

The set is small town America, a fictional place nested in real space: Hawkins, Indiana. The animal print clothing, Kate-Bush-heavy soundtrack and over-militarized technological anxiety attest to that space's imagined time: Reagan's 80s, as the Cold War runs out of breath.

Russia is not the only enemy, however. In fact, it is small change in the grand scheme of a larger threat. Creatures and consciousnesses from the 'Upside Down', a dimension that mirrors the world in spatial equivalence, creep in and render life precarious in all its forms through fissures known as gates. These faceless monstrosities are kept at bay only by a young girl with psychic powers named Eleven, who is the product and escapee of a top-secret government experiment that was being conducted in a laboratory close to Hawkins in the years leading up to the show's present. Both the program that produced Eleven and its Soviet analogue, it is eventually revealed, are responsible for incubating ruptures to the Upside Down. They are the structural supports that sanctify the show's bestial bloodbaths, bureaucracies whose ideological contours enable and perpetuate *ST*'s phantasmagoric violence, its psychoanalytic perversion and (thus) its captivating plot points.

This is a picture of Netflix's *Stranger Things* (hereafter *ST*), a television series now with four complete seasons as of July 1, when the final two episodes went live. (Television no longer "airs"). Unpacking the entirety of the show's history is a complicated matter for two pages, so I focus on the episodes released July 1 as a relative present; though pasts necessarily seep in. *ST* in general, and these last two episodes in particular (which together have a running time of almost four hours), televisually details the extent to which **this** (our 21st century space) is a production of a political unconscious that some would call 'neoliberal'. Whatever we call the zeitgeist, it depends on technologies of global simultaneity.

The plot lines are hard to cold start; but when the curtain raises at our chosen beginning, the unit of fourteen heroes (all American, naturally) is separated into three groups in geographically distinct locations: Hawkins in Indiana, the Kamchatka peninsula in Russia, and somewhere in a desert in Nevada. The unit is, by self-assignment, collectively fighting a monster who used to be a human, Vecna, to keep him from killing a fourth teenager. If he manages to commit the homicide, it will ensure a fundamentally ruptured distinction between the Upside Down and the nostalgic world of an American nuclear family.

The Upside Down is, I think, a conception of the future projected from fragments, flashes of the past. As was realized earlier in the season, the materiality of the Upside Down is locked in a state years earlier than the Right-side Up, the world in which our protagonists primarily live. Vecna's threat to rupture the two worlds is in service of a (rather unimaginitive) dream; a dream that he and his monsters might ravage and roam in 80s America. The expansion of his dominion is the future the Upside Down threatens, and in stellar capitalist-qua-colonizer fashion it seems (at this stage) to be only for its own sake. With each new victim, which he consumes as "everything that they are" parasitically becoming stronger himself, Vecna increments towards the vision of a tentacle-and-bat-rich wasteland spatially double to the world he inhabits now.

Vecna weaves his futurity into the present (80s Hawkins, which is naturally also a past) by finding sites where some fragment flash of it already exists. This is in the mental

manifestations of teenage suicidal thoughts, material unhappinesses of domestic violence, or lonely White suburbia. Understanding it (his futurity) enough to resist its advancing inevitability requires journeys to the past, journeys which are often traveled by way of the flashback and other filmic techniques. Another way to think of the Upside Down is simply as **purgatory**. It is a futurity rooted and undetachable from multiple pasts which unrelentingly seep into the present, a Messianic combustion that enacts violence and makes way for more of it.

ST suggests that, in order to keep Vecna's futurity at bay, we are currently relying on ambitious children. More specifically, on the ambitious *American* children who are top of the class in the national cults of reckless independence, of familial normativity (with just one unconsummated exception to prove the rule), and of freedom enforced by jingoistic heroism.

Now: it is not jingoistic heroism or heroic jingoism that keeps the world's impending collapse at bay. Nor is it the profits of technological solutionism, whether they are cashed as a psychic superhero girl, as a sentient AI, or as a global carbon sink. Nor is it the serendipitous simultaneity of jingoistic heroism, technological solution, and one or more other Liberal hopes joining forces in conspiratorial reveal, as it does in small town America in the penultimate progression of the final episode of season four. The final scene depicts an environmental line that divides two worlds that are both the Right-side Up; one which houses happy memories, and the other which rains ash, storms and earthquakes. I cannot say what it is, exactly, to progress, but let me say this: human life is not held together cinematically with the charm of second-rate acting from child stars who have grown out of their adorability. We will need a revolution of a different kind.