

POSTHUMANIST PANIC CINEMA? THE FILMS OF ANDREW NICCOL

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I know what you're thinking. It's a phoney-baloney world. The women are surgically enhanced, the athletes are on steroids, the singers are lip-syncing if they're even singing at all, the news is entertainment, the politicians are bought and paid for- we're living one big lie.
— Victor Taransky in *S1m0ne* (2002)

The Inauthentic, body manipulation, body enhancement, virtuality, infotainment, commercial colonisation, simulation – this, as the character Taransky suggests, typifies our age. These familiar motifs of the posthuman condition, as well as media surveillance, virtual reality, cloning, artificial intelligence, genetic engineering, biometrics, drones, and so on, feature in the popular films of Andrew Niccol.¹ They can be seen to represent and express anxiety around the posthuman condition. Niccol wrote *The Truman Show* (1998) and was writer and director of *Gattaca* (1997), *S1m0ne* (2002), *In Time* (2011), and *Good Kill* (2014). A consideration that links these films is a reflection upon posthuman cinema itself. For instance there is the oppressive nature of the posthuman post-cinematic camera as hidden surveillance tool in *Truman*, the notion of posthuman computer-generated ‘synthespians’ replacing human actors in *S1m0ne*, and the posthuman post-cinematic camera as precision bomber in *Good Kill*. In this article I suggest that each of the films under consideration stages a posthuman problem which is subsequently met with a humanist remedy. The films foreground posthuman issues such as media surveillance and simulation (*The Truman Show*), cloning and genetic engineering (*Gattaca*), virtual reality and digital media (*S1m0ne*), biometrics and neoliberalism (*In Time*), and mediated war and unmanned aerial vehicles (*Good Kill*). Variants of the humanist solution to these issues include an authentic real, a space beyond mediation, an outside of media ecology (*The Truman Show*), a human spirit that is not reducible to materiality (*Gattaca*), an authentic identity, and actual rather than virtual reality (*S1m0ne*), an innate sense of justice and

outside to the flow of neoliberal finance (*In Time*), and face-to-face rather than screen-to-screen relationality, and a real war in comparison to a virtual war (*Good Kill*).

These typically posthuman motifs also concerned the theorist Jean Baudrillard and compelled him to critique manifestations of the posthuman condition. Essentially, for Baudrillard, the posthuman is inhuman. In this article I discuss the posthuman imagery in Niccol's films with reference to Baudrillard's reading of the posthuman condition. The article begins with a brief discussion and uncoupling of the notions of posthumanism and the posthuman. Focus turns to the films of Niccol and inquiry is made upon the positing of posthuman problems and humanist solutions. Baudrillard can be seen to complicate these humanist solutions by suggesting that the apparent space they point to is always already compromised and colonised by the posthuman condition. Niccol's films can be seen to fit into the genre identified by Scott Loren as 'posthumanist panic cinema.' However, I conclude by suggesting that the construction of this genre needs some reconsideration in terms of the identification and function of such a genre.

POSTHUMANISMS AND POSTHUMANS.

How is posthumanism and the posthuman conceived? As in temporal discussions of the prefix 'post' in postmodernism, poststructuralism, postmarxism, postfeminism, for example, the 'post' of posthuman, and posthumanism, need not necessarily demarcate a complete rupture. Indeed the diverse aims and investigations of posthumanism and the posthuman, "renders inoperable any universally accepted definition."² There is already discussion and positing of a "post-posthuman"³ and a "posthumanism to come,"⁴ as well as the notion that posthumanism "comes both before and after humanism."⁵ Neil Badmington has suggested caution with the phrase 'posthumanism,' labelling it "a dubious neologism," however he allows for its potential to serve as a convenient shorthand for a "general crisis" in humanism.⁶ The 'post-' of posthumanism and the posthuman need not serve as signalling the absolute end of humanism, or the death of man, but instead as indicating a Freudian 'working through' of humanism.⁷

There is much debate on posthumanism and its possibilities. No consensus has been reached, and it may therefore be fruitful to speak of posthuman theory, practice, and condition not in the singular but in the plural – that is as posthuman conditions.⁸ If

humanism appeals to the notion of a core 'humanity' or fixed essential feature to the human being, then variants of posthumanism would express some degree of incredulity to such a notion. It would be suspicious of humanist belief in an essence to the human that would be outside of history, politics, technology, economics, social relations, and so on. Following Copernicus, Darwin, Freud, Nietzsche, and the 'theoretical anti-humanism' of Marx and Engels in 'The German Ideology', the human is decentred and the ego "is not even master in its own house."⁹ A later generation of thinkers, such as Foucault, Lacan, Althusser, Baudrillard, Deleuze, and Derrida would, with varying degrees, see humanism as an obstacle impeding radical change and the thinking of difference and alterity: "The future would begin with the end of Man."¹⁰

In more material terms, contemporary life in an advanced technologically ubiquitous society and a media saturated ecology and culture also calls for a crisis in the purported autonomous Cartesian subject. This environment troubles traditional humanist distinctions between the natural, the human, and the technological: "New technologies have complicated the question of what it means to be human."¹¹ This convergence of organisms and technology leads to "the point where they become indistinguishable."¹² The concern is clear for Francis Fukuyama, contemporary biotechnology "will alter human nature and thereby move us into a 'posthuman' stage of history."¹³ This is not without subsequent and qualified objection,¹⁴ however technology¹⁵, economic power, and the human conjoin in much posthuman discussion and ongoing debate.

Posthuman concerns about hybridity and the purity of the human have long been prefigured in mythic and literary narratives such as Plato's *Phaedrus*, Apuleius's *Golden Ass*, Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and Keats's *Lamia*, "in which human figures are transformed by formal coupling with the nonhuman into something beyond the human."¹⁶ However, the growth and advance of technology, the machine, robotics, silicon, cybernetics, digitalisation, and so forth, have upped the ante and accelerated the production of the posthuman and consumption of popular narratives around the posthuman condition. In the light of recent innovations in robotics, prosthetic technologies, neuroscience, nano-technology, biogenetic capital, and so on, the posthuman condition "urges us to think critically and creatively about who and what we are actually in the process of becoming."¹⁷ One critical line of thought this article considers is the work of Jean Baudrillard, and one creative form is the cinema of Andrew Niccol.

THE TRUMAN SHOW

Baudrillard suggested that ambitions and anxieties around technology and virtual reality are an obsession of our age. They are reflected and constructed in popular film¹⁸ such as *The Matrix* (1999). He notes that “there have been other films that treat the growing indistinction between the real and the virtual: *The Truman Show*, *Minority Report*, or even *Mulholland Drive*.”¹⁹ It has been claimed that “*The Truman Show* takes Baudrillard seriously.”²⁰ The film famously explores the virtual real, and the simulation of reality. It externalises what *Blade Runner* (1982) internalises. Truman, the first baby to have been adopted at birth by a corporation, unknowingly lives on a film-set where five thousand cameras carry the events to a television audience. Some of these surveillance cameras are inventively hidden in items such as a dog collar, a bathroom mirror, a pencil sharpener, buttons, and Truman’s ring. The film satirises our media saturated world and anticipates developments in reality television and virtual reality. Baudrillard had anticipated these developments in his comments on the documentary series *An American Family* (1973), which is today considered the first ‘reality’ series on American television. The private is made public and “the most intimate operation of your life becomes the potential grazing ground of the media....The entire universe also unfolds unnecessarily on your home screen.”²¹ This is how *The Truman Show* is for its unknowing subject and audience. The Orwellian oppression, and society of surveillance that Foucault warned about, is experienced by Truman involuntarily. However, today this surveillance appears to have become voluntary, indeed a necessity, desire, and demand for the contemporary subject of the digital age. Identity has always, in some sense, been performative, but virtual technologies amplify and this. Through social media²² subjects both perform in and produce their own version of the Truman show. *Pace Socrates*, “the unscreened life is not worth living.”²³ This is the participatory panopticon and demonstrates that successful Foucauldian governmentality comes about when people can be incentivised to impose certain behaviour willingly upon themselves and one another rather than be coerced into it. This self-subjugation, or Stockholm syndrome, is one sign of the move from domination to hegemony.²⁴

Baudrillard’s 1987 article, ‘We are all Transsexuals Now,’ might just as well be titled, ‘We are all Posthuman Now.’ Here he anticipates and warns against the posthuman,

screened life, self-surveyed, virtual identity that our media ecology and social media phenomenon such as *Facebook* facilitate:

We no longer have the time to seek out an identity in the historical record, in memory, in a past, nor indeed in a project or a future. We have to have an instant memory which we can plug in to immediately - a kind of promotional identity which can be verified at every moment.²⁵

The upshot here on identity and the formation of the self is that “all that remains is to perform an appearing act, without bothering to be, or even to be seen.”²⁶ There is movement from ‘I exist, I’m here’ to ‘I’m visible, I’m image.’ Being oneself becomes “an ephemeral performance, with no lasting effects, a disenchanting mannerism in a world without manners.”²⁷ This precarious self is facilitated by and fully suits the needs of life under neoliberalism with the capacity to self-modify at the whim of the fluxes, transfers, and exchanges of capital. There is a qualitative loss of human identity in this quantitative dissemination of the image of identity. Importantly, socialisation becomes dissociated from bodily affective experience, and the exposure to the other remains on the level of the virtual.

Sylvia is a young forthright ‘extra’ who seduces - leads astray - Truman from simulation. She is the only character in the show to communicate with Truman in relatively free and undistorted speech by deviating from the script. Product placement and overt advertising has been incorporated into the actor’s scripts as they communicate with Truman. The television audience can buy anything that is seen on screen through the *Truman Catalog*. This product placement and the notion of a ‘promotional identity’ represents the migration of advertising and marketing “from separated, regulated spaces into the spaces of programs, films, and eventually out of the media and into our lives.”²⁸ The performance by supporting actors in the film envisions and anticipates the neoliberal posthuman as an entrepreneur of their own capital, and as a consumer in a promotional culture and marketing society. Once Truman has triumphed and exited from the show the cheering audience in the film immediately become bored. “So, what else is on?” asks one, about to channel-hop, in the closing lines of the film. And one must assume that really existing cinema goers also pondered after *The Truman Show*, “So, what else is on?”

Once apparently free, Truman says in defiance to the director, "You didn't have a camera in my head." One reading of the film has deemed this to be the response of "an essential (plucky) humanism, a true nature."²⁹ However, Baudrillard might disagree with Truman's claim and humanist escape from posthuman horror. He has argued that Americans internalise the cinematic apparatus and "experience reality like a tracking shot; that's why they succeed so well with certain media, particularly television."³⁰ We should assume that Truman has internalised television and is part of "an integral telemorphosis of society."³¹ For Baudrillard, the McLuhanesque notion of technology being an extension of the human needs to be reversed and consideration also given to how technologies feed back to the human, implode, and transform the human in and through their extension. As Sobchack suggests, cinematic and electronic screens differently demand and shape "our 'presence' to the world and our representation in it. Each differently and objectively alters our subjectivity while each invites our complicity in formulating space, time, and bodily investment as significant personal and social experience."³² That is to say that interactive technologies lead to an increasing 'biological confusion' between the human and their prostheses, and are a further phase in the electronic colonisation of the senses and our "psychasthenic absorption."³³ We might be incredulous then, to *The Truman Show's* humanist notion of a mental space free from the impact of technology and media ecology. It can be suggested that Truman's 'freedom' is actually just the move from one form of simulation into another: "he is not leaving the society of control, he merely exits from one institution."³⁴ If the film, as Foley argues, is "better understood as a variation of what is arguably *The Republic's* most important trope: the Allegory of the Cave,"³⁵ then it should be added that Truman merely leaves one cave and enters into another cave.

GATTACA

Gattaca is a sci-fi genetic engineering, biopolitical dystopia which foregrounds anxiety around 'the not-too-distant future' possibility of cloning and eugenics in the form of conceiving 'improved' children by genetic manipulation. The posthuman conflict and dilemma is set up from the very opening of the film with two contrasting quotes. The first is from *Ecclesiastes* 7: 13, "Consider God's handiwork: who can straighten what He hath made crooked?" The second is by Dr Willard Gaylin from an essay published in 1983

titled 'What's So Special About Being Human?': "I not only think that we will tamper with Mother Nature, I think Mother Nature wants us to." The film foregrounds future possibilities of epidemiological surveillance whereby genetic tampering is so commonplace that 'potentially prejudicial conditions' are eliminated. These include alcoholism, premature baldness, myopia, obesity, and a propensity to violence. In the original epilogue to the film, not included in the final cut, the film's thematic foundation is restated:

In a few short years, scientists will have completed the Human Genome Project, the mapping of all the genes that make up a human being. After 4 billion years of evolution by the slow and clumsy method of natural selection, we have now evolved to the point where we can direct our own evolution. If only we had acquired this knowledge sooner, the following people would never have been born: Homer, Blind from birth; Napoleon Bonaparte, Epileptic; Colette, Arthritic; Lou Gerhig, Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (Lou Gerhig's Disease); Rita Hayworth, Alzheimer's Disease; Helen Keller, Blind and Deaf; Stephen Hawking, Lou Gerhig's Disease; Jackie Joyner-Kersey, Asthmatic; Charles Darwin, Chronic invalid.

Two final sentences conclude the epilogue: "Even Charles Darwin, the man who told of the survival of the fittest, numbered amongst our frailest. Of course, the other birth that would surely never have taken place is your own."³⁶

The film's title is based on the first letters of guanine, adenine, thymine, and cytosine, the four nucleobases of DNA. The film can be seen to pose ethical questions around biological materialism and the concept of the human and genetic determinism. It explores the use of biometrics to construct the ideal human and the elimination of otherness by way of the eradication of 'in-valids' – or as they are also called in the film, 'de-generates' - susceptible to genetic 'disorders'. This is the cognitive and nanotechnological-neurological future. The advertising strapline of the film indicates where it sits in the posthuman debate: 'There is no gene for the human spirit.'

Baudrillard's disquiet with proto-cloning and the project of cloning and genetic manipulation is that, counter intuitively, on the pretext of immortality humanity may well be moving towards a slow extermination. "Human beings can't bear themselves, they can't bear their otherness, this duality."³⁷ For Baudrillard, the desire and ambition behind

cloning is actually the eradication of all ambiguity and radical otherness from the human. This is part of what Baudrillard has identified as the process of simulation. The ambiguous and enigmatic real is eradicated and superseded by the copy and the clone. In this sense Baudrillard can posit that cloning signals the move from human to posthuman, and is actually “an enterprise of self-immolation by technology,” which leads humanity into “the future primitive society of the digital.”³⁸

S1M0NE

S1m0ne is self-reflective upon film making processes and the possibilities of film and virtual reality. Al Pacino plays Viktor Taransky, a washed up film director. Taransky has become disillusioned with film making after having difficulties with the star of his new film. The actress is a demanding diva, eternally late, and eventually walks out of the film. Upon hearing this threat to the completion of the film, Taransky is visited by a ‘mad professor’ type. In a representation of posthuman film-theory, the professor reminds Taransky that they previously met at ‘The Future of Film conference’ in San Jose. “I was keynote speaker. You must remember my speech, ‘Who Needs Humans?’” Viktor faintly recognises this: “That’s right. You were booed off the stage.” Who does need humans however, when, as the professor claims, he has a computer program which can create ‘synthespians’. These are virtual actors called ‘vactors’. Viktor protests: “I need flesh.” “Flesh is weak”, the professor replies. The trope of the posthuman is made apparent insofar as the messiness, unpredictability, and uniqueness of the human actress can seemingly be replaced by the perfect, ordered, controllable posthuman virtual actress. This is a simulated clone with all otherness eradicated.

Taransky can now use a computer-generated ‘synthespian’ to replace the movie’s leading actress. The program is titled Simulation One, which is shortened and combined to name the virtual actress Simone. In the film title there is the use of the 1 and 0 of binary code to result in ‘S1m0ne’. Here Simone is without origin, reality, or index. As with virtual images produced by digital visual technologies there are no real-life referents. The virtual actress is deemed by critics and the public to give a flawless performance in the film and more is demanded. Taransky duly obliges, marketing her as a real person, and subsequent performances result in an Academy Award for Best Actress. She appears in

simulated interviews and as a hologram in a stadium performance. The machinery of celebrity celebration goes into spin without a real celebrity. Developments around the posthuman and technology are entwined with the political economy of Hollywood. Viktor exclaims, "See beyond that irrational allegiance to flesh and blood. See that with the rise in price of a real actor and the fall in price of a fake, the scales have tipped in favour of the fake."

The key piece of dialogue of the film, in terms of exemplifying anxiety around virtual reality, may be when Viktor excitedly says to Simone, "Do you have any idea what this means, Simone? Our ability to manufacture fraud now exceeds our ability to detect it." Simone replies, "I am the death of real." With caution, this could be considered Baudrillard's thesis in a nutshell. If virtual reality could speak it would say precisely this: 'I am the death of real.' Baudrillard's theoretical target is hyper-reality, simulation, and the virtual – manifestations of the semiotic - which reduces the symbolic and thwarts experience of the real. Self-referential sign systems, or simulation, obscures the symbolic and replaces the real. Baudrillard's concept of the symbolic resonates with the Lacanian Real, and what he often targets as 'reality' is largely equivalent with the Lacanian symbolic. In this sense, the 'real' is just as much a form of simulation as the hyper-real. The fundamental distinction is not between the real and the virtual, "but between the symbolic and the successive attempts to neutralise it – the real, the hyper-real and the virtual."³⁹ Digital media and virtual reality inform Baudrillard's notion of simulation insofar as the virtual is the 'fourth order' or highest stage of simulation. It is without origin, referent, index, or representation of the real. It is a semiotic system divorced from the real and is self-referential or hyper-real. The hyper-real comes to dictate matters, and finally the map does indeed precede the territory. For Baudrillard, the universe of simulation aims at "a virtual universe from which everything dangerous and negative has been expelled."⁴⁰ This distances one from the possibility of symbolic exchange, radical alterity, and duality.

Characteristics of Baudrillard's conception of the virtual include high definition, high fidelity, immersion, immanence, and immediacy.⁴¹ This is distinct to the notion of the spectacle, which still left room for a possible critical consciousness and demystification.⁴² Previously the virtual was intended to become actual, and actuality was its destination. However, today the function of the virtual is to proscribe the actual.⁴³ Indeed the virtual dimension monopolises all the other worlds today, and totalises the real by evacuating

any imaginary alternative.⁴⁴ With the virtual we enter not only upon the era of the liquidation of the real and the referential, but that of the extermination of the other.⁴⁵ Baudrillard's critique of the virtual is based upon this loss of the symbolic, the imaginary, and alterity. In posthuman-technology relations, individuals have become "terminals of multiple networks."⁴⁶ In this scenario, the posthuman is becoming the virtual reality of the machine, and at a certain level of immersion in the machinery of the virtual, the man/machine distinction no longer exists.⁴⁷ We are no longer actors of the real, but double agents of the virtual. The posthuman emerges as a prosthesis, an addition and application, to digital technology and the virtual. Generations steeped in the virtual, Baudrillard claims, will never have known the real.⁴⁸ In essence: "The human gives way to the post-human when the virtual replaces the actual as the primary mode by which we conceptualise and experience reality."⁴⁹

One further core exchange in *Simone* happens during an interview with Simone on a screen in a television studio. The interviewer asks the screen, "Who are you really?" Simone replies, "That's a good question. As Nietzsche said, 'Whenever a man strives long and hard to appear someone else, he ends up finding it is difficult to be himself again.'" This warning, albeit blunt, is the cautionary tale of the film, and the warning about the virtual. By immersing ourselves in the virtual and the digital, by becoming posthuman and inhuman, we may not finally find our way back to the real and back to the human. The allusion of Viktor Taransky to Victor Frankenstein is signposted, and the film, likewise, is a cautionary tale on science and technology. Originally Frankenstein harnessed the then new technology of electricity to create his 'monster', and Shelley's novel expresses anxiety about science and technology. Taransky harnesses technologies of the virtual in his creation, and the film expresses anxiety about new technologies of the virtual.

IN TIME

In Time is a sci-fi genetic engineering dystopia. It has been suggested that the film offers "a post-apocalyptic vision of a world that both is and is not recognisably our own."⁵⁰ The dystopia is an extrapolation and exacerbation of our world and denotes the apparent collapse of a coherent response to capitalism. In the film when someone turns twenty-five

years old they stop aging. They are engineered to live only one further year, when they will ‘time-out’ and die. However, in a mirror of neoliberal economic inequality, this engineered time can be bought and sold. The rich attain decades at a time while the poor beg borrow or steal just enough hours to make it through another day. As a time-rich character states, “For a few to be immortal, many must die” – the neoliberal analogy is the ‘for a few to be rich, many must be poor.’ Nicky Marsh has claimed that the film reimagines “the meaning of the biopolitical time of debt in the shadow of the [2008 financial] crisis.”⁵¹ The protagonist of *In Time* becomes a Robin Hood figure, attempting to actualise justice by slipping outside the flows of finance, and robbing from the rich to give to the poor.

In Time plays with the fantasy of mastering and ordering time, and treads the same ground as recent films such as *Inception* (2010), *Source Code* (2011) and *Looper* (2012). These films, and one would add others from *The Terminator* (1984) to *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004) and most recently *Interstellar* (2014), have been termed ‘Mind-Game’ films engendering their “own loops or Möbius strips.”⁵² This abstraction, displacement, reorganisation and playing with the apparent plasticity and possible compression of time and space is seen as an expression of the alienation of post-Fordist work and time. Franco ‘Bifo’ Berardi, influenced by Baudrillard’s notion of semicapital, argues that the transformation induced by the neoliberal digitalisation of the labour process leads to the fragmentation of the personal continuity of work, and the fractalisation and cellularisation of time: “The worker disappears as a person, and is replaced by abstract fragments of time.”⁵³ The film provides a vision of this scenario. In *In Time* time becomes a universal currency - ‘time is money’ – and can extend youth and provide a form of immortality. This is the posthuman and cryogenic fantasy of immortality. It is an attempt to eradicate the ambiguity and singularity of death, and eradicate the ambiguity and singularity of the human, all too human.

GOOD KILL

Good Kill explores the situation whereby a U.S. drone pilot could “commute to work in rush-hour traffic, slip into a seat in front of a bank of computers, ‘fly’ a warplane to shoot missiles at an enemy thousands of miles away, and then pick up the kids from school or a

gallon of milk at the grocery store on his way home for dinner.”⁵⁴ The film opens by inviting the viewer to assume they are seeing a real bombing mission only to track back and reveal a scene reminiscent of a 1990s internet café. The film utilises actual footage of drone strikes obtained from *Wikileaks*. Gregoire Chamayou has suggested that the ‘best definition’ of drones is “flying, high-resolution video cameras armed with missiles.”⁵⁵ This is a movie camera without a man and signals posthuman cinema at the level of form as well as content⁵⁶. The drone is a McLuhanesque extension of man’s fist and eye: “Their history is that of an eye turned into a weapon.”⁵⁷ In principle the drone, like much posthuman technology, can be employed progressively. However, whilst countless military drones have killed countless people, and its commercial potential is being exploited, the drone as a humanitarian tool delivering medical supplies, for instance, remains at time of writing, a fiction, as only an “optimistically rendered *Photoshop* image.”⁵⁸ Drones are what Braidotti would term a ‘neco-technology’⁵⁹ operated by “tele-thanatological warriors.”⁶⁰ Further, “[c]ontemporary death-technologies are posthuman because of the intense technological mediation within which they operate.”⁶¹ *Good Kill* poses the possibilities that Judith Butler has remarked upon. Intuitively we may think that persons wage war, not the instruments they deploy: “But what happens if the instruments acquire their own agency, such that persons become extensions of those instruments?”⁶² This is the posthuman reversal of man becoming a prosthesis to technology. Butler adds, “persons use technological instruments, but instruments surely also use persons (position them, endow them with perspective, and establish the trajectory of their actions).”⁶³

The lead character of *Good Kill* - Major Thomas Egan – lives and works in Las Vegas whilst killing and maiming in Afghanistan. Mediated technologies might liberate him from certain constraints of space and time but they also confine him to a screen and non-place. He experiences becoming a posthuman prosthesis to military technology, and this militarised (and masculine) posthuman cyborg warrior is in contrast with the optimistic possibilities of the posthuman cyborg enthused by Donna Haraway. Egan is a former traditional pilot who, on a ‘nonvoluntary basis,’ has become a drone pilot. He laments how the U.S. Air Force has become the “U.S. Chair Force.” Indeed, by 2012, the US Air Force was training, via computer simulations, more drone pilots than fighter and bomber pilots combined. Whilst downing vodka, Egan begins to question this posthuman condition and the ethics and effectiveness of the drone⁶⁴. He sinks into indifference, depression, and fatigue. The major dilemma, posed in the film to Egan by this virtual war,

is signalled in the advertising strapline to the film: "If you never face your enemy how can you face yourself?" This makes apparent that Egan's distress is deemed to come from mediated digitised screen relations that disrupt face-to-face relations. Egan is a veteran of six tours in a fighter jet and want to return to the actual "theatre of operation." His hardened commander declares that, "War is now a first-person shooter." "I am a pilot and I'm not flying," Egan bemoans. "Every day I feel like a coward taking a pot-shot at someone half way around the world." The drama Egan both creates and suffers in his home life - he becomes impotent - allows inclusion of the film into the genre identified by Wiegman as "missiles and melodrama."⁶⁵ We might also read into Egan's dilemma a mourning of the lost phallic potential of the drone, whereby mastery of mediated technology replaces immediate military dominance in the field.

The film's atmosphere, like the Las Vegas military cube, is airless and banal. The viewer is likely to become as bored and indifferent as Egan as they repeatedly view grainy shots of tiny figures scuttling followed by explosion and dust. The drone operators staring at multiple screens are analogous to the financial traders described by Tom Wolfe: "trying to monitor six screens at once, six screens that fan out three over three, obscuring any connection we have to the real world."⁶⁶ Indeed, the drone operator and the financial trader are emblematic figures of the posthuman condition. Both are cut off from the 'real world' effects of their operations and this mediation desensitises them from their actions. The drone missile kills or injures in several ways, including through incineration, shrapnel, and the release of powerful blast waves capable of crushing internal organs⁶⁷. Likewise, financial operations in the hyper-real economy⁶⁸ remove the trader from the effects their virtual labour such as precarious employment, exploitation, austerity, inequality, environmental damage, hardship, poverty, and so forth. If for the Afghanistan, "[t]he buzz of a distant propeller is a constant reminder of imminent death,"⁶⁹ then for many in the West, it is debt that functions as a drone in terms of the constant reminder of the psychic imprisonment of permanent surveillance and financial obedience.

In mediated war the alleged enemy now apparently resides in 'compounds' rather than 'homes.' They turn from being seen as real flesh and are instead rendered posthuman and deemed to be a legitimate target or not based on adherence or deviation from simulation models. These are 'pattern of life' indicators and there is a reliance on 'quantitative data' to determine the possibility of a 'signature strike.'⁷⁰ This is algorithmic regulation of behaviour: deviate from your normal pattern of everyday life – deviate from the

simulation model – and you will be suspect. Should one show ‘suspicious’ behaviour, and the supposed ‘signature’ of a terrorist, or merely be near someone who does, then one will be defined as a terrorist and targeted. The definition of the terrorist precedes the war act and hence produces the alleged ‘clean’ nature of drone strikes and supposed lack of collateral damage and civilian casualties. This is how, in virtual war, the model precedes and dictates the real. This loss of the human is precisely the threat that virtual posthuman war poses. The digital dimension of the drone must be emphasised: “The precision bomber as ‘posthuman’ suggests that both bomber and the people on his or her screen are flows of information on a screen – existing as texts or codes.”⁷¹ Indeed this is the basis upon which Lauren Wilcox would challenge the drone. The production of certain subjects through their integration in informational frameworks constituted by the practices of precision warfare suggests, “that a greater emphasis on ‘seeing’ the victims of warfare is not an adequate critique: it is the ‘coding’ of such people that matters.”⁷²

“If you never face your enemy how can you face yourself?” As the strapline implies, Egan’s war has no face, no place, and no time. Or rather this is posthuman anonymous war, infinite war, and global war against ‘terror.’ Egan’s nostalgic Levinasian appeal to face-to-face relations, or to Baudrillardian relations of duality, reveal how vacuous virtual mediated war (and peace) has become. The problems experienced with the virtual feed back into relations with his wife and children. Yet Egan’s remedy – to return to the “theatre of operation” is bad faith and disingenuous. The ‘real’ war that Egan wants to return to – presumably Iraq 2004 – was, as Baudrillard has suggested of the Gulf War 1991, always already virtual. Baudrillard, notoriously for some, had suggested that the Gulf War differed from, and altered the traditional ontology of war. The war was not a real contest but a virtual war - a mediated demonstration of the West’s technological and political dominance and the globalisation of its commercial interests. War turns into ‘war-processing’ and drifts into rationalisation and technicalisation. Like the drone seeking deviation from simulation models of ‘normal’ behaviour, force is not directed against real adversaries, but against abstract operations and definitions. Warfare has been supplanted for the model of warfare. As James Der Derian has suggested, the virtual revolution in war “is driven more by software than hardware, and enabled by networks rather than agents.”⁷³ There are digital ‘warriors’ in films and video game simulations on the one hand, and real-time broadcasting and TV images of ‘real war’ suffering on the other. Both are mediated directly into the living room and condition and reconcile us to, as

Baudrillard had anticipated, the Military-Industrial-Media-Entertainment complex. The Gulf War was not a war, it was “war stripped of its passions, its violence, by its technicians, and then reclothed by them with all the artifices of electronics.”⁷⁴ This virtual war revised the notion that “war is born of an antagonistic, destructive but dual relation between two adversaries.”⁷⁵ The Gulf War was conducted in part as a media spectacle. It is this unilateral, virtual war, which Egan paradoxically mourns and regards as a real war, with dual relations, which would restore his actuality, masculinity, power, and presence.

POSTHUMANIST PANIC CINEMA?

Scott Loren⁷⁶ has attempted to derive and define the genre of ‘posthumanist panic cinema’ with a consideration of films such as *2001 A Space Odyssey* (1968), *Alien* (1979), *Blade Runner* (1982), *eXistenZ* (1999), *Fight Club* (1999), *Vanilla Sky* (2001), *Minority Report* (2002), and concluding with *The Island* (2005). The genre is deemed a “millennial disease,”⁷⁷ and might be “conceived of as cinema that stages some form of threat to the liberal humanist subject’s authenticity.”⁷⁸ What is posthumanist panic cinema? “The term should indicate both cinema that depicts representations of the posthuman and threat to humanist philosophies and ideologies.”⁷⁹ As this definition makes clear the level of analysis remains upon content rather than form⁸⁰. It is ‘reactionary’ to philosophies of the posthuman, and tends to be positioned “anxiously in relations to logics of posthumanism and nostalgically, even desperately, in relation to tenets of humanism.”⁸¹ It is “not interested in decentring the human, nor in doing away with humanism. The dominant story has rather been one of anxiety regarding form of decentring.”⁸² It addresses itself “to the viewer-subject’s latent knowledge of its own decentrement.”⁸³ Apparently, this allows a “psychical working out”⁸⁴ of collective preoccupations about authenticity, agency, individualism, technology, subjectivity, social formations, locations of power, and so forth.

The films of Niccol function in such a way and could fit into such a genre definition. However they also indicate why Loren’s definition would need elaboration. Panic, in Loren, is deemed to be panic about the human becoming decentred or hybrid in some sense – rather than the form this decentrement or hybridity may actually take. That is to say that there does not seem to be the necessary decoupling of (philosophical) posthumanism and the (technological) posthuman. Niccol’s films express anxiety about

both of these processes. Loren's definition is insightful and useful but certain notions in his definition such as 'disease', 'reactionary', 'nostalgic', 'desperate', and 'anxiously' are concerning. Witness the notion that "posthuman cinema is alive, but not well – at least from a posthumanist perspective."⁸⁵ Implicit here is that things are 'not well' because the human subject is not reconciling itself to the decentred, hybrid, posthuman condition. It seems that Loren is implying that some form of certainty, or mastery, over the aporias of posthumanism can be obtained. The panicked human does not cohere with the readings of the posthuman condition as having potential for the human, and as the negative connotations imply, Loren seems to see this as bad faith or even a hysterical condition that requires 'psychical working out'. This notion then, disregards the more critical and disturbing visions of the convergence of posthumanist decentring, deterritorialisation, precarity, mediation, and flexibility, with the demands of the emergent neoliberal norm. For instance, Braidotti's notion of the potential presented by the posthuman offers a form of 'techno-happy,' 'techno-salvation.'⁸⁶ But this disavows that it emerges from a "position of considerable privilege" and more importantly it repeats the myth of "the humanist European project as a truly emancipatory affair."⁸⁷

Loren does not pursue the etymology of *panic* but in this context I find it significant that we get the word from the Greek god Pan. He was a half-man and half-goat, who was said to have scared and scattered the Persians when he appeared on the side of the Athenians in the Battle of Marathon. The adjective *panikos* (noun *panikon*) was used to describe an extreme sense of fear in an individual or a collective. Pan was both sacred and profane, a god and a man-goat. I find it insightful that so clearly an originary hybrid making undecidable the boundaries of the human and animal resonates with contemporary fears of the posthuman condition. This suggests that the 'psychical working out' of Loren's posthuman panic may take some time. Finally, in comparison to posthuman panic being seen problematically and worked out to a degree of satisfaction that enables the subject to function smoothly within the neoliberal flows of control, finance, and media, the panic could be considered more radical and possibly inventive in a way reminiscent of the slogan from Deleuze and Guattari: "Panic is creation."⁸⁸

In *Good Kill*, the humanist solution and ambition to escape to a real war, from a virtual war, mirrors Truman's escape from an oppressive virtual media ecology, and Taransky's escape from simulation, and the attempted escape from biopower in *Gattaca*, and the flows of neoliberal finance in *In Time*. I have suggested that each of Niccol's films,

exemplary products of posthuman cinema, foreground a posthuman dilemma and that the remedy to this is to be found in the attempt to return to an earlier untainted version of the human. Issues such as media surveillance and simulation (*Truman*) are to be solved with an apparently authentic real, a space beyond mediation, and an outside of media ecology. Cloning and genetic engineering (*Gattaca*) are to be faced with a notion of the human spirit that is not reducible to materiality. Virtual reality and digital media (*S1m0ne*) can be countered with an authentic identity, and actual rather than virtual reality. Despite biometrics and neoliberalism (*In Time*) there is still the possibility of stepping outside the flow of biopower and finance. Mediated war and unmanned aerial vehicles (*Good Kill*) can be opposed by face-to-face, rather than screen-to-screen, relationality, and actual war rather than virtual war. However, Baudrillard's work ups the ante of these dystopian visions of the posthuman future by suggesting that any escape is going to be foiled and merely signals the move from one simulation or virtual realm to another. That is to say that the spaces and places of humanist return are, in Baudrillard, now compromised and colonised by the posthuman. The humanist remedy is a fantasy and is something we no longer have recourse to because the human is now posthuman. "The loss of (spontaneous, reciprocal, symbolic) human relations is the fundamental fact of our societies,"⁸⁹ Baudrillard claims, utilising the radical anthropology of Durkheim, Mauss, and Bataille.⁹⁰ These spontaneous, reciprocal, symbolic, human (but not humanist) relations have been eroded by simulation, proto-cloning, virtual reality, digital media, semiocapital, and so on. The posthuman condition here, is one of subjugation, often self-subjugation, to surveillance, biopower, virtuality, neoliberalism, and the drone. This posthuman, closed off from radical alterity, suffers an eternity of the same – like the eternal torture of Prometheus – and is, in effect, rendered inhuman. The future deserves better.

¹ Andrew Niccol was born in 1964 in New Zealand and began his career directing television commercials. He subsequently developed the Oscar nominated script for *The Truman Show* but was considered too inexperienced to direct it himself. In an interesting twist, he later married Rachel Roberts the actress who plays the virtual real Simone in *S1m0ne*. As well as the five films considered here Niccol produced *The Terminal* (2004), directed by Stephen Spielberg, wrote and produced *Lord of War* (2005), and adapted Stephenie Meyer's novel, *The Host* (2013). *The Terminal* is based on the true story of a refugee trapped in an airport terminal for nearly two decades when he is denied entry to the host country. This might be seen as the stateless posthuman refugee who cannot stay but also cannot leave what Marc Augé would call a generic, transient, 'non-place.' The airport serves as the consumer society and American mall in microcosm: "There's only one thing you can do," says the man in control of immigration, "Shop." *Lord of War* features an arms dealer who distributes weapons so that major governments can deny involvement. The film opens with the

construction of a 7.62x39mm cartridge for an AK-47 in a Soviet Union weapons factory, set to the Buffalo Springfield protest song *For What It's Worth*. The cartridge is shipped to Africa and fired into the head of a child soldier. This is a noble critique of illegal arms dealing and trafficking, whereby arms are the consummate commodity of the neoliberal, post-border, posthuman age, and can be sold to both sides of a conflict. An onscreen postscript informs the viewer that private arms dealers account for less business than the United States, United Kingdom, Russia, France, and China - the five largest arms exporters and, ironically, the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council charged with the maintenance of international peace and security. *The Host* was a poorly received teenage-romance, sci-fi tale of the classic posthuman motif of the human race being taken over by small parasitic aliens. A pocket of unassimilated humans lead the small but successful resistance.

² Christopher Peterson, "The Posthumanism to Come," *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 16: 2: (2001): 127.

³ Anthony Miccoli, *Posthuman Suffering and the Technological Embrace* (Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books, 2010), 4.

⁴ Christopher Peterson, "The Posthumanism to Come," *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 16. 2 (2001): 127.

⁵ Cary Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 121.

⁶ Neil Badmington, "Approaching Posthumanism," in *Posthumanism*, ed. Neil Badmington (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 2.

⁷ Badmington "'...a drowning of the human in the physical': Jonathan Franzen and the corrections of humanism," *Subject Matters – A Journal of Communications and the Self* 3. 1 (2007): 11.

⁸ Badmington, "Introduction: posthuman conditions," *Subject Matters – A Journal of Communications and the Self* 3. 1 (2007): x.

⁹ Badmington, "Approaching Posthumanism," 7.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Elaine Graham, *Representations of the Post/Human: Monsters, Aliens, and Others in Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 2.

¹² Robert Pepperell, *The Post-Human Condition* (Exeter: Intellect Books, 1995), 1.

¹³ Francis Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future: Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution* (London: Profile, 2002), 7. Incidentally, what does Francis Fukuyama do after the end of history? "In his leisure hours, he puts together little drones in his garage and then proudly exhibits them on his blog." (Gregoire Chamayou, *Drone Theory* (London: Penguin, 2015), 77).

¹⁴ Badmington, "Mapping posthumanism," *Environment and Planning A* 36. 8 (2004): 1344-51.

¹⁵ For a critical questioning of this and exploration of 'posthumanism without technology,' see Ivan Callus and Stefan Herbrechter, "Critical posthumanism or, the inventio of a posthumanism without technology," *Subject Matters – A Journal of Communications and the Self* 3. 1 (2007): 15-29.

¹⁶ Bruce Clarke, "Posthuman metamorphosis: narrative and neocybernetics," *Subject Matters A Journal of Communications and the Self* 3. 1 (2007): 32.

¹⁷ Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (London: Polity Press, 2013), 11.

¹⁸ Baudrillard suggests that mediated technologies of virtualization and the 'obscene' pursuit of (hyper-) realism are problematic to the quality of the cinematic image. Baudrillard mourns the loss of cinema's mythic qualities, the loss of its 'magic appeal,' and the movement from "the most fantastic or mythical to the realistic and hyperrealistic." (Jean Baudrillard, "I Like the Cinema," *Baudrillard Live: Selected Interviews*, ed. Mike Gane (London: Routledge, 1993), 33). Further, see the collection of essays introduced by Jon Baldwin, "White Magic: Baudrillard and Cinema," *Film-Philosophy* 14. 2 (2010).

¹⁹ Jean Baudrillard, *Cool Memories V (2000–2005)* (Cambridge: Polity, 2006), 92.

²⁰ J. Macgregor Wise, "Mapping the Culture of Control," *Television and New Media* 3. 1 (2002): 35.

²¹ Baudrillard, *The Ecstasy of Communication* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1988), 20-21.

²² For Baudrillard, social media is, of course, anti-social. A Stanford University study suggests that when people are exposed to the internet they are turned into passive users, spending less time with friends and family. This is the loneliness of the screen society. (Andrew Koch, "Cyber citizen or cyborg citizen: Baudrillard, political agency, and the commons in virtual politics," *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* 20. 2/3, 2005): 159-75) Franco 'Bifo' Berardi notes that internet users tend to withdraw into a confined and homogeneous area of the 'blogosphere,' in order to "receive the kind of information and opinions which confirm our expectations and restate our conclusions." Further, considerable investment of time and mental energy in virtual activity is likely to lead to an "unravelling of de-socialisation, and an increasing misperception of the common space of physical and affective interaction." (Franco 'Bifo' Berardi, *Heroes: Mass Murder and Suicide* (London: Verso, 2015): 115-16).

²³ Peter Marks, "Imagining Surveillance: Utopian Visions and Surveillance Studies," *Surveillance and Society* 3. 2/3 (2005): 226.

- ²⁴ Baudrillard, *The Agony of Power* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2010).
- ²⁵ Baudrillard, *Screened Out* (London: Verso, 2002), 11.
- ²⁶ Ibid.
- ²⁷ Ibid., 12.
- ²⁸ J. Macgregor Wise, "Mapping the Culture of Control," *Television and New Media* 3. 1 (2002): 37.
- ²⁹ Ibid., 38.
- ³⁰ Baudrillard, *Paroxysm: Interviews with Phillipe Petit* (London: Verso, 1998), 134.
- ³¹ Baudrillard, *Telemorphosis* (Minneapolis: Univocal, 2011), 28.
- ³² Vivian Sobchack, "The Scene of the Screen: Envisioning Cinematic and Electronic 'Presence,'" *Electronic Media and Technoculture*, ed. John Thornton Caldwell (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 138.
- ³³ William Merrin, "Speculating to the Death: Machinic Integration and Transformation Within A Virtualized Reality," *International Journal of Baudrillard Studies* 4. 2 (2007).
- ³⁴ Macgregor Wise, "Mapping the Culture of Control," *Television and New Media* 3. 1 (2002): 42.
- ³⁵ Michael P. Foley "Plato, Christianity, and the Cinematic Craft of Andrew Niccol," *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* 9. 2 (2006): 53.
- ³⁶ Ibid., 49-50.
- ³⁷ Baudrillard, *Exiles from Dialogue (with Enrique Valiente Noailles)* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 35.
- ³⁸ Ibid., 36.
- ³⁹ William Pawlett, "Virtual," *The Baudrillard Dictionary*, ed. Richard G. Smith (Edinburg: Edinburg University Press, 2010), 238.
- ⁴⁰ Baudrillard, *The Intelligence of Evil or The Lucidity Pact* (London: Berg, 2005), 202.
- ⁴¹ Ibid., 31.
- ⁴² Baudrillard, *The Perfect Crime* (London: Verso, 1996), 27.
- ⁴³ Baudrillard, *The Vital Illusion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 50.
- ⁴⁴ Baudrillard, *Paroxysm: Interviews with Phillipe Petit* (London: Verso, 1998), 50.
- ⁴⁵ Baudrillard, *The Perfect Crime*, 107.
- ⁴⁶ Baudrillard, *Paroxysm*, 16.
- ⁴⁷ Baudrillard, *The Intelligence of Evil*, 80.
- ⁴⁸ Baudrillard, *Cool Memories V*, 55.
- ⁴⁹ Kim Toffoletti, "Anti-Humanism + Post-Humanism," *The Baudrillard Dictionary*, ed. Richard G. Smith (Edinburg: Edinburg University Press, 2010), 16
- ⁵⁰ Nicky Marsh, "Paradise falls: a land lost in time: representing credit, debt and work after the crisis," *Textual Practice* 28. 7: 1190.
- ⁵¹ Ibid., 1191.
- ⁵² Thomas Elsaesser, "The Mind-Game Film," *Puzzle Films: Complex Storytelling in Contemporary Cinema*, ed. Warren Buckland (London: Wiley, 2009), 46.
- ⁵³ Franco 'Bifo' Berardi, *Heroes: Mass Murder and Suicide* (London: Verso, 2015), 138.
- ⁵⁴ Matt J. Martin (and Charles W. Sasser), *Predator: The Remote-Control Air War Over Iraq and Afghanistan: A Pilot's Story* (Minneapolis: Zenith Press, 2010), 2.
- ⁵⁵ Chamayou, *Drone Theory*, 15.
- ⁵⁶ Most discussion of posthuman cinema, regrettably this one included, remain at the level content. However, William Brown, for instance, stresses the importance to see certain contemporary cinema as posthumanist not only in terms of content but in terms of form and production. Digital special effects, for instance, free the possibilities of the 'camera' from the limitations of the human 'camera-man.' Further, digital cinema and the virtual camera produces "nonanthropocentric spaces and times." (William Brown, *Supercinema: Film Philosophy for the Digital Age* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2013), 3) Steven Shaviro has also indicated a posthuman post-cinema at the level of form. Post-cinema does not offer a classical work in which the "screen is a window upon a represented world, nor a modernist work (...) that reflexively focuses upon the materiality of the screen itself as a surface." (Steven Shaviro, "Post-Cinematic Affect: On Grace Jones, Boarding Gate and Southland Tales," *Film-Philosophy* 14. 1 (2010): 16) The space presented by post-cinema is 'radically different' from any previous cinematic space. Analogue photography and film are indexical, that is, they 'transcribe or document rather than represent.' But such "is no longer the case for digital video...[post-cinema] generates its own space." (Ibid., 17) Whereas classical cinema was analogical and indexical, "digital video is processual and combinatorial." (Ibid., 18) Whereas analogue cinema was about the duration of bodies and images, "digital video is about the articulation and composition of forces." (Ibid., 18) Crucially, Shaviro notes how contemporary 'post-cinema' techniques are linked with neoliberalism: "Just as the old Hollywood continuity editing system was an integral part of the Fordist mode of production, so the editing methods and formal devices of digital video and film belong directly to the computing-and-information-technology infrastructure of contemporary neoliberal finance." (Ibid., 3) There is a parallelism, in Spinoza's sense: "Intensive [post-cinematic]

affective flows and intensive financial flows alike invest and constitute subjectivity.” (Ibid., 6) Echoing Lyotard and Deleuze, “Libidinal flows are coextensive with financial ones.” (Ibid., 49) Shaviro suggests the contemporary social field sees the coming together of financial flows, media flows, and flows of control. These “generate subjectivity and they play a crucial role in the valorisation of capital.” (Ibid., 3) The flow of control “is characterised by perpetual modulations, dispersed and ‘flexible’ modes of authority, ubiquitous networks and the relentless branding and marketing of even the most ‘inner’ aspects of subjective experience.” (Ibid., 8) The flows of finance, media, and control, are at once impalpable and immediate. They are ‘invisible abstractions’, existing only as calculations in the “worldwide digital network and detached from any actual productive activity.” (Ibid., 8) Yet they are also brutally material in their ‘efficacy,’ “or in their impact upon our lives – as the current financial crisis makes all too evident.” (Ibid., 8) In order to explore the space/time of flows and forces of control, finance, and media, and to accurately render both its ‘abstraction and its tactility,’ and thereby to cleave to the ‘Real of global capital,’ Bazinian realism must be abandoned. The very obstacles being “its long shots, its ‘composition in depth’ (...), and its objective points of view.” (Ibid., 38) For all this, and its contemporary nature, it could be suggested that posthuman post-cinema is anticipated and actualised in much animation of the 20th Century.

⁵⁷ Chamayou, *Drone Theory*, 15.

⁵⁸ Adam Rothstein, *Drone (Object Lessons)* (New York and London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 9.

⁵⁹ Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, 9.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 126.

⁶¹ Ibid., 9.

⁶² Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (London: Verso, 2010), x.

⁶³ Ibid., xii.

⁶⁴ A Pakistani Taliban Leader is reported to have said, “I spent three months trying to recruit and only got 10 – 15 persons. One U.S. drone attack and I got 150 volunteers.” (Chamayou, *Drone Theory*, 69) Far from making the world a safe place, the drone shifts the ‘burden of risk’ from a ‘casualty-averse military force’ and onto the unprotected civilian populace. (Ibid., 76).

⁶⁵ Robyn Wiegman, “Missiles and Melodrama (Masculinity and the Televisual War),” *Seeing Through the Media: The Persian Gulf War*, ed. Linda Rabinovitz (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 171-187.

⁶⁶ Tom Wolfe. “Where Did All Our Power Go?” *The Sunday Times Magazine* (10.02.2013), 27.

⁶⁷ Survivors often suffer disfiguring burns and shrapnel wounds, limb amputations, as well as vision and hearing loss. As one report states: “There were pieces — body pieces — lying around. There was lots of flesh and blood...[all one could do was] collect pieces of flesh and put them in a coffin.” <http://www.livingunderdrones.org/living-under-drones/> [Accessed 1/4/2015]

⁶⁸ Jon Baldwin, *The Financial Crash and Hyper-Real Economy* (New York: Thought Catalog, 2013).

⁶⁹ Chamayou, *Drone Theory*, 44.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 50.

⁷¹ Lauren Wilcox, *Bodies of Violence: Theorizing Embodied Subjects in International Relations* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 164.

⁷² Ibid., 150.

⁷³ James Der Derian, *Virtuous War: Mapping the Military-Industrial-Media-Entertainment Network* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), xiv.

⁷⁴ Baudrillard, *The Gulf War Did not Take Place* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 64.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 62.

⁷⁶ The notion of a humanist response to a posthumanist dilemma in cinema is familiar. Loren is following Neil Badmington who has linked the science fiction film and posthumanism. Badmington suggests that concomitant with the philosophical anti-humanism of the 1950s, was the anxiety of the crisis in humanism expressed and explored in popular culture. “Humanism was in trouble – Hollywood knew this but took refuge in denial.” (Neil Badmington, “Approaching Posthumanism,” in *Posthumanism*, ed. Neil Badmington (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 8) In classic science fiction films such as *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956), *Them!* (1954), *War of the Worlds* (1953), and *The Blob* (1958), man faced a variety of threats from an inhuman other. Man’s position at the centre was at risk from an alien other ready to take over invade, and occupy man. In a scenario mirrored in much science fiction cinema of the contemporary age, to this posthuman anxiety was the remedy of humanism: “the aliens were always defeated, frequently by a uniquely ‘human’ quality.” (Ibid., 7) This is the reoccurring scenario in the films of Niccol.

⁷⁷ Scott Loren, “Posthuman Panic Cinema – Defining a Genre,” in Julian Straub (ed.) *Paradoxes of Authenticity – Studies on a Critical Concept*, ed. Julia Straub (Bielefeld: Transcrip, 2012), 161. It may well be that this ‘millennial disease’ has now passed and that contemporary audiences are simply fatigued, bored, and indifferent to further elaborations of the decentring, and merging of the human with another form.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 163.

⁸⁰ By concentrating on content Loren perhaps misses how the form can mitigate against competent 'working out'. As Baudrillard would suggest, technology as an extension of man comes back into and informs, transforms, and subjugates man. Further imbuelement in digital technology, post-cinema, and flows of control, finance, and media, can challenge the very possibility of the space, distance, and critical reflection required by the two phases of 'psychical working out': recognising resistances (insight) and overcoming resistances (change). Indeed, the very notion of 'psychical working out' seems rather retrograde and implies correction, cooperation, and conciliation to the posthuman condition: one must learn to live with the conditions that once caused panic. This recourse to a psychoanalytical register and psychiatrist's tool is concerning. Can the concept carry from the psychiatrist's couch to posthuman post-cinema seat? I would suggest that 'working out' needs some 'thinking out'.

⁸¹ Loren, "Posthuman Panic Cinema," 164.

⁸² Ibid., 165.

⁸³ Ibid., 181.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 164.

⁸⁶ Ingrid M. Hoofd, "Between Baudrillard, Braidotti and Butler: Rethinking Left-Wing Feminist Theory in Light of Neoliberal Acceleration," *International Journal of Baudrillard Studies* 7. 2 (2010).

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (London and New York: Continuum, 1988), 73.

⁸⁹ Baudrillard, *America* (London: Verso, 1988), 161.

⁹⁰ Baldwin, "Lessons from Witchetty Grubs and Eskimos: The French Anthropological Context of Jean Baudrillard," *French Cultural Studies* 19. 3 (2008): 333-346.