



Raymond Williams, Science Fiction and the Crisis of Continuity

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Introduction

A common understanding of crisis involves a dimension of suddenness overwhelming the stable functioning of a given order. Crisis thus perceived demands a state of activeness, as against the routine replication of the former order. In such scenarios, the former order comes under strain or even gets suspended. The system is unable to replicate itself, as would have been the case owing to the norms and conventions keeping it afloat. Still, often, an automated response involves the reinforcement of or latching on to the defunct order. On the one hand, this routine replication of the former order allows for stability or stagnancy. On the other, it contributes to the mytho-poetic ascription and perception of crisis as something 'sudden', while simultaneously contributing to the mytho-poetic naturalisation of a given order. Although crisis does involve the suspension, momentary or otherwise, of the prevalent order, it would be misleading to equate this suspension with suddenness. Despite the fact that we are confronted with seemingly sudden and devastating variants of crisis such as natural disasters, epidemics, refugee crises or even terrorist attacks (Hanisch 2016), it would be limiting to frame these events as sudden, which emphasises their localised and singular character while favouring localised containment, in a world where the context is increasingly a 'world context'.¹

This is not to say that crisis in its traditional sudden variant or local character has become obsolete, but in our globalised present, where all relations have been infiltrated by the free market, and a state of perpetual crisis has established itself as something 'naturalised', we do require a different conceptualization of crisis. Crisis, then, in its current avatar, whether in terms of climate, finance, or even triggered by a terrorist event, neither embodies suddenness nor is locally circumscribed, but, on the contrary, exhibits a chronic character, which is marked by a logic of continuity. This continuity

¹ Discussing earlier examinations of social relations particular to their context, Augé observes that "today the context is always a world context, even in the depths of Amazonia or in the middle of the Sahara" (Augé 2014: 49).



positions itself against the localised understanding of crisis as something sudden, which breaks out and causes disruption, while foregrounding its cumulative nature. Moreover, as the next passages will argue, the cumulative and continuous character of crisis in our present, when framed through the concept of 'resilience', might offer a different understanding altogether.

How, if at all, should we then respond? What forms make themselves available to represent crisis in our present? Even though we are confronted by crisis in its various guises such as market or climate crisis among others, the large scale and epochal dimension of such crises complicates and prevents any critical understanding, and thus, hinders any meaningful response to them. In a way, the scale of these crises overwhelms the underlying relations leading to it. The question then emerges: can there be a way of enabling the 'cohabitation' of scale and relation, in terms of a conscious insistence against the fragmentary perception and failed attempts at totality that late capitalism furthers? As this paper will attempt to demonstrate, the science fiction genre – having a certain proclivity for crisis and scenarios of apocalypse – offers narratives (the example chosen for this paper is Juli Zeh's celebrated *Corpus Delicti/The Method*) to visualise crisis framed by resilience. Moreover, while doing so, a framing of the genre through Williams' concepts of the dominant, the emergent and the residual testifies to the presence of a complex 'structure of feeling', exhibiting and favouring a logic of continuity to counter that of perpetual crisis defined by resilience, as will become clear from the following.

Resilience and Perpetual Crisis

The choice of not viewing crisis purely as a sudden event of rupture but preferring the logic of continuity has to do with the capitalisation of resilience in our present. Resilience has not just been welcomed as the new 'buzzword' (Martin and Sunley 2015) but wields the potential of operationalisation across a variety of disciplines.² Abstracting from its long-established use in psychology and ecology, resilience broadly refers to the act of recovery or rebounding after some disruptive event, ability to absorb shocks or to anticipatory adaptation (Holling 1973). In such contexts, resilience is ascribed positive attributes, yet Hanisch warns that "we must make clear which type [of resilience] we are

² The concept of resilience emerged in psychology to deal with trauma and in ecological contexts to foreground the necessity of strengthening natural systems against disruptive climate change, wherein resilience translated into the ability of ecological systems "to persist or to absorb change while preserving its structure and function" (Holling 1973). It was then transferred to social contexts where policymaking has focused on systems of coping and recovery to be finally adopted by the economic system, where developing resilience became co-terminus with "discussions of the strategies firms, companies and other organizations [that] need to adopt if they are to survive and prosper in an increasingly changeable global marketplace" (Martin and Sunley 2015: 2; see also Hamel and Välikangas 2003; Davidson et al. 2016).



referring to and under which circumstances. Are we, for example, ‘only’ talking about the ability to cope quickly with an unexpected crisis or rather about adapting structures and modes of behaviour to an ever-changing and insecure environment?” (Hanisch 2016: 3). Such contextualisations are necessary, as resilience as a policy tool for regional and local economies could acquire and represent a completely different set of attributes. Moreover, if anything, the ongoing corona pandemic has taught us and continues to teach us, with innumerable deaths, job losses, bankruptcies of local and small businesses and the exhaustion of savings, that there can be no return to a ‘normal’, i.e. the pre-pandemic state. What does resilience mean in such a crisis? Can there be talk of resilience in terms of rebounding or regeneration translating into re-establishment of the status-quo? And more importantly, what would a definition of crisis in terms of resilience look like?

If we were to restrict ourselves to the economic dimension of crisis, then resilience can unfold, as Martin and Sunley suggest, at three levels. Firstly, as ‘bounce back’, which implies a return to a previous state of equilibrium after experience of crisis or disruption. This means that the market corrects and regulates its course after a crisis event. Secondly, resilience can unfold as the ability of the system to absorb shock, which de-facto translates into preserving the status quo. The third category of ‘bounce forward’, also referred to as ‘evolutionary resilience’, foregrounds the system’s capacity to preserve its core values by adapting its structure, function and organisation (Martin and Sunley 2015). While the first two categories essentially revolve around the idea of ‘return’ as the logic of continuity, the third category of ‘bounce forward’ couples continuity with change, as way of bolstering the system, without any paradigm shift in its relations. Resilience within such conceptualisation operates on the plain of persistence and continuity, as these models of resilience are principally at their core driven by preservation.³ Martin and Sunley acknowledge a Marxist critique of resilience, whereby a ‘spatial fix’ defines remedy and involves capital flight and moving production and jobs to more buoyant and cheaper locations or includes *in situ* technological fixes through new technologies (Martin and Sunley 2015: 23-24).

Resilience, meanwhile, as a way of offsetting crisis has evolved to the stage of performing crisis, as part of any system’s routine check. Its productive recasting becomes evident in its framing as “productive moments for reconceptualisation, rethinking, and creative transpositions” (Polland et al. 2020: 9). This aspect becomes particularly evident in case of neoliberal systems operating on the logic of perpetual innovation (Augé 2014). An effect of this submission to perpetual innovation manifests in the acquisition of crisis by the market forces, where it is either financialised (stock market, uncertainty, hedging) or is deployed as way of developing resilience. In fact, the

³ There are other approaches questioning whether “resilience means that something must go back to its original state, or whether it can also move on to a new balance” (Hanisch 2016: 2).



alliance between crisis and narratives of resilience, where coping and recovering have become synonymous with strengthening the system, has visibly allowed for a shift in the meaning of crisis. A recent article titled “Interrogating resilience” discusses terms like “resistance capability, recovery time, crisis absorption, along with vulnerability, adaptation, regeneration capacity” etc. with respect to ecological, socio-ecological, urban, disaster and community-based variants of resilience (Davidson et al. 2016). These terms, while foregrounding the disruptive potential of crisis, focus on resilience as a means of stabilising or continuing with the system, or, in other words, how crisis via resilience is utilised by the system to perpetually innovate or re-invent itself with no change in its relations.

As a matter of fact, these concepts could have easily stemmed from any global finance giant, where managing crisis revolves more around developing resilience to absorb disturbance in order to retain system identity, rather than the system undergoing any significant change. This logic of defining crisis through resilience is of importance, as it highlights the loop through which the status quo is maintained and the market fortifies itself, where wage crisis, job losses, global dislocation of jobs, and exploiting labour relations are justified through systems or labour groups not being sufficiently resilient. Resilience, after all, is “the capacity of a system to absorb disturbance; to undergo change and still retain essentially the same function, structure and feedbacks” (Walker et al. 2006: 2), without crossing a threshold to a different system regime. This definition outlines the ‘logic of continuity’ lodged at the heart of crisis plaguing our present. Simultaneously, this framing of crisis through resilience favours the logic of scale, where overcoming crisis is important, over logic of relation.⁴ The overwhelming of logic of relation by logic of scale becomes visible in free-market’s ‘spatial-fix’ of crisis, where recovery from disruptions through capital-flight and capital are sacrosanct (Martin and Sunley 2015: 2).

One might, then, infer that in such a world, where crisis, supposedly as an act of suspension or rupture, has itself been reified or in a way has been acquired by the market to sustain the system, or reduced to the mere function of offering a maintenance check to test the resilience of the system, it has become increasingly difficult to either imagine crisis as something sudden or as an act of rupture or suspension. Smith offers a similar visualisation in postmodern science fiction narratives as well, wherein he sees resistance in the Matrix trilogy as “a function of the system’s routine self-maintenance, reducing ‘revolution’ to merely cyclical ‘revolutions’”, and reflecting a negative dialecticism (Smith 2012: 35). The guise, then, crisis defined by resilience assumes is

⁴ The logic of scale and relation is borrowed here from Bernd Scherer’s approximation of globalisation foregrounding the dissonance between global scale of production, profit maximisation and narratives of infinite growth and local consumption, arguing for localised strategies, situated contexts and scaling actions to human comprehensibility (Scherer 2020).



that of 'continuity'. This framing of crisis as 'continuity' or ours as an age of perpetual crisis becomes evident in the present corona crisis where the question being asked is how to develop resilience to the pandemic so that the system can return to its previous state of 'normalcy'. More important would have been to inquire into the cumulative nature of socio-economic relations, which exacerbated or contributed to the rapid spread of the pandemic, for instance, the virus' mobility along global routes of capital.

In fact, Yanis Varoufakis views in the corona crisis an escalation of the 2008 banking crisis, which has now spread across all parts of corporate capitalism. The momentary pause in economic activity, which might have come across as suspension of the former order, as Varoufakis argues, is once again sustained by the injection and financialization of public money in the finance market to keep the system from falling apart, in a world where there is currently no demand or supply (2020). This continuity traced by Varoufakis also underlines ecological crisis, which, of course, would not be stopped by a year of less production, as the effect of climate change is broad, continuous and cumulative rather than local, singular and sudden. With incessant matter extraction and resource exhaustion to sustain the meanwhile naturalised myth of perpetual progress, access to ecological crisis has shifted from a proactive logic of prevention or control to utilising vulnerability for adaptation and transformation, as a way of generating resilience and carrying on as usual. A glaring example of this presents the case of [British Petroleum](#) (2005) and their "beyond petroleum" campaign along with marketing innovation of "carbon footprint", which offloads responsibility on individuals, while continuing with its system of fossil fuel as business as usual.⁵

As crisis mutates into system-check or a way of strengthening the core without any change in the relations involved, its understanding as something sudden or something understood in binary terms of change or return becomes limiting. Crisis in our present is then neither sudden nor singular or local. With concepts like 'evolutionary resilience'⁶ exploitative relations are not only preserved but fortified. What possibilities of framing such forms of crisis are then available, whereby the logic of continuity it embodies could be figured by an equally cumulative approach? Williams and the genre of science fiction might offer some possibility, not just because the genre engages with doomsday scenarios, crises and apocalyptic disruptions, but also due to a shift in the meaning of apocalypse itself, as Williams would see it. Apocalypse is now neither a future event nor an immediate event of annihilation, but in times of an ongoing ecological crisis we are

⁵ "British Petroleum didn't just deploy the 'Beyond Petroleum' ad campaign in the U.S. In the UK, the marketing firm filmed regular people on the streets of London for a [TV ad](#). The marketers asked questions like 'Do you worry about global climate change?' so people would naturally reply with 'I' or 'We' when responding to a weighty question about global warming. This allowed BP 'linguistically to remove itself as a contributor to the problem of climate change" (Kaufman).

⁶ Evolutionary resilience is "defined in terms of 'bounce forward' rather than 'bounce back'" (Martin and Sunley 2015: 6).



confronted with the long apocalypse, as a gradual event. Williams, on the other hand, visualises events not in binary terms, but as a complex interaction, as evident in his concepts such as 'structures of feeling', or also in his distinction between rule and hegemony.⁷ The actual crisis that we are then facing is to frame and represent our state of perpetual crisis, whereas the market conveniently and perpetually replicates and re-invents itself.

Williams and the Crisis of Continuity

The messianic dimension of Williams' work becomes evident in his cumulative approach, which, when transferred to crisis, favours a gradualist gradient as against narratives of sudden rupture. This cumulative approach is reflected in both his concept of 'epochal analysis' and in the 'structures of feeling' (Williams 1977). Both these concepts foreground a procedural dimension, involving a more complex interaction as against a simplistic binary constitution between return and change. Instead of limiting himself to the particularity of a localised process while deliberating on culture, Williams spans the frame to include historical variability. He thus understands culture and its complexities not just in their variable processes and their further meanings, traditions, institutions etc., but also historically in the dynamic entanglements of historically changed and changeable elements. Referring to it as 'epochal analysis' (Williams 1977: 121), culture as a process is then viewed as a system in which there are visible dominant features available. These dominant features, owing to their prominent status, exercise according to Williams hegemonic control over historical analysis and function as scale for everything else. But, as Williams argues, an authentic historical analysis is only possible precisely when

at every point [one] recognize[s] the complex interrelations between movements and tendencies both within and beyond a specific and effective dominance. It is necessary to examine how these relate to the whole cultural process rather than only to the selected and abstracted dominant system. (Williams 1977: 121)

To this effect, he proposes the categories of the 'residual' and the 'emergent', which are not just to be seen as stages and variation within a system, but as a way of accessing a process without forgoing its internal dynamic relations (Williams 1977: 122). This approach has a broadly cumulative effect as both these categories are "in any real process and at any moment in the process, [...] significant both in themselves and in

⁷ Drawing on Gramsci Williams makes a distinction between rule and hegemony. Rule for Gramsci, as Williams understands it, translates into direct or effective coercion by political forms and in time of crisis, for instance the corona regulations. Hegemony, by contrast, represents a normal situation involving a complex interlocking of active political, social, and cultural forces, and thus exhibiting a systematic and continuous character (Williams 1977: 108).



what they reveal of the characteristics of the dominant” (Williams 1977: 122). The aspect of historic variability as articulated through the concepts of the residual and the emergent allows the framing of culture and the present, beyond them assuming an ontological status, or, as Williams would say, appearing as naturalised (1977: 125). This is especially relevant in case of the perpetual crisis articulating itself through the distended logic of late capitalism in our present, as it not only puts its ontological validity into question, but evidently can be deployed as a blueprint to chart a future beyond such a system. Of course, as Jameson argues, the suitable form for imagining such a framework or an alternative way of being is the prerogative of science fiction and particularly of utopia as a genre. In fact, Jameson’s idea of ‘the desire called utopia’ and his model of progress through failure, whereby failure of one model leads to the imagination of another one (Jameson 2005: 211-33), in a way, shares affinity with Williams’ idea of the tragic, where the downfall of the individual is channelled as a collective learning process. This operationalisation of the utopian genre might serve as a counter-project to the ‘bounce-forward’ mode of resilience sustaining the market, where a different logic of continuity emerges according to which each subsequent model learns from the failure of the former, and a long-term adaptive strategy becomes possible.

Similarly, Williams’ concept of ‘structures of feeling’ equally involves a cumulative dimension focussing primarily on the pre-emergent, though not limiting it as being a “matter of immediate practice”.⁸ He observes that the “structures of feeling can be defined as social experiences ‘in solution’ as distinct from other social semantic formations which have been precipitated and are more evidently and more immediately available” (Williams 1977: 133-34). Two aspects are important here. Firstly, the approximation of social experiences ‘in solution’ which overcomes the formalized, or, as Williams calls it, the ‘precipitated’ state of things. Secondly, ‘structure of feeling’ accessing the present ‘in solution’ hints at an ongoing negotiation between the already available and the not-yet manifest and, thus, preserves the possibility of change, albeit without explicitly separating it from the present. Williams warns of “taking terms of analysis as terms of substance” (1977: 129), which essentialises and reduces instead of treating culture as “interlocking and in tension” and as a “living and interrelating continuity” (1977: 132). This gradualist and cumulative approach can be equally valid and useful for understanding crisis, not only because of seeing crisis as the culmination of successive events, but for establishing and restoring historic sensibility, which does not define/identify crisis as rupture, but as continuity, just like Varoufakis establishes a continuity between the corona pandemic and the 2008 financial crisis.

⁸ “It is that we are concerned with meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt, and the relations between these and formal or systematic beliefs are in practice variable (including historically variable), over a range from formal assent with private dissent to the more nuanced interaction between selected and interpreted beliefs and acted and justified experiences” (Williams 1977: 132).



To return to the framing of crisis within Williams' cumulative approach, whether 'epochal analysis' or 'structures of feeling', both act against the dissociation of logic of scale from the logic of relation, which the framing of crisis as rupture furthers, as what one is immediately confronted with is the scale of the crisis, overshadowing the relations involved. The perpetual crisis of late capitalism operates on a similar logic, whereby dissonance is fostered, not just between scale and relation, owing to the colossal dimension of the free-market, but also as forces of production overshadows relations of production (Connery 2019). In such a scenario, it becomes necessary to disrupt this loop of 'bounce forward' mode of resilience defining crisis and offer an equally cumulative counter-project against its expansive nature.

To look closely at the concepts of the dominant, the emergent and the residual, it becomes clear that Williams' attempt is not to view these categories as independent but in their interrelation with each other. Consequently, he defines the 'residual' as something from the past, which maintains an oppositional relation to the dominant. He distinguishes it against the 'archaic', seeing it also as something from the past and recognised in a system as such as well, but not sharing an antagonistic relation to the dominant and in fact co-opted by the dominant itself (Williams 1977: 122-23). The 'residual', on the other hand, is something, that "has been effectively formed in the past, but it is still active in the cultural process, not only and often not at all as an element of the past, but as an effective element of the present" (Williams 1977: 122). This means that the 'residual' maintains an alternate and even an oppositional relation to the 'dominant' (Williams 1977: 122). Furthermore, Williams observes that a dominant culture cannot allow many residual experiences without threat to itself, i.e., the 'active' residual must then be co-opted.⁹

Similarly, the emergent either appears out of the dominant or against it and represents not plainly the new as in 'novel' but is to be understood as a set of new meanings, practices, relations and values, which maintain an alternative or oppositional relation to the dominant, for instance, the emergence of a new class (Williams 1977: 123). According to Williams, the significance of the residual and the emergent can only be established in relation to the dominant. As mentioned, the emergent appears and establishes itself in relation to the dominant, whereas the dominant maintains a hegemonic relation vis-à-vis the residual and the emergent. However, the residual entails the historic experience of having gone through both the stages, i.e., of being something emergent and dominant, as Williams foresaw it. The residual, thus, contains within itself the dynamics of social change and history, and offers an interactive register

⁹ "It is in the incorporation of the actively residual – by reinterpretation, dilution, projection, discriminating inclusion and exclusion – that the work of the selective tradition is especially evident. This is very notable in the case of versions of 'the literary tradition,' passing through selective versions of the character of literature to connecting and incorporated definitions of what literature now is and should be" (Williams 1977: 123).



to measure the shift, something necessary for approximating crisis as well. It, thus, represents a cumulative category, which should not be viewed as formalised, also owing to the dimension of entropy and loss accompanying it. In fact, if we were to recast the residual beyond Williams, then it comes across as a suitable category to think through crisis, as it becomes analogous to crisis owing to the logic of rupture and continuity equally accompanying it, whereby something residual experiences rupture in utility through disposal, or has an afterlife on the logic of continuity (Flusser 1993). The residual, furthermore, also allows the cohabitation of logic of scale along with logic of relation, with questions of quantity, quality, materiality coming together with questions of production, disposal, futurity etc. These are questions not only central to the ecological crisis, but residue as metaphor (Morrison 2013) generates affinity for other marginal social groups, for instance migrants or refugees. Surprisingly, a recent [initiative](#) promoting refugee employment utilises crisis as a way of developing soft skills such as “teamwork, stress-resistance, goal-orientation and resilience” (Socialbee). The initiative takes the traumatic event of escape, a crisis suddenly disrupting everyday life, and extracts continuity from it, as a way of developing resilience, which is then made accessible to the market.

To turn our attention to literature and particularly to science fiction, a possibility arises to not only sense and approximate crisis, or, for that matter, blueprints of post-crisis social reorganisation, but, moreover, the science fiction genre accommodates Williams’ conceptualisation of the dominant, the emergent and the residual in dynamic cohabitation as a way of critically reflecting on the present. As will be discussed in the following with the example of Juli Zeh’s novel *Corpus Delicti* (English title: *The Method*), the German author chooses the form of science fiction to visualise the mechanism of deploying crisis as a means to develop resilience by the system. More specifically, accessing the text through the residual furthers a cumulative understanding, allowing the cohabitation of logic of scale with the logic of relation.

Williams, Crisis and Science Fiction

Although Williams did not delve on science fiction as a form exercising his ‘structures of feeling’, his classification of the genre, especially as ‘putropia’ or ‘doomsday’¹⁰ is

¹⁰ Williams devised his own categorisation of the science fiction genre, calling them ‘Putropia, Doomsday, and Space Anthropology’. By Putropia he understood an inversion of utopian romances (basically dystopias) as represented by Huxley, Orwell, Zamyatin and Bradbury. The second category revolves around apocalypse scenarios with the annihilation of human life, for instance in A.E. van Vogt’s *Dormant*, Philip Latham’s *The Xi Effect*, John Christopher’s *The New Wine*, and John Wyndham’s *The Day of the Triffids*. The third kind, liked by Williams the most, engaged with “stories [...] which consciously use the science fiction formula to find what are essentially new tribes, and new patterns of living”, as in Blish’s *A Case of Conscience* (Williams 1988: 356).



symptomatic of crisis. The sense of urgency emanating from such classification and the genre's capacity to sense social shifts and process these through such negatively charged scenarios, do possess 'structures of feeling' as Williams imagines them. Williams, on his part, in an article titled "Science Fiction", asks not to dismiss the genre owing to its "fanciful, extravagant and even impossible" (Williams 1988: 356) nature and treats it as a form of social novel.¹¹ In fact, he tried his hand at science fiction with his dystopian novel *The Volunteers*.¹² Science fiction's ability to investigate crisis, however, goes beyond forms such as dystopia and apocalypse and is rather emblematic of Williams' categories of the dominant, the emergent and the residual. In fact, these categories provide a more comprehensive access to the genre, apart from Suvin's dialectical conceptualisation of it being a genre of cognitive estrangement (Suvin 1979).

The popular association with the genre is Williams' category of the (pre)emergent, owing to the novelties involved. Yet science fiction is not to be plainly seen as a literary form engaging with new marvels, imaginary futures and alternatives, but one implicitly recasting the relation between the present and these possible futures. Consequently, as a literary form, it allows the residual and the emergent to co-exist, while reconfiguring their relation to the dominant. The genre engages with dominant culture in an alternative or oppositional manner, against which it emerges or where the emergent becomes the dominant. Simultaneously, it also exhibits an affinity to the residual, not just through the dominant being transformed into the residual, whereby practices and relations are either intentionally left out or are discarded from these future narratives, but also through their presence in these imagined worlds, even though relegated to marginal positions. The transformation of our present into the past of these imagined futures, however, without letting it disappear altogether and maintaining an active presence either through continuity or through the conspicuous absence, affirms Williams' distinction between the residual and the archaic. Thus, the dominant, being something formed in the past, maintains an active presence as something residual in these imagined worlds.

The genre constitutes itself through the dynamic relation between the dominant, the emergent and the residual tied together in temporal relation with each other. The critical dimension of this recasting or redefining of relations, especially in view of crisis, emerges here, as this recasting involves the imagination of a complex 'structure of

¹¹ "The 'social formula novel' in Williams' schema worked by way of the abstraction of a particular pattern from the sum of social experience, accentuating it so as to create a fictional society" (Milner 2003: 203).

¹² "He thought of it as a 'political thriller,' rather than sf, and even insisted he had 'no direct experience' of writing the latter [...]. Yet his recollection of wanting 'to write a political novel set in the 1980s' [...] – that is, in what was then the near-future – marks it out as the kind of future story he had closely associated with sf in *The Long Revolution*. According to Suvin's definitions, at any rate, it is very obviously sf and, ironically enough, sf written precisely in the dystopian mode. For it is organized around the sociopolitical novum of a complete ideological and organizational collapse of the British Labor Party into X-planning and coalition government with the Conservatives." (Milner 2003: 210).



feeling', whereby the dominant, the emergent and the residual not only share dependency, or a logic of continuity becomes visible, but the tension between these categories and their oppositional relation to each other allows for the cohabitation of the logic of scale alongside the logic of relation. In other words: a totality emerges, a totality that transforms our present into future and, in doing so, enables critical reflection on the present in the first place, which is indispensable for approximating and charting a way out of any crisis. Science fiction can be schematically understood as thought experiments recasting the dominant as the residual, to question the validity the now-dominant exercises – something useful in case of late capitalism having established itself as a condition without alternative. The genre can thus be seen as an exercise in Williams' 'structures of feeling', as it, after all, engages the residual and the emergent in alternate and oppositional relation to the dominant, bound simultaneously in "specific internal relations, at once interlocking and in tension" (Williams 1977: 132).

Now, with crisis being defined by resilience and its bounce-forward variant absorbing shock, strengthening the system and maintaining its core relations, it becomes imperative to see how science fiction responds to such developments or how such forms of crisis framed by resilience are represented by the genre. Approximation or representation, after all, is half the battle won, if we remember Jameson's claim of postmodernism or late capitalism thwarting all attempts at representation (Jameson 2005: 212). Accessing crisis through Williams' interrelated categories of the dominant, the emergent and the residual has three advantages. Firstly, the reconfiguration of the dominant or the present condition into residual culture allows a re-imagination of relations, enabling critical examination of claims of naturalness. Secondly, the transformation of the expansive immediacy of our present into reduced or tangible dimensions of a finite narrative (Canavan 2012: 35), i.e., to fit the coordinates of the imagined future, facilitates the cohabitation of logic of scale with the logic of relation, whereas normally the logic of scale overwhelms that of relation during a crisis. Thirdly, accessing the science fiction genre or crisis through Williams' categories fundamentally means accessing relations 'in solution', i.e., something not as formalised or as a 'precipitate' favouring clear delimitations or clean ruptures, but as something ongoing and cumulative, having a broader complex interaction beyond localised containment.

Science fiction has been consistently processing crisis scenarios, whether it be techno-material, ideological, ecological, or anthropocentric crises. Now with the classic human subject having come under strain along with market-driven narratives of optimisation, resilience is sought and represented through the post-human subject in science fiction narratives. Braidotti succinctly underlines the appropriation of diversity and otherness as way of making the post-human subject more resilient (2011). Moreover, contemporary near-future variants of science fiction often implement estrangement as an ongoing process, rather than treating it as something given,



highlighting the procedural aspect. This means continuity is traced from the empirical world of the author to the estranged world of science fiction. Consequently, this continuity allows a more complex interaction between phenomena or practices that are dominant in a given scenario, being confronted with the emergent, and themselves being transformed into residual culture. This cumulative approach, or, as Williams' calls it, 'in solution', does not seek out crisis as an exclusively disruptive event. Simultaneously, owing to the procedural dimension underlining it, it might serve as a counter-model of approximation to the bounce-forward variant of resilience defining crisis in our present. There are sufficient postmodern science fiction narratives, where moments of crisis and attempts at resistance are utilised by the system to develop resilience and optimise itself.¹³ The recent adaptation of Asimov's *Foundation* series (2021) for Apple TV shows a galactic empire ruled by the clones of the emperor in three stages of life, identifying as Brother Dawn (future), Brother Day (present) and Brother Dusk (past). The emperor, by cloning himself repeatedly, has not just freed himself from death, but more importantly from the contingency of biological reproduction and has established his reign as one of perpetual-present, where past and future have become redundant, with no residual matter other than the preserved dead bodies of previous emperors. This reign marked by singularity, being without alternative, embodies historic continuity. This self-replication reminds us of the present condition of capital that has not just freed itself from actual production, but its financialisation through derivatives, debts, hedging and otherwise, has brought forward an equivalent system of self-replication, i.e., of capital producing capital. In such a system a mathematician, Hari Seldon, foresees imminent crisis and the collapse of the empire. Deciding against punishment, to prevent martyrdom, the mathematician is co-opted by the system and sent to a faraway planet to preserve knowledge as a way for the system to bounce-back/forward once the crisis is overcome.¹⁴

Zeh's novel *Corpus Delicti* (2009) almost prophetically deals with a health-crazed state called the METHODE (METHOD), where the supreme concern of the state is the health and well-being of its citizens, which also legitimises its existence. In Williams' terms, the state here represents a hegemonic order, as opposed to the corona

¹³ See, for instance, the series *The Hunger Games*, where acts of resistance are co-opted by the system to maintain its validity.

¹⁴ Something similar is also presented in the Disney series *Loki* (2021), where timekeepers maintain the singularity and linearity of time, protecting it against alternate timelines, to be read, as Jameson would, as other histories or rather other futures and thus ways of being. This singularity, evidently analogical to our present condition under neoliberal market organisation, disposes of other ways of being, where the timekeepers prune aberrant timelines and dispose of them into the void. Crisis emerges once two disposed-of timelines, represented by the figure of Loki, manage to resist to their status as disposed of. Attempts at restoring the plurality of time is thwarted as the timekeeper reveals to a pair of Lokis that he orchestrated the crisis as a quest for them to find him and take over, so that the system continues its existence without any change in its relations. The other option of killing the timekeeper is presented as multiverse wars, where another variant of the timekeeper would take over and the system would continue anyway.



regulations in our present, which would fall under rule, owing to the experience of crisis. The novel revolves around a case of suicide as a crime against the state and the negligent behaviour of the protagonist towards her health, classified equally as a crime. Both these instances function as an affront to the dominant health dictatorship conceived as utopia. The state monitors all bodily functions of its citizens through an implanted chip along with keeping a track of bodily discharge and sewage. A resistance group in the margins known as R.A.K. – Recht auf Krankheit (translated as PRI – People’s Right to Illness) is mentioned and is declared as terrorist group. The moment of crisis in the system appears in the act of suicide and turns into a full-blown crisis due to the protagonist Mia’s negligent behaviour towards her health. These acts not only emerge as something oppositional to the dominant discourse on health or question the validity of the METHODE by negating it, but simultaneously transform the body into refuse or something residual as it no longer serves or validates the narrative that legitimises the state and thus recasts the relations taken for ‘natural’. Simultaneously, Mia’s act of neglecting her health is declared by the state as problematic or oppositional, while using it later for system optimisation.

The exaggerated health dictatorship is evidently inspired by market narratives of optimisation eventually making incursion in the body, even though such quantification of health and body performance and monitoring already exist in our present. Biomedical control, after all, is since long part of the state’s bio-political regulation of its citizens’ lives. Zeh just extrapolates it to hegemonic dimensions, where all other rights and actions submit to the ultimate concern of health and the body is treated like a product with a barcode to scan in the form of the implanted chip.¹⁵

This control and submission is the actual crisis (Trojanow and Zeh 2010); however, for the METHODE, crisis emerges once citizens wilfully destroy their lives through the violent act of suicide or by neglecting personal health. Instead of punishment, which involves freezing the body, the state chooses the bounce-forward variant of resilience to overcome the crisis threatening its existence. After all, a system extracting legitimation through the perpetual well-being of its citizens cannot take life and thus contradict its own logic of existence. So, after a lengthy legal proceeding, just before Mia is to be frozen, the state overturns its own decision, as freezing her would have turned her into a martyr while ruining the state’s legitimation. In letting her live, the METHODE co-opts Mia’s resistive potential as a function of the state: while learning from the crisis and the vulnerability of its citizens, it adapts itself and discredits her. Mia is pardoned, and the

¹⁵ “Der Amtsarzt ist ein gutmütiger Herr mit gepflegten Fingernägeln. Er streicht Mia mit einem Scanner über den Oberarm, als wäre sie eine Bohnendose auf dem Kassenband im Supermarkt. Auf der Präsentationswand erscheint ihr Photo, gefolgt von einer langen Reihe medizinischer Informationen.” (Zeh 2009: 49); “The civic doctor is a good-natured man with manicured fingernails. He passes a sensor over Mia’s upper arm as if he were scanning a tin of beans at the checkout. Her picture appears on the wall, accompanied by a long list of medical stats.” (Zeh 2014: 41).



state recognizes her as ill – as opposed to the earlier narrative of illness as threat and being criminal – to be put under psychological care, given medical support, and to undergo re-socialisation.

In such an extensive response to crisis, whereby resistance is co-opted and neutralised, only an equally cumulative response can offer a meaningful counter-action. As discussed earlier, Williams' concepts of the dominant, the emergent and the residual access events and relations in their dynamic and conflicting interaction with each other. Consequently, the entire legitimisation of the METHODE bases itself on the control of its citizens' bodies. Although suicide represents a sudden act of disruption, Mia's negligence of her health is an ongoing event and in Williams' terms offers the possibility of examining relations 'in solution'. A healthy body is representative of the state and its legitimacy and, thus, part of the dominant. Mia, however, instrumentalises her body to forge an oppositional narrative and imagines an alternative frame. The resistive potential of the body, as part of the emergent, is realised through its negligence, where Mia rejects the dominant discourse of optimisation. This act of negligence simultaneously transforms the body into something disposable, thus reducing its value within the system and making it residual for the state, while remaining a potential threat. This residual character of the body is perceived by the state as something that is subversive and requires neutralisation. Its neutralisation eliminates its threat potential as a site of resistance, which could have escalated the crisis, as a threshold could have been breached and the system would not have been able to bounce forward or even bounce back, as the logic of resilience dictates.

Mia's body, then, not only visualises a continuous logic through the crisis, but also allows the cohabitation of logic of scale with the logic of relation, i.e., the state and its bio-politics as something abstract along with the immediacy of her body as something tangible. Although the crisis is averted by co-opting and the system persists, what accessing the text through Williams' concepts enables is the recasting of relations. This recasting not only acts against a formalised state of affairs or allows the awareness of a different frame of being, but radically exemplifies science fiction's critical role, and this is what we need to seek out, if any possibility beyond crisis needs to be imagined, whether in the current pandemic or otherwise.

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