperative pursuit of analyzing the narrative.

4. Results and Discussion

Usually chosen for their historical significance and wide-reaching impact, cultural trends in alternate history are commensurate with popular interest in history. The cannon of these texts has been heavily influenced by several historical events with particular emphasis on the motifs of geo-political conflict: total wars and rebellious insurrections, assassinations of important socio-historical figures, anachronistic technological advancements, or change of political orientation and leadership; however, alternate histories do not, for example, imagine as points of divergence economic changes, nor do they suggest points of divergence in the history of culture or ideology: as Collins points out, "there are no arguments for a crucial turning point in the shift from patrimonialism to bureaucracy; nor in the patterns of kinship structure or even of gender roles" (2007, p.249). Actually, it would be more accurate to state that a cross-section of WWII and speculative extrapolations constitute perhaps the largest bulk, related by choice of historical subject, of such narratives published since 1940. Gavriel Rosenfeld's insightful and comprehensive survey of texts about Adolf Hitler and the Third Reich Germany makes the point undeniable: speculating about the alternate outcomes to World War II is a widespread phenomenon in Western popular culture (2005, p. 2). According to Rieder, most Critics have related this realization to "Nazism" and how it "really triumphed in World War II" (Rieder, 1988, p. 215). Although the particular historical event is by no means absent from the contemporary iterations of the genre, the thematic concerns have been necessarily modified by more recent evolutions.

The end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the USSR brought to an end a decades-long period of intense paranoia and eschatological thinking and ushered what many scholars believed to be the *post-history* (see Fukuyama, 1989). However, the post-Berlin Wall appears now as *pre-history* in the light of what Baudrillard (2001) described as an "absolute event" of 11th September 2001. The undisputable significance of the event lies not only in that all history, politics, the post-Cold War global symbolic order, and the conditions of their analysis were disrupted but in the fact that 9/11 entered the discourse of our time with all its evocative power—or as Jacques Derrida put it in an interview after the attacks: "conceptual, semantic, . . . hermeneutic apparatus that might have allowed one to see coming, to comprehend, interpret, describe, speak of, and name 'September 11'" (Borradori, 2003, p. 93). As a result, there has been a growing international trend in the genre incorporating the event of 9/11 as a reference point in parahistorical fiction as exemplified by Matt Ruff's *The Mirage* (Other examples include LevieTidhar's *Osama* [2011], Amy Waldman's *The Submission* [2011], and Ken MacLeod's *The Execution Channel* [2007]).

Like all works of historical and speculative fiction, alternate histories usually comment obliquely on contemporary issues. Rosenfeld's claims, among other things, that alternate histories of WWII "say just as much about Americans' view of their own present as about their views of the past" (2002, p.98). Ruff's novel begins on November 9, 2001, when religious fundamentalists from the "World Christian Alliance" with headquarters in Rocky Mountains crash two hijacked planes into "the Tigris and Euphrates World Trade Center Towers" in Baghdad, a third hits the Arab Defense Ministry in Riyadh, and a fourth crashes in the Empty Quarter—after the passengers attempted to retake control. The event was "replayed endlessly on television, [...] followed by the screams of people who [could] see it" (Ruff, 2013, p.11). In retaliation, "President Bander of the United Arabian States (UAS)", a federal constitutional republic of 22 Islamic states, deploys airborne troops in Denver and declares a broader War on Terror. After the 11/9 attacks, UAS intervenes in Colorado (Afghanistan), occupies Denver, and Special Forces launched raids against Alliance (Al-Qaeda) in the Rocky Mountains, whereas its leadership remains at large (as most of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda). After being

presented with fabricated evidence about a CSA's WMD programs by an expat informant from ERT (Saudi Arabia) (analogical to the precedent for the Invasion of Iraq). In March 2003, a massive invasion of America was launched, and a provisional government was installed in the "Green Zone" in Washington D.C (Baghdad). Perhaps of more lasting influence, however, besides the massive deployment of military forces and technique, which led to one of the most one-sided conflicts in history, are some strongly ambivalent and contradictory discourses which enter the narration, namely: the rise of structural religious fundamentalism, furthering of political polarization of society, massive curtailment of civil and human right, and media-induced hysteria and paranoia.

The same historical pre-text can be *defacto* observed in LevieTidhar's *Osama* (2011). However, Tidhar constructs a reality where the emergence of Islamic terrorism simply never occurs, and Osama Bin Laden exists only as a fictional character in a series of pulp novels about his fictional exploits in our reality. Both in Tidhar's novel and the reality of *The Mirage*, Osama bin Laden participates in the plot. However, Tidhar's character is a figment of imagination, whereas Ruff's narrative introduces him as its central antagonist since "[a] wicked prince in one old is a wicked prince in all worlds" (Ruff, 2013, p.336). His presence points to the second area of the intersection of alternate histories and historical novel, their preoccupation with figures of historical significance. In fact, according to Duncan (2003), the history of the world is not the biography of great men. Several crucial historical figures are introduced to sustain its premise throughout the narration, either anecdotally or as central to the narration. Near-East dictators, American officials, and religious demagogues appear among the most prominent, albeit transformed, yet all the historical figures, which are all part of common historical knowledge and a part of the normalized narrative of the real past. Ruff's presents these historical figures as "curiously essentialized characters whose personalities are unchanged" (Annette Schimmelpfennig, 2015, p.176). These referents operate as rather cartoonish satires of their actual counterparts—the Libyan revolutionist Governor Muammar Gaddafi becomes a techno-fanatic responsible for funding the Library of Alexandria (Wikipedia) and eco-conservatory efforts in sub-Sahara; religious fundamentalist Osama bin Laden turns into a celebrated war hero and nepotistic conservative Senator in control Al Qaeda—"alleged clandestine agency ... specializing in anti-terrorist operations" (Ruff, 2013, p.76); and a charismatic mobster Saddam Hussein running his bootlegging business, "he becomes the (benevolent) king of the underworld" (Ruff, 2013, p.92). On the other hand, across the pond, George W. Bush exists, but only as "a son of privileged [...] who had squandered the advantages of his birth, used up all his second chances, and so come to nothing" (Ruff, 2013, p.404). While the Bush family languishes into suburban obscurity, Lyndon B. Johnson filled Bush's role of "a Texan, with something resembling a brain, to lead America in its darkest hour" (Ruff, 2013, p.260); Bush's vice president Dick Cheney aka "the Quail Hunter" appears as the head of Texas CIA: "a glorified secret policeman in a dinky backwater country" (Ruff, 2013, p.315).

Hence, Ruff's narration has a strongly presentist character. In summary, Ruff's novel narratively normalizes not only the event of 9/11 and its aftermath, but the premise of the book does not affect the cognition of the displaced historical referents negatively but positively, alleviating the epistemological tensions. Ruff's strategy seems like a simple mirror reversal—a mere transposition that essentializes contemporaneous international politics, and his method does not involve any substantial societal or cultural changes.

According to Duncan, "the one invariable rule of alternate history is that the difference between the fictional timeline and the real one must be obvious to the reader" (2003, p.217); the problem is that *The Mirage* is rather vague about the point of divergence. Ruff's socio-political commentary introduces UAS, a political entity consisting of thirteen states (Arabia, Bahrain, Egypt, the Emirates, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Syria, Yemen, and the religious district of Mecca-Medina) with Cairo as a capital, as emerging from the political turmoil at the end of the nineteenth century when Arab League, a loose federation of Middle Eastern states revolt against Ottoman Empire and declare independence; after series of civil wars along various confessions and tribal lines, the unanimous geo-political unity of UAS is galvanized by an attempt of reconquest by the Ottoman Empire at what is referred to as "the miracle of Alexandria" (Ruff, 2013, p.16), it quickly becomes a nexus of international trade and experiences an economic boom bestowed with the discovery of oil reserves, followed by an ambitious yet tedious project of industrialization. The Union avoids, despite being a major political power, interfering with WWI. Although UAS attempts to stay neutral during WWII, it intervenes when the Axis invaded the Muslim countries in North Africa and the Indonesian archipelago. After the liberation of North Africa (Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, and Mauritania), which joins the Union, UAS invades Europe through the Mediterranean Sea while the Russian Orthodox Union advances through the Eastern front. "In the Southeast Asian Theatre, Arab and Indian marines ... struck as far north as the Philippines. In August 1945, after a third atomic bomb was dropped on Tokyo, Japan surrendered, ending war [...] In December 1946, Adolf Hitler [is] beheaded at Nuremberg" (Ruff, 2013, p.16). The post-WWII partition of Germany occurred along the river Rhine and religious lines between the Jews and the Christians, not ideological; the decision, politically and geographically as controversial as in the actual historical event, *defacto* disrupts the stability of the region. The Jewish state clashes with its Christian neighbours, such as Austria (Jordan), resulting in the 1967-Six-Day War. More recently, Israel has been threatened by Britain (Iran), which is attempting to develop its nuclear program. The Cold Crusade, as a historical parallel to the Cold War, ends with the failed Russian Invasion of Afghanistan. Finally, Somalia and Sudan joined the Union as a permutation of the historical analogy to the military interventions and international sanctions imposed on the countries.

On the other hand, North America is divided between the Christian States of America (CSA; 17 states on the East Coast), the Evangelic Republic of Texas (ERT; including Oklahoma, New Mexico, and the disputed territory of Mexican Coahuila), the Pentecostal Gilead Heartland (Ohio, Michigan, Kentucky, Tennessee, ...), smaller kingdoms (Louisiana, Mississippi), and tribal fractions (Rocky Mountains Independent Territories such as Colorado or the Mormons from Missouri area). Even less information is provided about their respective histories since the narrative does not offer a single definite detail concerning either the date or the nature of the schism besides the inexplicable suggestion that it might have occurred along religious lines. Through meta-textual references, a reader discovers that after the assassination of the Kennedy clan in 1963 in Texas, then-vice president Lyndon B. Johnson was sworn into office as the president of CSA. Moreover, he uses the assassination as a precedent for invasion. The so-called Heartland War (as parallel to the Vietnam War) developed into guerilla tactics which prolong the conflict indefinitely; although the conflict ends with the *Algiers Peace Accords* of 1973, it was followed by an ongoing series of insignificant intercommunal tensions. Eventually, CSA (Iraq) invaded the kingdoms of Mississippi and Louisiana (Kuwait). ERT (Saudi Arabia) appeals to its fellow OPEC members, and UAS and Persia launched a massive air campaign, whereas Venezuela established a defensive naval cordon in the Mexican Gulf (Persian Gulf War). Hence, the eastern interlopers usher relative stability. Johnson declared his defeat a victory—very much like Saddam, and the Coalition failed by allowing Lyndon to stay in power and “set the stage for the final act in the dictators' career...” (Ruff, 2013, p.238). As most of history disappears into oblivion, it is possible to assume that it occurred much earlier than suggested; however, the actual point of divergence can be determined only deductively and even then, not definitely. I would suggest, taking into consideration the admission of actual states into the union, that the Louisiana Purchase never occurred.

While the present is transposed, the transmutations of the analogy of the past are extrapolated post-positively, and the evolutions do not simply follow such analogical patterns as determined by history and geography. Hence, under closer scrutiny, Ruff's deformation of history is a multifaceted and complex phenomenon. Ruff's approach lies in the fact that it does not create an alternative which readers will not recognize; he does not extrapolate on the point of divergence but gives a world so familiar by zooming in and dramatizing the contemporary events of significance and inconsequentialization of the actual past. Hence, the main function of this particular allo-historical iteration is to reflect upon the context in which it is written.

The narration of *The Mirage* follows Mustafa, Samir, and Amal—agents of the Arab Homeland Security Service of “Halal” investigating a series of terrorist attacks in a cooperative effort. The action moves swiftly, as anything by Tom Clancy, and suspense is at the core of the story as Ruff's characters venture further into the unsettling world of terrorism, political corruption, organized crime, and espionage. Very much like the characters in Phillip Roth's *Plot Against America*, they are forced to interact with the mundane gods, who shape their destiny (Spedo, 2009, p.190). Hence, Ruff's novel includes discourse marked by a deep pessimism and cynicism about politics like Robert Harris' *The Fatherland* 1993 while incorporating and subverts some of the conventions of detective and spy thrillers such as the “man-on-the-run” trope. As Ruff's narration progresses, the plot transforms from symptomatically paranoid and conspirational to patently surreal, suggesting a competing reality at play—cultural artifacts from our reality appear and accumulate, the Christian terrorists claim that this world is only “a mirage”, and characters experience delusional fragments of their alternate lives confronting them with questions without rational answers. Both the divergence and the convergence, which seemingly occur, ultimately give way to a narration that does not have a scientific premise but a fantastic one: Jinn. His presence, however sporadic, is recursive and always catalyzes the narration. In fact, many works of science fantasy engage historical settings while incorporating mythological or fantastic beings. However, the presence of this fantastical being ultimately suggests the existence of other hypothetical, self-contained planes co-existing with reality since “Jinn occupy a parallel universe hidden from human eyes” (328). In summary, whereas the actual point of divergence can be determined only deductively and even then not definitely, Ruff introduces a framework where the alternate realities not only coexist but interact through a series of incremental changes pointing to a process of convergence—by this logic, *The Mirage* can be regarded as a plural uchronia or nexus story. However, while the motif of time travel seems to be *de rigueur* for this particular strain of uchronia, Ruff does not rely on the symptomatic trope of a time machine since what sets Ruff's narration apart is the fact that the fantastical element radically transforms the framework of relationships between the divergence and convergence and simultaneously temporally displaces the point of divergence into the present.

Eventually, the crumbling tangle of illusions and delusions eventually transforms into “a sandstorm” of metaphysical incoherence, and the convergence seemingly gives way to the world described by the artifacts. The extraordinary melodramatic potential integral to the idea of convergence of alternate worlds as manifested in “The Mirage Legend” allows Ruff to explore a particular, typologically symptomatic discourse of alternate histories: historical agency. Several historical figures follow their underlining agendas, and the most desperate expressions of agency focus on attempting to interfere with the process through the control of the Jinn. However, Jinn's policing of the convergence, as a *dues ex machine*, overrides the discourse of historical agency since the popular trope rather alludes to the discourse of cultural history; Ruff's fantastic addition, unlike the romanticized, anthropomorphized wish-granting machine of the Western orientalist tradition, is not a passive element of his world-building, he

isa complex and multifaceted character with his own motivations. When “the mirage” collapses, the characters are magically transported to “The future—that place where the survivors of all apocalypses inevitably find themselves” (Ruff, 2013, p.11). Therefore, unlike other alternate histories, *the Mirage* does not stick to the fixed date or a specific location from which it unfolds and constantly returns since “That doorway is shut however and cannot be gone back through” (Ruff, 2013, p.399). The ending may seem improperly resolved, and the novel—at what is supposed to be the cathartic moment and, in fact, results in the “abnegation of resolution” (Schimmelpfennig, 2015, p.176)—fails exert a normative force. Thus, his alternative world is rendered as an illusion in which terror comes from nowhere and everywhere, with the characters vainly striving to control it. Moreover, although the narration does not necessarily describe post-catastrophe circumstances, the execution of the conclusion opposes the generic proclivity for causality and teleology of alternate fiction since history here is not reversible, retraceable, nor retractable; this fact signals slippings between ontological levels and such fictional teleology notwithstanding stands rather in opposition to traditional understanding of alternate histories as a coherent generic category.

5. Conclusion

In summary, Ruff normalizes the events of 9/11 and has a distinctive presentist character—all due to a different effect: mirror satire. On the other hand, his construction of the past is marked by indeterminacy. Furthermore, *The Mirage* follows a rather ambiguous trajectory where the construction of reality is ultimately an unstable phenomenon since the novel collapses past, present, and future in a negative ahistorical postmodernism, and the narration creates paradoxical tensions between determinism and contingency. Whereas Ruff’s de-conceptualization and relativization of history as monolithic, unilinear relegates the novel into the realm of post-modern fiction, the discourse of historical agency in relation to historical referentiality connects the novel also with the realm of the politically motivated genres of popular.

However, there are some limitations to my essay. For example, when exploring the post-modern strategies employed by Ruff, I could have engaged Butter’s (2009) distinction between “affirmative” and “revisionistic” alternate histories, which draws upon the categorization of contemporary historical fiction, particularly the concepts of “realistic historical novels” and “revisionistic historical novel”, eutopian and dystopian respectively. The latter one exists in the domain of post-modern fiction. Furthermore, “Affirmative” alternate histories establish narratives through the projection of a (mostly) dystopian counter-world, which implicitly gives a utopian impulse to the real course of history. “Revisionist” alternate histories question generally accepted narratives by suggesting that their dystopian designs represent the real course of history much more adequately. Hence, I would suggest that there is a space to interpret the text from the perspective of Utopian studies,

Moreover, despite the political corruption, organized crime, terrorism, and conspiracy, we are not talking about a new iteration of the detective novel, the spy novel, nor the terrorist fiction; in fact, setting the narration against the backdrop of a broader political power struggle—the successful invasion of the UAS into North America immediately after the attack on 9th November 2001 carried on the Twins in Baghdad— characterizes not only many other alternative histories but a wide variety of science fiction visions of personal, national, and global catastrophe. Indeed, most of the pseudo-historical fiction employ such an approach in their conjectures; for example, Philip K. Dick’s *The Man in the High Castle*—an example of “the great treatments of colonialism and racism in post-World War II science fiction”—operate within the same framework of “inversion of victors and vanquished” (Rieder, 2008, p.147). However, How Ruff’s novel ultimately conflates the linkage between discourses of colonialism and imperialism depends on the complex nature of the epistemological tensions produced, transculturation occurring, and the societal issues resolved as a derivative of the particular historical pre-text. Therefore, I would assume that another area worth exploration is the intersection between the particular speculative history and the genre of invasion literature. This is the fundamental point at which this essay ends as it suggests discussing Ruff’s novel not only in its relation with history but in terms of its functionality and its cultural pretext; such an approach requires a more nuanced theory of postcolonial studies, and a better understanding of the concept of invasion fiction in order to establish its intersection with allohistorical accounts.

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