Allen, Elizabeth,
"More is Less: Representing the Planet"

The paper begins with the assumption formulated by Fredric Jameson that 'all forms of aesthetic production consist in one way or another in the struggle with and for representation' and offers a critique of the responses of fiction to the representational challenge offered by contemporary planetary relations and consciousness. It examines the strategies adopted by novelists and its central contention is that the potential of realism in the construction of such representational forms has been seriously misunderstood and underestimated, with important political results.

Recent discussion of fiction in a globalised context has focused on novels identified as 'cosmopolitan', characterised by flux, hybridity and deterritorialisation: a world, in James Clifford's terms, mapped by routes rather than roots. I argue that such an emphasis, offering an illusory, liberating glamour to disconnection and fragmentation, and erasing the local, is essentially bolstering a dubious political discourse. David Harvey's writings on fictional form and social justice are referenced here, as is his contention in his recent *Cosmpolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom* that 'there is nothing wrong with a subaltern cosmopolitan perspective remaining particularistic and local in orientation, provided the dialectic connectivity to global conditions is sustained.'

It is realism, condemned by the 1980s' theoretical hegemony, and still marginalised in much critical discussion as essentially conservative, which offers the more appropriate political model for an eco- conscious fiction which maintains the centrality of social justice. While the realist form insists on the centrality of the material conditions of existence, including place, its history demonstrates an equally strong insistence on the local as situated in a relational system of forces and an interest in evolving and transforming its representative techniques to enable them to represent the changing spatial scales in which those forms interact.

Armstrong, Nancy,
"The Contemporary Novel as a Theory of Realism"

In recent years, as I see it, something has happened in and to the novel that cannot be satisfactorily explained by way of reference to new communication technology or global capitalism—although both are contributing factors. As if provoked by these turns of history to reflect upon the place and power of fiction, a number of novelists have seen fit to introduce a completely encoded world inside an apparently everyday world and then allowed the virtual world to leak
out and envelop the reader, forcing us all to rethink the relationship between the two: Can we indeed consider text and context different worlds? What distinguishes these novels from three centuries of novels that came before them is, in a word, the contemporary tendency of fiction to operate as descriptive theories of an entirely mediated world.

Christinidis, Georgia,
"Types of truth: authenticity and totality"

The truth claims made by realism can concern different aspects of reality and therefore be associated with distinct ethical imperatives. This presentation will briefly sketch two different types of truth claims made by fiction: the first type concerns the depiction of personal experience, the second concerns world-making, a truthful representation of the social totality. It will then continue to spell out the ethical imperatives addressed to literature associated with each of these types of claim, indicate their relative importance in recent critical debates and aesthetic practices, and ask whether a re-valorisation of the two kinds of realism is justified ethically and aesthetically.

On the one hand, fiction can claim to authentically represent the experience of the individual. Here, the ethical imperative entails respect for the specificity of the experience concerned, which must be captured adequately. Critical debates regarding authenticity have particularly focused on the areas of transcultural communication – adequate representations of migrant and minority experiences – and of trauma, particularly after the attacks of 9/11. As trauma is conceptualized as unrepresentable, authentically representing survivors' experiences constitutes a fundamental challenge to the realist mode. Adorno held that it was impossible to adequately represent the Holocaust, famously declaring there would be no art after Auschwitz and valorising the modernist poetry of Paul Celan, with its refusal of direct representation. This refusal of realism may, however, be argued to entail a dismissal of the specificity of individual experience that is itself ethically problematic. Passages from Primo Levi's *If This Is a Man*, De Lillo's *Falling Man*, Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* and Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11* will be examined to assess the comparative effectiveness of realist and non-realist strategies in representing trauma.

The realist novel of the nineteenth century does not restrict itself to authentically representing the experience of the individual; its narrative universe holds up a mirror to the social totality - for instance in George Eliot's *Middlemarch*. The ethical imperative associated with this function of literature is an evaluative analysis of the social reality the novel is trying to depict, an assessment of which phenomena are of central significance at a particular time, which is the precondition of social critique. This mode of realist representation has, however, lost its central significance with the advent of modernism, leading Terry Eagleton to argue, in *Exiles and Emigrés*, that a successful representation of the social totality has become an unreachable goal. Nevertheless, realist novels that are read as a valid depiction of society at a given time, rather than merely an embodiment of a socially specific experience, still exist, including, for instance, Martin Amis's fiction, which is regarded as paradigmatic of the new "classless" society. The validity of Amis's realist vision of society in *Money* will be compared with the use of cognitive mapping and allegory to make sense of the shape of society in the speculative fictions of J. G. Ballard.

Drews-Sylla, Gesine,
"Post-colonial Social(ist) Realism: The Case of Ousmane Sembène"

Maybe the most dominating aesthetic form that socialism developed was, of course, socialist realism which is only slowly being recognized as an as much aesthetic as ideological approach to cultural production. In certain aspects, it has been described as an ambivalent attempt to develop a mode of writing that differs from Western modes of representation

and cultural production. It shares this objective with certain aspects of post-colonial theory that departs as a radical critique of Western representational models. The importance of socialist, communist or Marxist ideological positions for the development of the varying paradigms of post-colonial theory has often and prominently been discussed. *Socialist* realism can be seen as a very specific development of *social* realism, which in turn has been recognized as one of the modes of representation that post-colonial cultural productions resorted to in order to describe their specific situation. Whereas the theoretical and ideological interdependencies of post-colonialism and socialism have been widely discussed, studies of any aesthetic interrelationships of socialist realist and post-colonialist literatures are astonishingly rare to find, which is, maybe, due to the fact, that research of post-colonial literatures focused, for instance, onto models of "writing back" to or their overall relationship with the former colonial powers on the one hand. On the other hand, research of socialist realism did not feel inclined to take into consideration any influences upon post-colonial literature, which is most likely due to the lack of e.g. Russian colonies in those regions of the world that developed the most proliferated post-colonial discourses. Another reason might be ideological implications that prevent socialist realism to be seen in aesthetic terms of. My paper aims at comparing socialist realist aesthetics and post-colonial social realist writing, using the works of the Senegalese Ousmane Sembène (1923-2007) as a case study. Sembene can be considered as one of those post-colonial authors that prominently worked in a social realist style. After his early career as a writer, he turned to film making, partially because he recognized film as the more appropriate mode of representation when aiming to reach a mostly illiterate audience. He shares the conviction of this necessity with Lenin who called for a socialist art that was easy to understand for the illiterate masses of Soviet-Russian peasants. This fundamental agreement does not seem to be incidental taking into account that, in 1961, Sembene studied film making in Moscow and was a convinced communist who understood his art as a contribution to political goals. There are more parallels: for example, Sembene stressed the importance of local oral traditions for literary production, just as Maxim Gorky did in the Soviet Union, or, on a thematic level, Sembene's constant critique of the local, post-colonial bourgeoisie. From a theoretical perspective, my paper will not only compare the two related realisms (social and socialist), it will also discuss in which way the deconstructive post-colonialist theoretical approaches relate to those realist aesthetic modes of representation. The paper is part of my post-doctoral research project "Russia and Africa – a Polylogical Network of Discourses".

Fechner-Smarsly, Thomas & Hennig, Reinhard,
"Realism as practice. Literature between documentarism, activism and concept art - two scandinavian examples"

If realism in contemporary culture is, or must be, considered as a pluralistic phenomenon (as the title of the conference indicates), one may seek for new and/or deviant forms of 'realism' within the aesthetic field (not at least against the background of globalized media). We would like to present a (double) case study from Scandinavia: two writers/artists who use classical forms of representation and narration as well as other forms inspired by concept art/happening and political activism.

In 2001, with the publication of his autobiography, the Danish writer and artist Claus Beck-Nielsen declared himself as dead. Nevertheless this act of 'self-erasure' became a starting

point for different projects that the artist formerly known as Claus Beck-Nielsen undertook under different roles and identities like Claus Nielsen, clausbeck-nielsen.net or Das Beckwerk. Most risky, in more than just one sense of the word, seems his project of a travel to Iraq in 2004 in order to introduce democracy while the war against Saddam was still going on. Like the whole of his work, the march through the desert from the Kuwaitian border to Bagdad carrying a ‚democracy'-container is, according to the artist, far from being ironic. But the documentary of the desert-walk, published under the name of clausbeck-nielsen.net and entitled „Selvmordsaktionen" (The suicide-action) – why has it been labelled by the author as 'novel'?

The Icelandic writer Andri Snær Magnason, born 1973, became famous when he in 1996 published a book of poetry designed like the products of the supermarket chain Bónus. Although critical of consumerism, the book was sold just in these supermarkets (ata discount price) and became a bestseller that was followed up in 2003 by „Bónuspoetry, 33 % more!". Even more attention was caused by Magnason's 2006 book „Dreamland. A Self-Help-Manual for aFrightened Nation", which questions the self-perception of Icelandic societyand culture in its relation to nature. Starting by asking „what is reality?", the book criticizes the devastation of an ecologically and historically important area in Eastern Iceland through the building of a huge reservoir dam and an aluminium smelter. In „Dreamland", Magnason blends storytelling and rhetoricsof environmental activism with a ‚realistic', documentary style, citing a huge amount of sources, including photographs, charts and maps, thus making itdifficult to define this bordercrossing book's genre.

As a kind of thesis we would like to discuss the following: Instead of dismissing traditional mimesis and representation, Beck-Nielsen and Magnason even seem to strengthen these classical approaches to a certain extent while at the same time transgressing ‚realism' by intervening into reality. As a result, it remains undecidable what is more important: representation or intervention. Books, that means literary publications, are only one part within a larger strategy. As the culture critic Marianne Ping Huang (University of Copenhagen) puts it: Nielsens (and Magnasons) work of art must be considered in terms of a network where the single product is less important than the interrelations between the parts.

Hauthal, Janine,
"Realisms in Contemporary British Drama"

In 2006, the National Theatre of Scotland produced two plays which premiered at the Edinburgh Festival: *Realism* by Anthony Neilson and *Black Watch* by Gregory Burke. In each of these plays, conventional notions of psychological and social realism resonate and are challenged at the same time. As the paper will argue, the two plays can be identified with different realistic trends in contemporary British writing for the stage.
In accordance with realism's focus on everyday life, Neilson's *Realism* deals with the seemingly ordinary. The play depicts an uneventful (Satur)day in the protagonist's life. It details the workings of his mind by showing his thoughts and what influences them enacted on stage. Replacing object-realism by experiential authenticity, the acting-oriented play reduces realistic theatrical representation to the point of absurdity. Thus, its meta-realistic

modernization of the well-made play makes *Realism* comparable to e.g. plays of Alan Ayckbourn.

Burke's *Black Watch*, by contrast, exemplifies the recent rise of verbatim theatre in contemporary British drama which gained momentum in the course of the documentary turn and is associated with British playwrights such as, for instance, David Hare. Burke's play is based on interviews conducted with former soldiers of the Scottish Black Watch regiment who served in Iraq in 2004. Combining autobiography and historiography, the play's documentary approach holds both objective and subjective truth claims. By introducing music and songs, dance and other physical elements, and lightning design, however, *Black Watch* can be described not only as a political play, but also as a post-dramatic spectacle.

Comparing how both plays defy and vary realistic representation finally leads to questions of media-specificity: In how far do the meta-realistic and documentary strategies used in the two plays rely on the specific theatricality of role-playing in performance? What happens to realism's implication of a transparent representation of reality in literary drama, a genre which is based on a similar premise with regard to its performance in the theatre?

Isekenmeier, Guido,
"Visual Event Realism"

Any attempt to come to terms with the concept of realism must address two questions: (1) what is the object of realism, which aspect of reality is to be represented realistically? and (2) what are the techniques of realism, the ways in which a realitic representation is achieved? Classical answers to these questions focus on everyday reality, on the representation of people and things encountered in daily life (from antiquity to Auerbach) and on the use of details, the inclusion of seemingly insignificant items in realistic representations.

Contrary to such definitions of literary realism, an analysis of media realism, of realistic representations particularly in the news media, but also in film, has to take into account that it is not the everyday, the ordinary or the familiar which is their object, but the spectacular, the exceptional and the distant, in short: the event. Nor do they generate the impression of realism by formal techniques or aesthetic devices only; instead, they rely, above all, on their apparatuses, the optical technologies they use for depicting reality.

This paper suggests, first, to trace the genealogy of the enhanced reality effect of media representations to its photographic origins. It will be shown (using the example of Diderot's wart) that it is not simply opposed to literary techniques, but takes them over, adding to them the indexical quality of technical images. This produces pictures of reality whose form can equally be ascribed to the photographed object, whose trace they are, to the optical medium used, which also leaves its traces, *and* to an aesthetics of representation akin to contemporary literary forms. It is this structure of undecidability which makes their reality effect superior to that of literature.

Secondly, it will work out the implications of the event's being the object of realistic representation. This will require both a definition of events (just as former analyses of realism required an idea of what everyday reality was, often only implicitly acknowledged) and its application to a corpus of images of events in the light of the above conception of visual realism. Examples will be televisual depictions of war, particularly of the 2003 War in Iraq.

Jakubowski, Zuzanna,
"The Consolation of Objects": Exhibiting Lost Love in Orhan Pamuk's *The Museum of Innocence* and Leanne Shapton's *Important Artifacts*

The paper will propose that the obsession with the material world in contemporary literature is a strategy of literary realism, using the example of two recently published novels: Orhan Pamuk's *The Museum of Innocence* (2008, transl. 2009) and Leanne Shapton's *Important Artifacts and Personal Property From The Collection of Leonore Doolan and Harold Morris, Including Books, Street Fashion, and Jewelry* (2009).

Although poststructuralist and deconstructionist theories have demoted both literary realism and any interest in the material object world for their supposed attempt at a transparent representation of reality, the emergence of Object Studies and Thing Theory coincides with a renewed interest in literary realisms. I understand both tendencies – the return of 'the real' and the return of the 'thing itself' in literary works and literary theory – in the context of a post-postmodern strive for (admittedly unattainable) authentic representation. The rising scholarly interest in the representation of objects in literature is evident in the number of publications on the subject, but the reemergence of 'things' is not restricted to the perspective of theoreticians and literary scholars. The detailed description of commonplace objects has played a significant role in the stylistics of 19th century literary realism and it is therefore not surprising for contemporary realisms to resort to this familiar technique. Recent novels are profusely populated with things. Two extreme examples of this are the aforenamed novels:

Pamuk's narrator remembers recounts and structures his story of a lost love through the items on display in his 'museum of innocence'. His exhibits are objects of daily use, recognizable, often mass-produced and yet full of intimacy. They tell the story of love lost, but they also tell the story of Istanbul in the 1970s, in the early stages of westernization, torn between modernization and tradition. The museum and its exhibit, however, do not remain virtual, a narrative construct: For years Pamuk has been assembling a 'real-world' museum of innocence in Istanbul, identical to the one in his novel. Shapton's novel, which is designed to resemble an auction catalog, has been hailed as a new genre by its critics: The story of a failed love affair is told in 332 lots, including photographs of objects (letters, books, photographs, trinkets, clothes, etc. complete with prizing) owned by the couple and their prosaic descriptions. The novel's narrative, or so it seems, is told directly through the objects on display.

I am particularly interested in the "history *in* things" (Bill Brown), which I will interpret as the narrative potential of objects in literature as well as their ideological inscriptions. How are these objects participating in the creation of a 'reality effect'? How is this effect complicated by the linguistic or visual representation of the objects, on the one hand, and their material existence (e.g. in a museum) on the other?

Langkjaer, Birger,
"Realism as a mode of film practice"

In film studies the concept of realism has been used in many ways. It has been considered the essence of cinema itself (its moving images), and it has been thought of as an 'invisible' style associated with Hollywood cinema. Further, it has often been used as an adjective as when someone considers a specific film realistic in some sense or another. I will suggest an alternative approach to realism, especially with regard to a European context. Instead of a catch-all term I propose that realism may be considered a mainstream practice in Scandinavian and European Cinemas that differs from both national variants of film genres and international art films. Realism characterises kinds of films which are more accessible than art films but less clear-cut than genre-films. In my talk, I will sketch 'realism' by its basic prototypes and variants.

Morris, Pam,
"Realism as metonymic mode: a political defence"

Realism has to be understood as both epistemology and aesthetic representation. I shall consider this dual imperative within the framework of Roman Jakobson's notion of metaphoric and metonymic modes of language. In contrast to poststructuralist condemnations of realism as politically conformist, I shall suggest a way of understanding metonymy that provides underpinning for a realist epistemology that is anti-individualist and anti-totalising. Metonymic realism additionally offers a dynamic way of understanding the relationship of the particular to the universal, of localism to cosmopolitanism. This line of thinking affiliates with the current project of ecocriticism in constituting the basis for a more cogent critique of exploitative global economics and politics.

In addition to Jakobson, I shall also draw briefly upon the work of reception theory, of Jürgen Habermas and of Hannah Arendt to consider the relationship between ways of seeing and ways of understanding the world. Aesthetic experimentation with perspective has always been at the centre of radical modes of realism. In the sphere of literary art, it is this formal restlessness in conjunction with a wholly dialogic representation of discourse that maintains what Bakhtin termed the protean form of the realist novel.

Turner, Nick,
"Realism and the Contemporary British Novel"

Post-war British fiction, in its endless variety has, while opening itself to experiment, never abandoned the 'real'; writers such as Penelope Lively are characteristic in their blending of postmodernism and realism. Realism has also become more commercial (as James Wood sees it) and also academically unfashionable. However the 'ethical turn' in philosophy – seen through the work of Martha Nussbaum, for example – has accompanied a return of the belief in the solidity of author, character and reader as postmodernism has been questioned. The climate of the early 21st century has likewise caused novelists such as Ian McEwan, writing on the September 11th attacks, to remark that

If the hijackers had been able to imagine themselves into the thoughts and feelings of the passengers, they would have been unable to proceed. It is hard to be cruel once you permit yourself to enter the mind of your victim. Imagining what it is like to be someone other than yourself is at the core of our humanity. It is the essence of compassion, and it is the beginning of morality.

This echoes novelist-philosopher Iris Murdoch's call for the novel to be a 'house fit for free characters' and her belief in essential principles of knowledge, value and truth.

Citing and supporting Raymond Williams's definition of realism as "the kind of novel which creates and judges the quality of a whole way of life in terms of the qualities of persons", where "we attend … to every aspect of the general life, yet the centre of value is always in the individual human person – not any one isolated person, but the many persons who are the reality of the general life", I argue that the contemporary British novel both can and should be able to focus on character, and resurrect its ability to intervene in politics and society. I identify, thus, the return of liberal humanism (illustrated by Zadie Smith, Philip Hensher and others) in literary fiction; and social realism, which now finds its home in crime fiction, such as the work of Ruth Rendell and Minette Walters.

But can realism really be a positive force for those who have been seen as 'marginalised'? Linda Anderson wrote in 1990 that "It may be that the female subject can take over as the unified autonomous subject of realism only by taking on its ideological legacy as well". In the wake of postfeminism, what are the dangers of realism in commercial and literary fiction? Acknowledging the power of postmodern and fantasy fiction, and novels that explode genre, I argue that here again is a need for the realist novel – to write how women live in the world today, to intervene, educate – and change. There is still a need for women, and many other groups, to be identified as free subjects in fiction, and that is the strength of the realist novel, both marketable and political in its endless manifestations.