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edited by Patrícia Castello Branco

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ABSTRACTS

THE CINEMATIC LIFE OF THE FIGURAL: MAPPING SHAPES OF TIME IN TERRENCE MALICK'S *THE NEW WORLD* (2005)

Gabriella Blasi (The University of Queensland)

This article investigates Terrence Malick's cinematic treatment of nature in *The New World* and argues that cinema, as a figural technology, disrupts the Kantian time-space division informing modernist and postmodernist conceptions of the nature/culture divide. The argument takes Robert Sinnerbrink's and Iain Macdonald's divergent readings of Terrence Malick's *The New World* and shows how a figural approach can overcome the nature/culture divide informing romantic (Sinnerbrink) and nihilistic (Macdonald) approaches to Malick's treatment of human-nature relations. In using historical and romanticised figural gestures such as Pocahontas and John Smith, Malick's film disrupts perception, sensations and significations associated with ideological and mythic readings of the tainted legend, and opens these gestures to their cinematic life. The argument draws on applications of Peter Fenves' work on Benjamin's conception of the turn of time to figural experiences of films. In order to illustrate the significance of Fenves' study in film-philosophy, the analysis will pause at Malick's use of the map-territory relation in the title sequences of *The New World*. A figural approach to the map-territory relation will crystallise time as a Benjaminian sphere of total neutrality, a non-subjective continuity of experience able to produce a temporal reduction that does not reside in subjective intentionality. Benjamin's shape of time illuminates a vision of nature beyond nihilism and delusional romantic ideals, it contributes to a more defined philosophical role of the figural in film-philosophy and opens the film's figural gestures to their posthumous and, indeed, posthuman, temporal plasticity.

Keywords: Time, Phenomenology, Walter Benjamin, Terrence Malick, Nature-culture relations.

ON SOME POSTHUMAN MOTIFS IN WALTER BENJAMIN: MICKEY MOUSE, BARBARISM AND TECHNOLOGICAL INNERVATION

Daniel Mourenza (University of Leeds)

This article discerns some posthuman motifs in Walter Benjamin's writings on film and analyzes them in dialogue with recent literature on posthumanism. I argue that, from his early anthropological texts, Benjamin devised what can be considered a posthuman theme: the idea of the creation of a collective body *in* and *through* technology. It is, nonetheless, in his writings on film that he sets out most fully how this technological innervation into the body of the collective should occur, in this case through a rush of energy through the body of the audience. The arena of cinema reception appears in this way as a paradigmatic space in which to adapt technology into the collective body of the audience. However, cinema reception is only a rehearsal for what could exist for real in the revolution, when the collective attempts to gain mastery over the new techno-body. In this new reconfiguration of humanity, traditional formations such as families and nations would be discarded. I thus suggest that Benjamin's theory finds an echo in current feminist and postcolonial posthuman authors.

In this article, I will particularly focus on the period of the "destructive character" in Benjamin's oeuvre (1931-1933), in which he develops a fierce critique of bourgeois humanism and conceives the posthuman figures of the inhuman and the positive barbarian, of which Mickey Mouse is a privileged advocate. For Benjamin, Mickey Mouse and his friends were examples of what human beings would resemble once they had merged with technology. Thus, I will argue that Benjamin's theories around technology, the human body and cinema are useful in reconsidering our relationship with nature and technology in a (desirable, rather than actual) posthuman condition.

Keywords: Walter Benjamin; posthumanism; barbarism; Mickey Mouse; technological innervation.

HUMAN/CYBORG/ALIEN/FRIEND: POSTWAR *RESSENTIMENT* IN JAPANESE SCIENCE FICTION AND POSTHUMAN ETHICS IN *KAMEN RIDER FOURZE*

Se Young Kim (University of Iowa)

This essay examines the television and film series *Kamen Rider Fourze* (2011-2012), approaching it within its role in the larger mode of *tokusatsu* filmmaking in Japanese science fiction. *Tokusatsu* or "special filming" consists of live-action science fiction narratives that heavily feature special effects. Evident in the way that the first *tokusatsu* text, *Gojira* (1954, Honda Ishirō), refers to the U.S. hydrogen bomb tests at Bikini Atoll that killed twenty-three fishermen, the mode shares a deep connection with its historical context and is continually haunted by the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. As the bombings did nothing less than force the Japanese to reconsider the contours of their own humanity, going so far as to engender new identities such as the *hibakusha* or "bomb-affected people," the concern with humanism becomes a core component for *tokusatsu*. In the imaginary of science fiction, an emasculated nation reactualizes national trauma, copes with the anxiety of complete disarmament following the Potsdam Declaration, and coopts the technonationalist interest in science and technology that motivated the postwar rebuilding effort. While the atomic bombs pushed Japan past the limits of humanity, *tokusatsu* dreams of the possibility of new forms of life through colorful monsters and cyborg superheroes. Actualizing the fantasy of rearmament, these new creatures embody the desire of postwar Japanese science fiction and reveal it to be a cinema of Nietzschean *ressentiment*.

This essay simultaneously reads *Kamen Rider Fourze* as a representative of this history and a radical break. Drawing on the work of Donna Haraway, Martin Heidegger, and Jacques Derrida among others, this essay initially places *Kamen Rider Fourze* in this long tradition of postwar Japanese moving image culture. Like much of *tokusatsu*, *Kamen Rider Fourze* depicts a Japan under attack and details the rise of a teenage cyborg superhero. And although the hero of *Kamen Rider Fourze* decries Japanese disarmament and realizes the desire for a final weapon, the series actually moves into a radical space that hews much closer to Donna Haraway's notion of the cyborg. Those politics are facilitated by *Fourze*'s alternative comportment to technology where technology does not merely operate as weaponry that obliterates the alien, enemy Other. Instead, technology functions as Heidegger's *techné* and reveals the violent, binaristic, hierarchizing character of humanism. *Fourze* thus pushes past the resentful slave morality of World War II, opting instead for ethics that are framed around posthuman politics and the ethos of friendship. In the end, *Kamen Rider Fourze* points not only to a break in national trauma, but also to

nothing less than the potentiality of a different mode of cinema that reorients the relationship between Self and Other.

Keywords: *Kamen Rider*, Japanese science fiction, posthumanism, Martin Heidegger, the politics of friendship

THE HARD TECHNOLOGICAL BODIES OF *ELYSIUM* AND *EDGE OF TOMORROW*

Aaron Tucker (Ryerson University)

Susan Jefford's work on Reagan-era action movies established the "hard body" as the over-muscled biological spectacle that functioned as a unifying force for both "a type of national character" and "the nation itself." The "mastery" that the hard body represented is echoed in the equally spectacular hard technological bodies of the exoskeleton-enhanced protagonists of *Elysium* and *Edge of Tomorrow*. While Jeffords argued that the 80s hard body was deeply suspicious of "technological innovation" as a possible polluter of the hard body's individualism, the contemporary hard technological body freely blends its biological body with wearable and networked technologies to become an effective military assemblage that has morphed its mastery from international and physical conflicts to virtual and borderless ones.

Different from the all-encasing machine "suits" of Iron Man and Robocop, the combat exoskeleton is a literal "man-in-the-middle" soldier that deliberately melds the human and the machine so that the biological and the technological are visible simultaneously. This paper briefly tracks representations of the exoskeleton through *Aliens, The Matrix Revolutions* and *Avatar*, before focusing on *Elysium* and *Edge of Tomorrow*. These two latest films showcase biological muscle combined with and augmented by a technological apparatus which, when combined, generate an updated spectacle still deeply rooted in the problematic 80s hard body. Such a figure is not the healthy symbiotic posthuman that N. Katherine Hayles promotes. Instead, the hard technological body, in an attempt to heroically reassert human exceptionalism, treats his/her computerized technologies as tools to be conquered and then weapons to conquer with.

Keywords: hard body, military technology, posthuman, exoskeleton, combat

POSTHUMANIST PANIC CINEMA? THE FILMS OF ANDREW NICCOL

Jon Baldwin (London Metropolitan University)

This article discusses the posthuman imagery in Niccol's films with reference to Baudrillard's reading of the posthuman condition. It begins with a discussion and uncoupling of the notions of posthumanism and the posthuman. Focus turns to the films of Niccol. It is proposed 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*, 1998), cloning and genetic engineering (*Gattaca*, 1997), virtual reality and digital media (*S1m0ne*, 2002), biometrics and neoliberalism (*In Time*, 2011), and mediated war and unmanned aerial vehicles (*Good Kill*, 2014). Variants of the humanist solution to these issues include an authentic real, 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*). Baudrillard's work 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 proposed genre of 'posthumanist panic cinema.' However, the conclusion suggests that the construction of this genre needs reconsideration in terms of the identification and function of such a genre.

Keywords: posthumanist panic cinema, Andrew Niccol, genre, surveillance, virtual reality, drone, Baudrillard.

POSTHUMANISM IN MATTHEW BARNEY'S *CREMASTER* CYCLE: AUTOPOIESIS AND THE "HERMETIC STATE"

Irina Chkhaidze (University College London)

This article analyses Matthew Barney's *Cremaster* cycle (1994-2002) as a film series including its accompanying multimedia works, arguing for the posthumanist orientation of the cycle on structural and thematic levels of the narrative, as well as the use of material. As an interdisciplinary critique in the humanities and social sciences, posthumanism is set against the anthropocentric discourse of humanism and its speciesist structures that reproduce the normative human subject through the dichotomy of humanity/animality. Looking at how the cycle represents nonhuman and human beings, and environments from a specific perspective is pertinent for situating the work in the context of recent posthumanist theories, particularly as articulated in Cary Wolfe's writing. Furthermore, in my discussion of a multifaceted self-referential system of the cycle and a recurrent theme of the "hermetic state", I rely on the concepts developed by German second-order systems theorist Niklas Luhmann who introduced a radically posthumanist view into social theory, especially his notion of autopoietic systems combining operational closure and structural openness. Drawing on this theoretical framework I argue that the *Cremaster* cycle embodies a complex self-referential narrative in tension between differentiation and undifferentiation, where ideas of biological development as well as conventional species boundaries are disrupted through a radically nonanthropocentric depiction. Through the analysis of Barney's project, I observe how these theoretical paradigms destabilising humanist notion of subjectivity have been taken up in contemporary art and how, by directly engaging our perception, these works are contributing to the wider posthumanist debate.

Keywords: Posthumanism, contemporary art, second-order systems theory, autopoiesis, Matthew Barney, Niklas Luhmann, Cary Wolfe, Bruce Clarke.

REDISCOVERING OUR HUMANITY: HOW THE POSTHUMAN NOIR ANIME *DARKER THAN BLACK* SUBVERTS THE TROPES OF FILM NOIR TO REAFFIRM A HUMANIST AGENDA

Maxine Gee (University of York)

There is an inherent contradiction at the heart of *posthuman noir* in Anglo-American film and Japanese anime; this sub-genre focuses on science fictional futures where characters

have moved beyond the traditional boundaries of what is considered human; however, the emphasis is often on more typically human traits of emotion and irrationality and their awakening/re-awakening in these posthuman characters. This hints that the sub-genre is not in fact positing a truly posthumanist standpoint but reaffirming an older humanist one, assuaging fears that what is traditionally considered human still has a place in these technologically advanced worlds.

Posthuman noir is concerned with the fears and possibilities afforded by the modification of the humanity and how human nature is preserved or perpetuated through these changes. These concerns are presented through adopting elements found in the traditional film noir corpus—spanning from *The Maltese Falcon* (J. Huston, 1941) to *A Touch of Evil* (O. Wells, 1958)—and adapting or subverting them.

This article will examine, through a case study of Tensai Okamura's *Darker Than Black*, two specific areas where the anthropocentric agenda of *posthuman noir* is particularly evident—narrative structure and characterisation. To examine these ideas three areas of critical debate are initially explored; the sub-genre of *posthuman noir* is introduced and defined; pertinent philosophical and ontological questions of what it means to be posthuman, transhuman and posthumanist are identified; and finally, relevant issues relating to the contested genre of film noir are raised. These theories are applied to *Darker Than Black* to demonstrate how *posthuman noir* validates the continuing status of the human at the centre of focus in science fictional posthuman futures.

Keywords: anime, posthuman, film noir, anthropocentric, Tensai Okamura

ZOMBIE CINEMA AND THE ANTHROPOCENE: POSTHUMAN AGENCY AND EMBODIMENT AT THE END OF THE WORLD

Phillip McReynolds (UNC Charlotte)

The Anthropocene, the name for our current geological epoch proposed by Crützen and Stoermer, poses significant challenges to traditional humanistic conceptions of human agency and embodiment. The claim that these and other scientists make is that human beings as a species have, beginning with the industrial revolution, made impacts upon the biosphere on a planetary scale equivalent in magnitude and duration to those of (other)

natural forces such as glaciation, plate tectonics, and asteroid strikes. The implication of this discovery is that these human effects are of such a scale that they are no more subject to human control, intelligence, and agency than are other forces of nature. On this view human beings aren't so much actors as actants, producing far ranging effects in concert with other non-human actants. Thus, ironically the Anthropocene, literally the epoch of the human, is the first posthuman epoch.

In this paper I argue that the cinematic trope I will refer to as "the fast zombie" of recent zombie cinema serves as a figure for the posthuman in the age of the Anthropocene. I trace the lineage of the cinematic zombie, the first movie monster without precedent in non-cinematic art forms, from the "voodoo zombie" of the thirties and forties, through the "slow zombie" of George Romero and Romero-inspired films, to the fast zombie of the post millennial era. Despite the differences among these monsters I claim that they share a common lineage, common features, and collectively provide a fictional analogue to social and economic forces that have led to our current environmental crisis.

In brief, the voodoo zombie of the early zombie movies such as *White Zombie* (1932) and *I Walked with a Zombie* (1943) serves as a signifier for slavery and colonization. The trope of the voodoo zombie, whether reanimated or merely drugged, stands in place of the slave, deprived of agency and doomed to a life (or death) of alienated labor in service of a master, the voodoo priest. The slow zombie of the Romero films – *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), *Dawn of the Dead* (1978), and *Day of the Dead* (1985) – also signifies alienated labor deprived of agency and subjectivity yet now presented as a shambling force under the control of no human intellect. This zombie represents a threat to the civilized order en masse as well as a fear of contamination. The work of the slow zombie is to reproduce itself through consumption. The figure of the fast zombie found in post millennial cinema in films such as *28 Days Later* (2002), *World War Z* (2013) and the remake of *Day of the Dead* (2008) signify a fear of contagion occurring under deterritorialization (Deleuze and Guattari), abject masses swarming over borders and laying waste to the countryside by sheer force of numbers.

What these different types of zombies share is an excess of embodiment. In this way they represent an antidote to the disembodied, technophilic posthumanism of the cyborg cinema of the 1990s and early 2000s. Whereas the latter represent the intellect dematerialized (Hayles), the former represent embodiment run amok. In addition, insofar

as colonization and slavery provided the capital for the industrial revolution, which in turn is the direct cause of anthropogenic climate change, the evolution of the cinematic zombie marks a fictional trace of the human and posthuman forces that have brought about the Anthropocene.

Keywords: Posthumanism, Zombies, Anthropocene, Agency, Cinema

ARTICLES | ARTIGOS

THE CINEMATIC LIFE OF THE FIGURAL: MAPPING SHAPES OF TIME IN TERRENCE MALICK'S *THE NEW WORLD* (2005)

Gabriella Blasi (The University of Queensland)

For space, too, is a temporal concept.
— Paul Klee[1]

INTRODUCTION

What remains debated in the extensive literature on Terrence Malick's films is the metaphysics informing Malick's complex treatment of nature-culture relations in his films. Kit and Holly's vain escape through the badlands in Montana (*Badlands* 1973), biblical plagues in *Days of Heaven* (1978), different philosophical views on law and violence in *The Thin Red Line* (1998), cosmic and human temporalities in *The Tree of Life* (2011), and consuming moral dilemmas of love (or lack thereof) in the deeply alienated twenty-first century settings of *To The Wonder* (2014) and *Knight of Cups* (2015). As Iain Macdonald's work on Malick's *The New World* suggests, although many critics acknowledge nature as one of Malick's fundamental motifs and themes, very few have "directly purported the metaphysics and 'the problem of nature'"[2] in Malick's oeuvre. Operating within this critical and philosophical gap of the problem of nature, this article frames the analysis of Terrence Malick's *The New World* within a posthumanist discourse on aesthetic experiences. William Brown states that "[p]osthumanist discourse seeks to displace old, anthropocentric theories and practices with new, posthuman considerations of mankind and its creative endeavours, be they technological or artistic."[3] In this framework, this article maintains that Walter Benjamin's philosophy of time and art is particularly productive for an illumination of Terrence Malick's treatment of nature in his cinema. Contrary to modernist and nostalgic conceptions of film technologies as the primary cause of humans' alienation and loss of archaic unity and harmony with the world and

nature, second technology, for Benjamin,[4] is a possibility of a positive relation to *techne* and renewed relation to nature in the present world.

Thus, the paper specifically investigates Malick's use of cinema to deal with issues of nature-culture relations in *The New World* (2005). In narrowing the scope of the investigation to nature-culture relations, both Robert Sinnerbrink's and Iain Macdonald's readings will be foregrounded for their respective, although divergent, philosophical positions on Malick's film. Sinnerbrink argues that *The New World* "recalls the kind of 'aesthetic mythology' called for by the early German romantics in response to the crisis of reason and meaning afflicting the modern world," and concludes that the legend of Pocahontas and John Smith "provides the opportunity to develop the allegorical significance of the theme of marriage and the possibility of reconciliation between cultures or, more deeply, between human culture and nature."[5] For Sinnerbrink, Malick's retelling of the tainted legend is, in fact, a deliberate "attempt to immerse us in the imagined experience of this mythic moment of contact between old and new worlds and to transfigure this tainted myth of intercultural encounter through the aesthetic power of cinematic poetry."[6] On the other hand, Macdonald argues that, "*The New World* asks the viewer to look upon what occurs in the narrative, on the level of appearances […] as nature *itself* or, better, as nature expressing itself as reason in history."[7] Moving on from these two divergent premises, this paper asks: is this "reconciliation" and "transfiguration"[8] between humans and nature really possible through an aesthetic approach to film? Does cinema interfere with–or alter–romantic and nihilistic visions of nature and life?

Drawing on D. N. Rodowick's account of the figural in film-philosophy[9] and Peter Fenves work on Benjamin's concept of plastic time,[10] this paper contends that cinema does, indeed, play a crucial role in the redefinition of nature-culture interplays beyond romantic and nihilistic approaches to nature. It argues that cinema enables a non-anthropocentric and non-subjective vision of the plasticity of time thereby disclosing a redefinition of the modernist space-time paradigm in contemporary culture. In order to concretely exemplify the novelties of Benjamin's figural and temporal approach to nature-culture relations in films, the analysis pauses at Malick's use of a sixteenth-century map in the initial and final title sequences of *The New World*. Malick's cinematic map evokes, subverts and reshapes the Kantian nature/culture divide ingrained in modernist/postmodernist visions of the map-territory relationship. Through a detailed

application of Benjamin's temporal reduction in film-philosophy — with its explicit relation (and distance) to Husserl's phenomenology — this article concludes that Benjamin's shape of time illuminates Malick's *The New World* as a cinematic possibility of new, non-anthropocentric approaches to nature-culture relations in the present world.

TIME AND THE FIGURAL

In the introduction to the edited work *After Images of Gilles Deleuze's Film-Philosophy*, Rodowick clarifies the relevance and link between his work on the figural and a Deleuzian philosophy of time:

> In *Reading the Figural*, I suggest that the movement-image and the time-image are not historical concepts and that it is misleading to conceive of the latter as following the former along a chronological time line. The two concepts do suggest, however, divergent philosophies of history owing to their different relations to the Whole and to their immanent logics of image and sign … The movement-image has a history in a dialectically unfolding teleology. It progresses to a point where it logically completes its semiotic options … But the time-image pursues another logic altogether. Expressed as eternal return, the recurrent possibility in each moment of time for the emergence of the new and unforseen.[11]

Contrary to most film-historical readings of the time-image and the movement-image, Rodowick reads Deleuze's cinema images philosophically. On the one hand, the movement-image of classical cinema, for Rodowick, entails a Hegelian conception of time and history. On the other hand, the time-image of post-war cinema is inscribed within a Nietzschean genealogical perspective where linearity and teleology leave the scene in favour of a new, non-linear and recurrent logic of time. Following Rodowick, the perceptual realism of the film-image (its indexical or virtual relation to space that distinguishes analogue and digital technologies, for example) is irrelevant: "the experience of film returns to us the forms and *shapes of time as change* in its singularity, contingency and open-endedness [emphasis added]."[12] Thus, the Deleuzian shift from the

study of images of movement in space to the study of *images of time* in films inaugurates a new set of ethical and aesthetic considerations on films.

In philosophical terms, for Rodowick, the Deleuzian shift translates from a Hegelian conception of historicity to a Nietzschean concept, "[the movement-image and the time-image] do suggest, … divergent philosophies of history owing to their different relations to the Whole [namely, Hegelian and Nietzschean relations to the whole].[13] While Deleuze's and, indeed, Rodowick's work remain essential, for this reader, to an understanding of the importance of time in film-philosophy, this article proposes Walter Benjamin's notion of time [14] as a suitable concept in tackling the "the problem of nature" and history in Malick's *The New World*. Before turning to Fenves' shape of time and its relevance to a figural reading of *images of time* in films, the next two sections of this article point to Malick's dramatic presentation of an exemplary philosophical gap between Hegelian and Nietzschean conceptions of history expressed in, and through, *The New World*'s formal and narrative elements.

IDEOLOGIES AND *THE NEW WORLD*

In *The New World*, the tension between nature and culture that consistently runs throughout Malick's oeuvre, is more evident and played upon. The contraposition between a new and an old world, between the colonizers of the western world and the "naturals" – as they are called in the movie – of the beautiful, untouched and pristine Virginia of the 1600s is the driving conflict of the story, and a purely aesthetic and perceptual one. As Sinnerbrink notes, Malick's *The New World* challenges the imposition of philosophy and philosophical ideas over its distinctively cinematic worlds and poetics.[15] Similarly, Martin Donougho argues that Malick's turn from teaching philosophy in American academia to enrolling in the American Film School in the late 1960s can be interpreted as Malick's way of exploring cinema's philosophical possibilities, "… a way of allowing things to emerge into significance – to let their showing up itself be shown up … while retaining a certain obliqueness of presentation and interpretation."[16] Indeed, as both Donougho and Sinnerbrink point out, the cinematic presentation of ideas overcomes the problem of ideologies and ideological thinking, or the problem of imposing ideas over the world. In this reading, Captain Smith's story allegorises a precise utopian and ideological vision of

the human-nature relation; a vision that remains irremediably blocked in dualism between a dream world of love and the world of necessity and nature.

The love-story between John Smith and Pocahontas is punctuated by a dream versus reality antithesis, conflict and opposition. The film opens with Smith (Colin Farrell) as prisoner in Captain Newport's (Christopher Plummer) ship ("you come to these shores in chains"), and Smith's dualism in the film does not resolve in a dialectical and liberating synthesis of sorts; rather, his character's trajectory arguably shows the limits of a practical approach to idealism and dialectical thinking. When Smith falls in love with Pocahontas in the Powhatan village immersed in lush forest, he rather idealistically says, "They are gentle, loving, faithful, lacking in all guile and trickery. The words denoting lying, deceit, greed, envy, slander, and forgiveness have never been heard. They have no jealousy, no sense of possession. Real – what I thought a dream." When Smith returns to the fort, Malick's direction emphasises the visual contrast between the Powhatans' and the British culture, and early James Town is shown as a filthy, horrible expression of a parasitic civilization. In the fort, Smith's voiceover narrates, "It was a dream, now I am awake." The last element of Smith's dialectical journey occurs at the very end of the film, when he meets with Pocahontas, now Rebecca Rolfe, in the perfectly domesticated and assimilated nature of European gardens. Here, Smith says, "I thought it was a dream what we knew in the forest. It's the only truth." Smith's voice-overs arguably point to the limits of dialectical thinking: the dangers of thinking of life as a progression towards a better or perfect world, following (or looking for) foundational ideas and original "truths" in utopian futures and dreams of new lands.

Indeed, Smith's voyage of discovery ends on the metaphoric rocks that Malick's film openly shows when it will come to an end; not finding the "passage to the Indies," as hoped, but just a stream of running water flowing into the ocean. In this view, it is important to note that during Smith's first assigned mission to find the Powhatan king (a breathtakingly beautiful sequence shot on the Chickahominy River in Virginia), viewers hear Smith in voice-over saying:

> We shall make a new start, a fresh beginning. Here the blessings of the earth are bestowed upon all. None need grow poor. Here there is good ground for all, and no cause but one's labour in the true commonwealth – hard work and self-reliance and

> virtue … We shall have no landlords to extort the fruit of our labour, or wrack us with their high rents. Men shall not make each other spoil.

Despite the remarkable historical detail in the mise-en-scene (and implication of substantial work carried out in the film's pre-production phases: scouting locations; the resurrection of an extinct Powhatan language in the scriptwriting and acting; and historical research informing detailed make-up and costume design), Smith's "progressive" vision in the voice-over narration produces a gap and interruption of narrative teleology that strikes the viewer not only for its anachronism, but also for its distance from the historical events that arguably followed Smith's mission in real history. In light of five hundred years of American history, coupled with contemporary awareness of the disasters of colonization and the systematic destruction of Indigenous cultures in the name of cultural superiority, Smith's words present as particularly disturbing and, indeed, naïve.[17] Arguably, it is in this discomfort that Malick exposes the dangers of imposing abstract ideas over the world and history, and the all-too-human tendency to give new names to old practices of war and conquest.

A NEW WORLD, BEYOND NIHILISM?

As Donougho remarks, in Malick's film there is a constant preoccupation with naming. *The New World* displays a "consuming interest in language, in the naming of world and thing."[18] For example, the scene where Pocahontas learns from Smith the English name of things, as if Smith "was speaking for the first time" as he will confess at the end; or the scene where the maid (Janine Divitski) teaches Pocahontas how to dress, wear shoes and read the written word. Significantly, at their first encounter the maid says: "My name's Mary, and yours I believe, is…" to which the young man introducing them hastily replies: "Oh no! She says it's not her name anymore. She hasn't got a name," and the maid politely says: "How unfortunate. Well, we shall have to give you one!" The maid is a key figure helping the unnamed Pocahontas on her journey to a new name, when she marries John Rolfe (Christian Bale) as the newly christened Rebecca. Their courtship begins when Rolfe joins Pocahontas, who is broken and lifeless after Smith's abandonment and decision to follow his dreams and look for "the passage to the

Indies." The courtship is shown in a montage sequence that starts with a handheld camera following Pocahontas' silent walk and her silent and timid gaze at Rolfe, and voice-over of the maid saying: "… a nature like yours can turn trouble into good…" The maid's words then continue over a montage moving in and out of her pedagogic speech as she combs Pocahontas' hair, with images of imposing trees with broken branches, and culminating in Rolfe's visit, and a visibly satisfied Mary. The maid's speech, in its entirety, is as follows:

> A nature like yours can turn trouble into good. All the sorrow will give you strength and point you on a higher way. Think of a tree how it grows round its wounds. If a branch breaks off it don't stop, but it keeps reaching towards the light. We must meet misfortune baldly and not suffer it to frighten us. We must act the play out, then leave our troubles down, my lady.

Here, the maid's words refer to Pocahontas' humanity, "a nature like yours," a nature that is common to the "naturals" and to the English speaking colonisers in the film, and whose differences are only apparent at the aesthetic level of language, clothing and naming. Thus, the parallel between humans and nature would ostensibly give credit to Macdonald's reading of human and non-human nature as an expression of an inexhaustible "will to power" in Malick's New World. The film's romantic aesthetic would remain at the surface of a deeper nihilism.

In this view, Macdonald's reading suggests that the need for foundational truths is ingrained in human cultural production and arguably not an exclusive prerogative of the Western philosophical tradition. Indeed, *The New World* opens with Pocahontas invoking the muse (like Homer and many others in literary history) to tell the story of her land, "Come spirit help us sing the story of our land." This singing/telling is shown as a human necessity, as a way of regaining contact with the "spirit," the origin and mother of all things. In this, Pocahontas' and Smith's worlds are no different. Pocahontas asks: "Mother, where do you live?"; Smith asks: "Who are you, whom I so faintly hear? Who urge me ever on? What voice is this that speaks within me, guides me towards the best?" However, in a compelling reading of the images associated with Pocahontas' last voice-over in the estate's gardens ("mother, now I know where you live"), Macdonald concludes that the camera answers for viewers.[19] He writes:

> As the angle changes from the topiary hedges and trees that dominate the last part of the film, stressing the attempted mastery of nature. In an explicit shift of perspective, an orderly hedge gives way to its sinuous branches … and one kind of order yields to another, deeper order of which it is part.[20]

For Macdonald, Malick's film illustrates how humans' rationalization of nature is an expression of the will to power, and, as such, how the rational is part of nature itself. Nevertheless, as Sinnerbrink's reading points out, it is problematic to relegate Malick's cinematic poetics to a nihilistic and totalizing worldview without distorting the overall balance of its aesthetic elements and without engaging with the ethical questions they pose.[21]

So, what other meanings can be derived from Malick's *The New World* other than (or in addition to) nihilism and failed romantic ideals of love and new lands? At the simplest level, Malick's carefully crafted historical detail in the mise-en-scene and contrasts with the film's romantic aesthetics does indeed point to the dichotomy and polarization between empiricism and rationality, nature and culture, body and mind (and all other binaries of Cartesian derivation) that arguably started to be *en vogue* in Western thought from the time of *The New World*'s setting onwards. Nevertheless, Malick's artistic use of a sixteenth-century style cinematic map that sinuously draws itself in the film's initial and final title sequences, complicates this simplistic Cartesian reading, a complication moving well beyond philosophical "interpretations" and readings of *The New World*'s narrative and formal elements. The cinematic map operates as a potent metaphor able to illustrate the philosophical novelties *of cinema* in destabilising obsolete space-time coordinates. In order to support this claim, it is important to frame the map-territory relation as a figural motif in philosophical and cultural discourses.

THE MAP-TERRITORY RELATION: A "CONTINUUM OF EXPERIENCE" FROM KANT TO BAUDRILLARD AND BATESON

The map-territory metaphor is a recurrent one in cultural discourse, able to illustrate the power of representation as well as the irremediable split between sensory perception and the world. The modern use of the metaphor can be traced back to Kant's first critique.[22] It

is widely noted that Kant's first critique was a direct response to the philosophical debates between the rationalist and the empiricist positions of the seventeenth century.[23] Far from being obsolete disputes belonging to seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe, debates between rational and empirical positions are responsible for polarized epistemologies in the natural and cultural sciences in modern culture and still relevant in increasingly globalized academic structures. Attempts to overcome the polarisation of natural and cultural sciences are certainly relevant today in cultural-ecological discourses. Nevertheless, within a twentieth-century context, Gregory Bateson writes:

> We say the map is different from the territory. But what is the territory? […] What is on the paper map is a representation of what was in the retinal representation of the man who made the map; and as you push the question back, what you find is an infinite regress, an infinite series of maps. The territory never gets in at all. […] Always, the process of representation will filter it out so that the mental world is only maps of maps, ad infinitum.[24]

For Bateson, as for Kant, the problem seems to be that the territory is *Dinge an Sich* or unknowable in itself, "The territory never gets in at all."[25] The Kantian epistemological condition is bound to know through representations, maps and approximations based on how phenomena are perceived, but not at all "true" to how things are "in themselves."[26] In a twentieth century context, as in Kant, the territory is still nothing but illusion and appearance, the human condition is bound to endless simulations of the ungraspable real thing, to the point that in Jean Baudrillard's notable postmodern "desert of the real" the map has replaced the territory and "only simulacra exist."[27]

Kantian philosophy inaugurates modernity and sets forth the enormous philosophical task of bridging the abyssal distance between Cartesian rationality and empirical objectivism.[28] Kant's seventeenth century solution to the problem of perception is in the transcendental categories a priori; however, a non-transcendental and material overcoming of the rational versus empirical positions to the world is still very much a contemporary philosophical preoccupation, especially in Deleuze's and Benjamin's projects. Deleuze's answer to the Kantian impasse is the plane of immanence, a Spinozian[29] univocal substance that overcomes the problem of the phenomenological or transcendental subject altogether. Conversely, this article suggests that Benjamin's shape

of time overcomes the subject/object problem by *deanthropologizing subjectivity* and phenomenological experiences. The next section of this paper will explicate this claim and will use Fenves' work on Benjamin's "shape of time" to suggest that a Benjaminian approach to time is precisely able to remain suspended (without synthesizing) over the gap left open between the map and the territory in post-Kantian thought.

TEMPORAL PLASTICITY AND SUBJECTIVITY

Benjamin's philosophical project develops a non-subjective and equally non-metaphysical conception of life and experience. In the early essay "On the Program of the Coming Philosophy," Benjamin lays the foundation of a philosophical project that will resonate throughout his non-linear and non-systematic work; that is, the overcoming of the Kantian divide between the perception of the empirical world and the apperception of the transcendental (or unknowable) world through what he terms a "continuum of experience."[30] In this, Fenves' ground-breaking study on Benjamin's notion of time points to a novel conception of historicity based on the plasticity of time: a "recapitulation" of time in singular openness to new experiences of space *as* a temporal concept. In his study, Fenves draws on a number of philosophical influences qua possibilities in Benjamin (including Kant, Husserl, Bergson and The Marburg School)[31] to argue that Benjamin's shape of time is non-integrable:

> a particular *phenomenon* will be identified in the course of this study that nevertheless guarantees the existence of a fully "reduced" sphere […] And a name will emerge from this sphere: time. The term time in this case refers neither to the time of "inner-time consciousness" (Husserl) nor to time as "possible horizon for any understanding of being" (Heidegger), but rather, to a "plastic" time, which is shaped in such a way that its course is wholly without direction, hence without past, present and future, as they are generally understood. [Original emphasis][32]

For Fenves, the shape of time generates a non-integrable "reduction" in aesthetic experiences. In this view, a non-anthropocentric *epoché* [33] is a possibility enabled by the turning and plasticity of time itself:

> if the course of time can be captured by a curve of this kind [sharply turned on itself] its concept can be aptly described as "highly enigmatic," for every time, down to the smallest unit, would be similar to every other time and to time as a whole […] History interpolated in the form of a "constellation" acquires the monadic character of time by virtue of an *epoché* whose unity *is of a higher power than that of an activity of thinking* that directs itself toward immanent objects of thought [emphasis added].[34]

Such a conception of time and history, for Fenves, allows a "bracketing" that does not reside in bodily or rational subjectivity. To this end, Fenves details the difference between Benjamin's and Husserl's "reductions" and notes:

> what ultimately separates Benjamin's mode of thought from Husserl's is this: from its title onwards, *Ideas* [Husserl's work *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*] proceeds as though the philosopher is fully capable of "turning off" the attitude that bars access to phenomena [the original split of perception generating the subject/object encounter] and can thus enter into the sphere of "pure phenomenology" on the strength of will; Benjamin, by contrast, makes no such concession to the profession of philosophy.[35]

For Benjamin, phenomena and experiences cannot be grasped in "pure" bodily or rational receptivity. A Benjaminian *epoché* requires the "arresting" of the perceiving and thinking subject, the suspension of intentionality and the *recognition* of a constellation of meaning: "[w]here thinking suddenly halts [*einhalt*] in a constellation saturated with tensions, it imparts to this constellation a shock through which it crystallizes as a monad [or new turn of time]."[36] Thus, the only "higher power" [37] capable of guaranteeing a fully reduced—yet, non-integrable—sphere is the turn of time itself rendered *visible* and *re-cognisable* in aesthetic and phenomenological experiences.

Fenves' conceptualisation of Benjamin's reduction is an important contribution to phenomenology and is significant in acknowledging the important function of aesthetic experiences in contemporary culture. Benjamin's shape of time is a "sphere of total neutrality" an "innate sphere of knowledge"[38] which guarantees a non-anthropocentric unity of experience in a non-integrable, reduced sphere of "life." In this view, Fenves' interpretation of Benjamin's early work on Hölderlin's poetry,[39] suggests that "life" for

Benjamin is precisely this sphere of total neutrality, and that the "poet" (artist, engineer or filmmaker) "exists on the verge of life by momentarily converging with *the limit* called 'life.'"[40] This limit is a turn of time, a *temporal* sphere of action. Benjamin's word for this material "life-context" produced by temporal convergences is *das Gedichtete* [the poetized], a noun made by a verb, which implies further actions, further "turnings of time" in the act of "poetizing" (perceiving, reading, interpreting, *using* technology or art).[41] In this way, Benjamin's philosophy clearly articulates a post-Kantian and non-Hegelian conception of "life" in *both* non-exclusively empirical *and* non-exclusively rational terms, but in pursuing the study of *techne*, intended as any creative manifestation, phenomenon or practice in the world (human technology and science included).[42] It is precisely through the study (and contemplation) of art and nature that time can be apprehended: aesthetic and figural experiences give time its "life" in re-cognisable shapes and forms.

THE CINEMATIC LIFE OF THE FIGURAL IN *THE NEW WORLD*

Benjamin's philosophical project enables a clear non-subjective and non-metaphysical continuity of experience of figural gestures. In this view, Malick's *The New World* does not simply allude to the Pocahontas legend in an inter-textual exercise, but concretely enacts the possibility of "continuity" and recapitulation of the Pocahontas' story in *time* intended as a new, *temporary space*. The space of the figural is a temporary ground generated by time. Space (the figural map) collapses in an impossible idealisation of an always-changing territory (time). Nevertheless, this collapsed space and disjunctive gap of perception becomes a possible "life-context," the temporary ground that enables new experiences and significations of figural gestures. Time generates and *disrupts* space, it constantly forces onwards, towards a *non-directional pluriverse* of potential life-contexts. Just as Malick's appropriation of the map-territory relation used in the initial and final title sequence bears with it *all* approaches to the metaphor, from Kant onwards, as a "continuity" and recapitulation of all meanings that have been assigned to it in different historical, philosophical and cultural contexts, so does Malick's use of Pocahontas and John Smith as figural gestures. Malick's retelling simultaneously draws on the Disney's version[43] and on all other popular and fantasized versions and (com)modifications of the supposed love story between John Smith and Pocahontas that have been used to construct personal and national myths and identities. In this way, Malick's retelling simply *offers* the

possibility of a new shape and turning of time that encompasses, *recapitulates* and transforms all previous experiences *at once*. But how is Malick's retelling distinctively cinematic? Does Malick's use of cinema differ from other forms of figural storytelling?

In an application of Benjamin's insights in the Work of Art essay, Malick's *The New World*, like the Disney Corporation, uses the affective power of nature as a metonym of a lost, mythical unity with the world. In *The New World*, however, Malick's vision expresses an oblique, neutral and distinctively non-anthropomorphic[44] point of view. Despite the affective power of Pocahontas' story, Malick's camera work in *The New World* is strangely rendered unable to produce defined gazes, affects, or any form of bodily or rational subjectification in its viewers.[45] Malick's seeing ostensibly frustrates closures[46] and arguably *releases* a new filmic experience by collapsing existent experiences and associated ideals in the material reproducibility of the film's figural gestures. In this way, Malick's *The New World* does indeed reveal an "equipment free aspect of reality"—time—through the utmost "intense interpenetration of reality with equipment;"[47] that is, using the cinema, Disney's *Pocahontas* and "auratic" encounters with nature. In other words, the "seeing" of Malick's subject-less visions of nature expresses the kinematic character of the shape of time "immediately"[48] in a seeing with a material event that arrests and "halts" thinking,[49] releasing a new *possibility* of time, a possible new figure of re-cognition in a temporal life-context.

CONCLUSION

In "Approaching the New World" Adrian Martin states that, "each of Malick's films, for those who love them, is an experience demanding its witnesses and its testament."[50] Indeed, the myth of Pocahontas and John Smith needs retelling in light of the disasters of colonialism and imperialism. These disasters cannot be reconciled or transfigured through an aesthetic approach to cinema, but they can be *re-cognised* as a continuity of experience expressing itself in a new possible shape, a new possible now. As argued, Malick's cinematic retelling of the Pocahontas legend in *The New World* is not a "new map," so to speak, or a new representation of an original "territory," nor a liberating and triumphant "synthesis" of previous experiences in a progression of time. Benjamin's thinking opens up the film's "silent witnessing and testament" to a concrete, autonomous and non-

subjective cinematic life able to recapitulate and turn time into new potential life-contexts, into new possibilities, shapes and forms.

The potential consequences of Benjamin's shape of time in figural film-philosophy are significant. The figural approach to films can contribute to the articulation of the important philosophical role of film technologies in the disruption and *transformation* of fixed significations (including the humanist need of a perpetual foundation of time) in Western thought. Acknowledging time as a non-integrable, non-directional and disruptive "now" of re-cognisability, enables that interplay[51] between nature and culture that Benjamin so clearly foreshadowed in an increasingly mediated and alienated world. Fenves' work on Benjamin's messianic reduction informs the possibility of a non-anthropocentric vision of film experiences: a virtuality that this article locates in the kinematic character of Benjamin's philosophy, possibly opening up new abilities and possibilities of films in shaping new nature-culture relations in the present world.

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[1] Paul Klee, "Creative Credo," in Herschel Chipp, (ed.), *Theories of Modern Art: A Source Book by Artists and Critics*, (Berkley: University of California Press, 1968), 184.

[2] Iain Macdonald, "Nature and the Will to Power in Terrence Malick's The New World," in David Davies (ed.), *The Thin Red Line*, (Routledge: London, 2009), 88.

[3] William Brown, "Man without a Movie Camera – Movies without Men," in *Film Theory and Contemporary Hollywood Movies*, ed. Warren Buckland, (London: Routledge, 2009), 66-85.

[4] One of the most often-cited passages from the well-known Benjamin's Work of Art essay reads: "the first technology really sought to master nature, whereas the second aims rather at an interplay between nature and humanity. The primary social function of art today is to rehearse that interplay. This applies especially to film. *The function of film is to train human beings in the apperception and reactions needed to deal with a vast apparatus whose role in their lives is expanding almost daily.* Dealing with this apparatus also teaches them that technology will release them from their enslavement to the powers of the apparatus only when humanity's whole constitution has adapted itself to the new productive forces which the second technology has set free [original emphasis]. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility," *Walter Benjamin, Selected Writings: Volume 3, 1935-1938,* ed. Eiland Howard and Michael W. Jennings, (Cambridge, Massachussetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006), 107–08. Within the posthuman context of this article, the Benjamin passage acknowledges a specific function of film technologies in setting free "new productive forces;" these are not abstract, metaphysical and transcendental powers, but material, concrete, immanent new abilities qua possibilities released and set forth in language (*logos*) by technology (intended as *techne*, meaning every form of art or artifice in the world.)

[5] Robert Sinnerbrink, *New Philosophies of Film: Thinking Images,* (New York: Continuum, 2011), 195.

[6] Ibid., 182.

[7] Macdonald, "Nature and the Will to Power," 99.

[8] Sinnerbrink, *New Philosophies of Film*, 195.

[9] D. N. Rodowick, *Reading the Figural, or, Philosophy after the New Media,* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001); and D. N. Rodowick, *The Virtual Life of Film,* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).

[10] Peter Fenves, *The Messianic Reduction. Walter Benjamin and the Shape of Time,* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2011).

[11]D. N. Rodowick, *Afterimages of Gilles Deleuze's Film Philosophy,* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), xix.

[12] Rodowick, *The Virtual Life of Film*, 78.

[13] Rodowick, *Afterimages*, xvii. The capitalization of the word "whole" in Rodowick is, of course, a reference to Deleuze's *Cinema 2*. See Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image,* trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta, (London: Continuum, 2005), 81.

[14] Recent work on Walter Benjamin's philosophy, points to Benjamin's renowned work on Holderlin's poetry ("Two Poems"), language ("On Language as Such") experience ("The Coming Philosophy"), and two newly translated essays ("Two Rainbows") to present the philosophical relevance of Benjamin's notion of "plastic time". See Fenves, *The Messianic Reduction,* 247-255. As will be further detailed in this article, the philosophical sketch provided in Fenves' ground-breaking work on Benjamin presents a compelling reading of Benjamin's engagement with (and distance to) Husserl's phenomenology.

[15] Sinnerbrink, *New Philosophies of Film*.

[16] Martin Donougho, "Melt Earth to Sea: The New World of Terrence Malick," *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 25.4 (2011), 361.

[17] James Morrison, "Making Worlds, Making Pictures: Terrence Malick's *The New World*," *The Cinema of Terrence Malick: Poetic Visions of America,* ed. Hannah Patterson, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 199-211.

[18] Donougho, "Melt Earth to Sea".

[19] As will be further elaborated in the last section of this article, camera work in Malick's *The New World* is not tethered to human perspective and does not express an anthropomorphic point of view; the camera flows over bodies and land, grass and water, and remains virtually suspended in-between the film's romantic aesthetics (nature's beauty and sublimity) and its utter indifference to humane vicissitudes (nature as expression of a "will to power").

[20] Macdonald, "Nature and the Will to Power," 106.

[21] Sinnerbrink, *New Philosophies of Film*.

[22] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason,* trans. and ed. Marcus Weigelt (London: Penguin Books, 2007), B295, 296/A236.

[23] See Marcus Weigelt's introduction in Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, xxviii. In broad terms, while the rationalists ground knowledge in reason, empiricists ground knowledge in experience, based on sensorial approaches to phenomena.

[24] Gregory Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), 460.

[25] Ibid.

[26] The Kantian unknowable *Dinge an Sich* rests on a dualistic approach to phenomena and noumena. Kant introduces the concepts noumena and phenomena in the chapter entitled "The ground of the distinction of all objects in general into Phenomena and Noumena." The chapter follows "The Transcendental Doctrine of Elements," where Kant details all that is pure and transcendental, or the highest possible realm for the Kantian human mind. Nonetheless, Kant starts the new section in effective poetic style and uses the map-symbol to convey the concept that the transcendental world, the world of things in themselves, is a world that cannot be known but only mapped out in textual representations. Before moving to phenomena, then, Kant asks: "Before we venture on this sea, in order to explore its length and breadth, and to find out whether it has anything to offer, it will be useful to glance once more *at the map* of that country which we are about to leave, and to ask ourselves, firstly, whether we might not be content with what it contains, nay, whether we must not be content with it, supposing that there is no solid ground anywhere else on which we could settle; secondly, by what title we possess even that domain, and may consider ourselves safe against all hostile claims [emphasis added]." For Kant the objective noumena is not subject to time and space and therefore is unknowable and empirically "inaccessible."

[27] Jean Baudrillard, *Simulation,* (New York: Foreign Agents Series, Semiotext(e), Columbia University, 1983). Baudrillard, too, uses the power of the figural map when he writes: "If we were able to take as the finest allegory of simulation the Borges tale where the cartographers of the Empire draw up a map so detailed that it ends up exactly covering the territory … then this fable has come full circle for us, … it is the map that engenders the territory and if we were to revive the fable today, it would be the territory whose shreds are slowly rotting across the map. It is the real, and not the map, whose vestiges subsist here and there, in the deserts which are no longer those of the Empire, but our own. The desert of the real itself." Baudrillard's allusion to Borges arguably illustrates the cultural passage from the modern to the postmodern condition in effective figural form. The modern cultural movement of the first decades of the twentieth century acknowledges, in artistic forms, the fall and crumbling of overarching metanarratives that dominated cultural production from the Classic era onwards; including the Christian era and the time of an "Enlightened" Reason. Baudrillard arguably continues the modernist discourse and applies it to twentieth century technologically mediated culture. After all, as Jean-François Lyotard puts it in *The Postmodern Condition: a Report on Knowledge,* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), postmodernism is, essentially, a rewriting of the modernist period.

[28] Kant's philosophical response to Cartesian subjective rationality can be understood as follows: even if things in themselves are unknowable, their "appearances" (or phenomena) have empirical epistemological validity under the formal conditions of space and time, and therefore "…the empirical truth of appearances is sufficiently established and adequately distinguished from a dream" (B520/A492 § 7).

[29] As widely noted, Deleuze's overall philosophical position privileges a Spinozian "univocal" Substance, see Daniel Smith and John Protevi's entry "Gilles Deleuze," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2015/entries/deleuze/. On the other hand, Benjamin's philosophy privileges a Leibnizian position. The relevance of Leibniz's philosophy in Benjamin's thought is acknowledged in Fenves' work, see *The Messianic Reduction* and, also, "Of Philosophical Style–from Leibniz to Benjamin," boundary 2 30.1 (2003). At great risk of oversimplifying complex philosophical issues, it is perhaps useful to point to the substantial difference between Spinoza and Leibniz in pre-Kantian thought. To this end it is perhaps useful quoting a passage from Ross Wolfe's study, "Substance, Causation and Free Will in Spinoza and Leibniz," *Arche'* 2.1 (2008): "in summation, we might concisely appraise the extent to which Leibniz provided an acceptable counterargument to Spinoza's necessitarian determinism. Spinoza's system is, taken on its own terms, theoretically impregnable. If one agrees to his definitions and axioms, it is difficult to see any other way of construing things. One quickly sees that his system is based principally upon the notion of a single, all-encompassing Substance constrained by an efficient species of causation. Conversely, Leibniz's system takes for its point of departure the notion of a plurality of simple substances (monads) which ultimately obey a teleological or final order of causation. Commonalities surely exist between the two philosophers' conceptions of Substance. But Spinoza's definition in *The Ethics* permits of no diversity; Leibniz's claim to the contrary in his *Monadology* indicates a significant redefinition of the term" (19). For Deleuze's position on Leibniz, see Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold. Leibniz and the Baroque* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

[30] Walter Benjamin, "The Coming Philosophy," trans. Rodney Livingstone, in *Walter Benjamin, Selected Writings: Volume 1, 1913-1926,* ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004) : 105.

[31] The breath and vastness of the philosophical (and mathematical) sources that Fenves masters and applies to his detailed reading of Benjamin's writings is outside the scope of this article. This article is nonetheless concerned with an application of Fenves' insights to contemporary film-philosophy.

[32] Fenves, *The Messianic Reduction,* 3.

[33] *Epoché* is what Husserl terms the "phenomenological reduction" or a "bracketing" of the "natural standpoint" that is at the base of singular experiences, see *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, (London: Routledge classics 2012).

[34] Fenves, *The Messianic Reduction,* 243.

[35] Fenves, *The Messianic Reduction*, 135.

[36] The passage, quoted from Fenves, *The Messianic Reduction,* 243 is from thesis XVII. See, Walter Benjamin "On the Concept of History" *Walter Benjamin, Selected Writings: Volume 4, 1938-1940,* ed. Eiland Howard and Michael W. Jennings, (Cambridge, Massachussetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006), 396.

[37] Fenves, *The Messianic Reduction,* 243.

[38] Walter Benjamin, "The Coming Philosophy," trans. Rodney Livingstone, in *Walter Benjamin, Selected Writings: Volume 1, 1913-1926,* ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 104.

[39] Walter Benjamin "Two Poems by Friedrich Hölderlin," in *Walter Benjamin, Selected Writings: Volume 1, 1913-1926,* ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2004): 18-36.

[40] Fenves, *The Messianic Reduction,* 45.

[41] See "Two Poems," 18. For a philosophical rendition of Benjamin's "poetized" as "transitivity" and "shaping force" see, Warwick Mules, *With Nature: Nature Philosophy as Poetics through Schelling, Heidegger, Benjamin and Nancy,* (Chicago: Intellect, the University of Chicago Press, 2014): 141-143. On the "poetized" as a specific vision of the "turning of time," see Peter Fenves "Renewed Question: Whether a Philosophy of History is Possible," *MLN* 124 (2014): 514-524.

[42]Here, it is perhaps important to repropose the remarkable and profoundly non-synthetic study of Benjamin's "Work of Art" essay, performed by Susan Buck Morss in her interpretation of Benjamn's work quite literally "suspended" between empiricism and rationalism. Along similar lines, Miriam Hansen, in "Benjamin's Aura," *Critical Enquiry* 34 (2008), suggests that Benjamin's thought distinguishes itself for its capacity and intellectual courage "to appropriate and transform theoretical impulses from philosophically and politically incompatible, if not antagonistic, camps" (375). Susan Buck-Morss' essay "Aesthetics and Anaesthetics: Walter Benjamin's Artwork Essay Reconsidered," *October* 62 (1992): 3-41, is, for this reader, a performative example of Benjamin's philosophical approach. Buck-Morss writes: "the senses are effects of the nervous system, composed of hundreds of billions of neurons extending from the body surfaces through the spinal cord, to the brain. The brain, it must be said, yields to philosophical reflection a sense of the uncanny. In

our most empiricist moments, we would like to take the matter of the brain itself for the mind. (What could be more appropriate than the brain studying the brain?) But there seems to be such an abyss between us, alive, as we look out on the world, and that gray-white gelatinous mass with its cauliflower-like convolutions that is the brain (the biochemistry of which does not differ qualitatively from that of a sea slug) that, intuitively, we resist naming them as identical. If this "I" who examines the brain, were nothing but the brain, how is it that I feel so uncomprehendingly alien in its presence? Hegel thus has intuition on his side in his attacks against the brain-watchers. If you want to understand human thought, he argues in *The Phenomenology of Mind*, don't place the brain on a dissecting table, or feel the bumps on the head for phrenological information. If you want to know what the mind is, examine what it *does*" (ibid., 11). Yet, Buck-Morss does not follow the empirical approach of the natural sciences, or the study of human history and human culture alone. In her reading and application of Benjamin's insights in "The Work of Art", Buck-Morss remains suspended between antithetical positions, hovering "over the abyss" that exists between them. This abyss, Buck-Morss' essay suggests, is Benjamin's philosophical ground.[43] As Macdonald points out, Malick's retelling of the legend of Pocahontas deliberately draws on the Disney's 1995 version, casting Irene Bedard, the model and voice of Disney's Pocahontas, as the fictional mother of Malick's Pocahontas (Q'Orianka Kilcher.) See Macdonald, "Nature and the Will to Power," 100.

[44] The "non-anthropomorphic" vision of *The New World*'s distinctive camera work is indebted to Thomas Elsaesser and Malte Hanager, see *Film Theory. An Introduction to the Senses* (New York: Routledge 2010), 114.

[45] Leo Bersani and Ulysse Dutoit study on Malick's *The Thin Red Line* already identifies the complex "seeing" of Malick's film as "erasure of perspective." See "One Big Soul" in *Forms of Being: Films, Aesthetics, Subjectivity*, (London: BFI 2004), 146.

[46] This frustration of defined perspectival gazes and bodily affects is beautifully brought to an extreme in Malick's latest film *Knight of Cups*.

[47] Benjamin, "The Work of Art," 116.

[48] In *The Messianic Reduction*, Peter Fenves maintains that Benjamin's thought "… does move in the direction of philosophical kinematics: experience is not so much "transient" (*verganglich*) as "transitional" (*uberganglich*). The putative objects of knowledge are neither realities nor potentialities: they are, rather, "virtualities" that can be known as such–as "something" that exists in a medium that it instantiates" (176). For the "immediacy" of the medium in Benjamin, see Weber's "impart-ability" of language as medium in *Benjamin's Abilities* (31-52).

[49] Fenves, *The Messianic Reduction,* 243.

[50] Martin, "Approaching the New World," 220.

[51] Benjamin, "The Work of Art." See note 4 above.

ON SOME POSTHUMAN MOTIFS IN WALTER BENJAMIN: MICKEY MOUSE, BARBARISM AND TECHNOLOGICAL INNERVATION

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In this article I will argue that Walter Benjamin's critique of bourgeois humanism, and more specifically his writings on film on the same theme, can be considered a precursor of recent critical accounts of posthumanism. Recently Benjamin scholars such as Sami Khatib, Matthew Charles and Carlo Salzani have recognized that some creatures he devised, namely the barbarian (*Barbar*) and the inhuman (*Unmensch*), could be considered predecessors of the posthuman.[1] In this article I will focus on these and other posthuman themes in Benjamin's writings on film, especially those which emerged during the period of the "destructive character" (1931-1933), in which he heavily criticized the centrality of the individual, bourgeois subject that made its first appearance with the Enlightenment.

For the last thirty years, posthumanism has attempted to de-centre the traditional model of the human devised according to the principles of the Cartesian subject. This model has been criticized for positing a white, European, male, liberal self. Posthumanism thus begins from the premise that "We are not all humans if by humans we understand the creature familiar to us from the Enlightenment and its legacy."[2] This primary critique has led to a broader criticism of the understanding of the human as the measure of all things – that is, to the detriment of other life forms. Through a closer engagement with science and technology, posthumanism has argued that the traditional binary opposition between nature and culture has been blurred and, in addition, has claimed that the incorporation of technology into the human body is already changing the parameters of how human nature should be understood. From these premises, posthumanism has generated many – often contradictory – theories about what posthumans should look like. By bringing Benjamin into dialogue with recent literature on posthumanism, I will argue that his writings on technology in general, and on film in particular, contain similar concerns to those of posthumanism, especially in regard to the way that nature (including human nature) and technology interweave.

In this article I will analyse Benjamin's writings on cinema in relation to his "anthropological-materialist" idea of the creation of a collective techno-body. From his early anthropological texts of the late 1910s and early 1920s, Benjamin devised the idea of the creation of a collective body *in* and *through* technology. He thought that human beings could adapt technologies, as simple as they might be, into their bodies as limbs. In essays such as "Poverty and Experience" (1933) and "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility" (1935-39) Benjamin envisaged cinema as an exemplary space in which a technological innervation into the body of the audience could be produced. Film figures such as Mickey Mouse were examples of what human beings would resemble once they had merged with technology. Thus, I will argue that his theories around technology, the human body and cinema are useful in reconsidering our relationship with nature and technology in a (desirable, rather than actual) posthuman condition.

ANTHROPOLOGICAL MATERIALISM AND THE NEW MATERIALISMS

Benjamin introduced the concept of "anthropological materialism" in his essay "Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia" (1929). He defined this new brand of materialism as a fusion of political materialism and physical creatureliness. In opposition to the "metaphysical materialism" of authors such as Georgi Plekhanov and Nikolai Bukharin, Benjamin aimed to produce a type of materialism that would focus on the materiality of the body, be it individual or collective. Adorno, however, disapproved of Benjamin's anthropological materialism as "an undialectical ontology of the body."[3] For Adorno, the human body cannot represent the measure of all concreteness, as Benjamin wanted to convey. Notwithstanding Adorno's criticism, Benjamin's conception of the body is hardly to be understood ontologically. Anthropological materialism aimed to bring materialism closer to the human body as it develops *historically* in its relationship with nature and other human beings. For that reason, Benjamin takes technology as the medium to (re)organize the interplay between humans and nature.

This article aims to bring Benjamin's "anthropological materialism," his own brand of materialism and the basis for his theories around the incorporation of technology into the body, into dialogue with the new materialisms. Through this dialogue, I will claim that

Benjamin provides a highly interesting insight into reconsidering not only the way we think of our relation to technology, but also other material elements. I will also explore how Benjamin problematized the binary opposition between nature and culture, which is a common concern of both the new materialisms and posthumanism. Benjamin's interest in the materiality of the human body is thus echoed by the increasing academic interest in matter. This revival of materialism can arguably be dated back to the turn to the body in 1990s feminism, although this had become more matter-oriented by the following decade. Indeed, this interest – primarily a reaction to the privileged position of language to the detriment of the material in poststructuralism – has entered the posthuman agenda in recent years. According to Francesca Ferrando, the new materialisms try to problematize the apparent opposition between language and matter: "biology is culturally mediated as much as culture is materialistically constructed."[4]

Diana Coole and Samantha Frost have argued that this renewal of materialism means "taking heed of developments in the natural sciences as well as attending to transformations in the ways we currently produce, reproduce, and consume our material environment." For that reason, the new materialisms reconsider the human's material practices with regard to "the ways we labor on, exploit, and interact with nature."[5] This critique is shared with posthumanism, which rejects the domination of human beings over other life forms. According to Pramod K. Nayar, critical posthumanism studies and criticizes the "power relations and discourses that have historically situated the human *above* other life forms, and in control of them."[6] I will argue that Benjamin introduces a relevant critique of this domination of nature by human beings and of the role of technology in this uneven power relation, which is according to him self-destructive.

Benjamin's critique of the instrumental mastery of nature is most clearly introduced in the last section of his book of aphorisms *One-Way Street* (1928), "To the Planetarium."[7] There, he denounces what he calls the "imperialist-capitalist conception of technology," which is the human use of technology in order to dominate nature. Benjamin argues that, because of its lust for profit, the ruling class has followed and endorsed this conception, thus betraying the positive potential of technology. For him, the domination of nature also entails the domination of any life form, human beings included. For that reason, he claims that such a conception of technology has led to a bloodbath, referring first of all to the First World War and its deployment of warfare technology. Benjamin claims that our relationship with nature should be one of interplay and technology should be used to

enhance an equal relationship between humans and nature. In other words, technology should be used to improve our relationship with nature, instead of using it as a form of (self-)abuse.

From his first anthropological texts, Benjamin promoted a union with nature that would incorporate both living and non-living matter. In "Outline of the Psychophysical Problem" (1922-1923), he claims that humankind can create a collective body through the incorporation of nature – the nonliving, plants and animals – into the body of mankind "by virtue of the technology in which the unity of its life is formed."[8] Benjamin thereby suggests that technology functions as the medium in which humanity can form a single body with the other elements of nature – because the human is itself nature. He also argues that everything that completes humanity's happiness should be considered as part of this bodily life, as its organs. For that reason, Benjamin suggests in "Theories of German Fascism" (1930) that technology should be conceived of as a key to happiness.[9] He resumes this idea in "To the Planetarium," and argues that technology is organizing a new *physis*, or collective body for mankind, different to previous configurations of humanity such as families and nations. In this way, he claims that technology is already changing the way human beings relate to each other and organize collectively. Although in that same text he had prefigured a miscarried reception of technology, epitomized by the use of chemical warfare in the First World War, Benjamin believed that the new collective *physis* organised by technology could still be rescued and adopted by humankind. Once the recovery of this techno-body was complete, mankind would take a new step in its development towards a better relation to nature and to itself.

Benjamin thus introduces an environmentalist concern for our conception and reception of technology which may be pertinent to a reconsideration of the posthuman interaction with nature. However, one need only look at the language used by Benjamin in this passage to understand that his theory is hardly scientific. The Marxist environmentalist scholar John Bellamy Foster has for example criticized the "ecologic critique" developed by the Frankfurt School for being "almost entirely culturalist in form, lacking any knowledge of ecological science." By way of contrast, he compares such a critique to Marx, whose theory of the metabolic rift was based on the work of Justus von Liebig, the founder of organic chemistry, and entailed an analysis of the real, material alienation of nature.[10] Any criticism of Benjamin emerging from the new materialisms would undoubtedly point out his unscientific approach to this question.

The problem with the new materialisms, however, is that they go as far as to provide (inert) matter with a form of vitalism. Thus, new materialists argue that science has revealed that matter has its own modes of self-transformation and self-organization and, therefore, should not be conceived of as purely inert or passive, but as having its own agency. This conception, they argue, disputes that only humans have an agency "and the corollary presumption that humans have the right or ability to master nature."[11] Although the conclusion is well-aimed, this view is dangerous in the sense that it equates human agency with that of nature and, therefore, also a politically, ethically-bounded agency to a natural one. As I will show later, Benjamin's call for a new, more real humanism criticizes the bourgeois, imperialist idea that humans have the right to master nature without adopting the dangerously anti-humanist belief that any material element, either inert or alive, should have the same rights as human beings.

Benjamin's unscientific, but socially and politically pertinent, theory on the relationship of society and nature would perhaps be perfected through incorporating the contributions of scholars such as Manuel Sacristán, James O'Connor, John Bellamy Foster, Marina Fischer-Kowalsky, Michael Löwy and Paul Burkett, who have addressed ecological problems from a Marxist point of view with a more scientific base. Nonetheless, I argue that his sensitivity to the way we relate to nature – which he extends to animals, as I will show later – is highly relevant in reconsidering our conceptions of science and technology and the social consequences they may entail.

THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN HUMANS AND NATURE

If technology is the medium by which to reorganize and establish a better relationship between humanity and nature, cinema is the arena wherein the correct interplay between nature and humans is rehearsed. As I will expand below, the space of cinema reception appears as a training ground for the incorporation of "second technology" into the collective body of mankind – in this case represented by the audience. Benjamin gives some clues as to how this technological interpenetration of film image and body should take place in essays such as "Surrealism," "Experience and Poverty" and "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility." In the first essay, Benjamin argues that the praxis of the surrealists opens up a space in which the "energies of intoxication"

supplied by surrealism can set off a revolutionary discharge through the bodily innervations of the collective. He thinks that, in their practice, the surrealists had succeeded in bringing together what he calls image-space (*Bildraum*) and body-space (*Leibraum*), challenging the traditional conception of art, in which the viewer stands at a distance of two metres from the artwork. Reading the "Surrealism" essay in connection with Benjamin's writings on film, Miriam Hansen argues that the technologies of reproduction had also opened an expanding image-space which had become – as the surrealists recognized – the habitat of the collective.[12] Benjamin understood that in this space, opened up by technology, a new *physis* could be re-appropriated and embodied by the collective. The collision between body- and image-space in cinemas could supply the necessary energies to innervate and, therefore, empower the collective body in a revolutionary way, as he demanded at the end of the essay on surrealism. Uwe Steiner argues that the specific conditions of the film medium led Benjamin to perceive the creation of a collective body. In this way, the interaction of human beings with technology in that space appears as a rehearsal for a revolution that pursues the innervation of the technological organs of the collective. "What is merely practiced in the cinema," says Steiner, "exists for real in the revolution," when the collective attempts to gain mastery over the new techno-body.[13] Benjamin uses the Freudian term "innervation" here, which means "a rush of energy through the nervous system" to stress, on the one hand, the corporeality of the collective *physis* to which technology adapts itself and, on the other, the energy which, according to Benjamin, is deployed by technology — an energy which can be both advantageous and destructive, depending on whether the technology is put to humane use or, on the contrary, strips human needs.

It may seem at first sight that, for Benjamin, cinema automatically enables a (positive) collective technological innervation. Nonetheless, in all his writings on film he demands, on the one hand, a political effort to bring a liberated film technology closer to the audience and, on the other, a critical and de-mystified representation of technology. Thus, while he denounces the fact that film capital uses the revolutionary potentials of film for counterrevolutionary purposes – for example, by adding a cultic character to the movie star – he praises Soviet films like Vertov's *Three Songs of Lenin* (Tri pesni o Lenine, 1934) and Eisenstein's *The General Line* (Staroye i novoye, 1929) for providing a new use of the camera and using amateur actors. In "On the Present Situation of Russian Film" (1927), he also celebrates the use of traveling cinemas to arrive at the remotest regions of the Soviet

Union and provide historical, political and technical information to the peasants.[14] For Benjamin, these efforts to expose such audiences to film and radio were the biggest mass-psychological experiments hitherto undertaken and turned the Soviet Union into a grandiose laboratory for technological innervation. However, he also considers that the Soviet "new man" is not critical enough to appreciate irony and scepticism in technical matters.[15] Benjamin bases this on his abhorrence of the Russian comic actor Igor Iljinsky, who he considers a bad imitator of Chaplin, and the fact that American slapstick has not succeeded in the Soviet Union. Certainly he held American slapstick, and Chaplin in particular, in greater esteem. Through his characteristically syncopated gestures, Chaplin allegorically represented the alienation of his contemporaries in their everyday interaction with technology. Through his films, Benjamin argued, the audience could perform a more therapeutic reception of technology, resulting in a kind of catharsis via which spectators were able to receive a psychic immunization against the tensions engendered by the rapid technologization of society.

It is in "Experience and Poverty" that Benjamin explains how, in cinema reception, the audience can collectively embody and innervate the energy supplied by films. Mickey Mouse and his friends appear here as paradigmatic figures which show new, possible rearrangements of technology into the human body.

> Tiredness is followed by sleep, and then it is not uncommon for a dream to make up for the sadness and discouragement of the day—a dream that shows us in its realized form the simple but magnificent existence for which the energy is lacking in reality. The existence of Mickey Mouse is such a dream for contemporary man. His life is full of miracles—miracles that not only surpass the wonders of technology, but make fun of them. For the most extraordinary thing about them is that they all appear, quite without any machinery, to have been improvised out of the body of Mickey Mouse, out of his supporters and prosecutors, and out of the most ordinary pieces of furniture, as well as from trees, clouds, and the sea. Nature and technology, primitiveness and comfort, have completely merged.[16]

Benjamin returns here to the image of an electric discharge introduced in the "Surrealism" essay to refer to the empowering quality of art on a collective body. In the reception of Mickey Mouse films, Benjamin argues that a similar interpenetration between image- and body-space takes place. Indeed, in a note written in relation to "Experience and Poverty," "*Erfahrungsarmut*," Benjamin states that these films may be

incomprehensible to an individual, but not to an entire audience, since Mickey Mouse governs the whole public rhythmically.[17] The reactions to these images are therefore regrouped and concentrated into a mass, which acts as a body precisely because technology has been so interpenetrated into the audience that it moves according to the rhythm set up by the cartoons. This reading, however, would miss the relevance of representation. What Benjamin appreciates in Mickey Mouse cartoons is that they hyperbolize the promises of technology and, at the same time, improvise out of them a regime of play and dance. Technology does not appear as a mechanization or ossification of the body, as many contemporary critiques of technology depicted it, but as if technology had already been adapted and embodied by the characters – that is to say, as if technology had become their own nature. This interpenetration between nature and technology which occurs in Mickey Mouse films and in the cinema audience is a constant in Benjamin's oeuvre, as well as in contemporary debates on posthumanism.

THE *NATUR*/*KULTUR* DEBATE

One of the most important achievements of posthumanism is to have called into question the traditional dualism between nature and culture. Scholars on posthumanism such as Rosi Braidotti have argued that, due to scientific and technological advances, the borders between nature and culture have been blurred.[18] This idea was already present in Donna Haraway's seminal text "A Cyborg Manifesto" (1983), in which she claimed that, because of the reconception of organism and machine, "the certainty of what counts as nature is undermined, probably fatally."[19] Benjamin was already aware of the blurring boundaries between nature and culture – or, at least, between nature and *Kultur* or civilization – and thus criticized the traditional dualism between them through the concepts of "natural history" and "second nature."

Adorno was probably the most perceptive author to assert the centrality of these two concepts to Benjamin's philosophy. I will, in fact, draw on Adorno's reworking of Benjamin's concepts to claim their relevance for the present discussion. Adorno first used Benjamin's concept of "natural history" in his 1932 lecture "The Idea of Natural History," in which he aimed "to dialectically overcome the usual antithesis of nature and history."[20] This was directed particularly against the tradition of subjectivistic idealism, which

understood nature in opposition to spirit and history, and the ontological interpretation of history proposed by Martin Heidegger in his *Being and Time* (1927).[21] Adorno argued that history and nature each have two poles: one dynamic and the other static. Nature has thus a double character: on the one hand, a positive, materialist pole, referring to concrete, existing living beings and, on the other, a negative, mythical one, in which nature is understood as the world not yet incorporated into history, not penetrated by reason. In this latter pole, nature is out of human control and mythically understood as "what is eternally there." History, similarly, insofar as it was determined by the fact that it was only reproducing the same social relations, could be conceived of as natural rather than historical. Adorno wanted to maintain these two poles, i.e. transitoriness and myth, for his project of negative dialectics. Otherwise, if nature and history were posited as theoretical ontological principles, the double character of both nature and history would be lost and thus either social conditions would be affirmed to be "natural" or the historical process would ontologically be posited as "essential." The irrational material suffering of history could therefore be understood as mere contingency, as in the case of Hegel, or as something essential to history, as in Heidegger. The result, argues Susan Buck-Morss, would always be "the ideological justification of the given social order."[22] This concept, in conclusion, is particularly useful in opposing the traditional dualistic understanding of nature vs. culture, as well as nature vs. history and civilization.

Benjamin's division of nature into "first" and "second nature" in the first version of "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility" (1935) follows a similar dialectical structure. It was in fact Adorno who suggested to him in a letter that he use this term.[23] "Second nature" can be understood as the world of human convention or man-made structures, in opposition to "first nature," an untouched nature that develops independently of the agency of man. In the "Work of Art" essay, Benjamin describes film technology, that is, a technology liberated from a ritual function, as a "second nature." Benjamin points out that this "second nature" now stands in relation to society as elemental as "first nature" once stood to primeval society: "Humans of course invented, but no longer by any means master this second nature which they now confront; they are thus just as compelled to undertake an apprenticeship as they were once when confronted with first nature."[24] He argues that although people do not have the capacity to control that "second nature," as Lukács put it in *The Theory of the Novel* (1914-15) and "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat" (1923), they can at least take up an

apprenticeship and learn how to confront it. Film comes into play here: "art once again places itself at the service of such an apprenticeship—and in particular film."[25] Film is therefore the medium through which the audience, collectively, can better understand that "second nature" that, in Lukács's words, appears incomprehensible to the individual. This is what Benjamin means in a fragment of his article on *Battleship Potemkin*, "Reply to Oscar A. H. Schmitz" (1927), which he later repeats almost verbatim in the "Work of Art" essay:

> To put it in a nutshell, film is the prism in which the spaces of the immediate environment—the spaces in which people live, pursue their avocations, and enjoy their leisure—are laid open before their eyes in a comprehensible, meaningful, and passionate way. In themselves these offices, furnished rooms, saloons, big-city streets, stations, and factories are ugly, incomprehensible, and hopelessly sad. Or rather, they were and seemed to be, until the advent of film. The cinema then exploded this entire prison-world with the dynamite of its fractions of a second, so that now we can take extended journeys of adventure between their widely scattered ruins.[26]

This function, however, not only has to do with historically adapting human perception to the chaotic, fragmentary reality of modernity, as he seems to suggest in the "Work of Art" essay.[27] It is also a question of incorporating that "second nature" into the collective audience, which is understood as a body, through a rush of energy. For that very reason, Benjamin claims: "To make the enormous technological apparatus of our time an object of human innervation—that is the historical task in whose service film finds its true meaning."[28]

AN EMANCIPATED TECHNOLOGY

Benjamin's embrace of the incorporation of "second nature" and technology into the (collective) human body may seem uncritical. I will show, however, that Benjamin is calling for an adaptation to a specific type of technology; a technology which is liberated from its mythical pole and is conceived as promoting a positive relationship with nature. For that reason, he divides technology into "first technology," which corresponds to the capitalist-imperialist conception of technology and exists in fusion with ritual, and

"second technology," which aims at the correct interplay between humanity and nature. Sami Khatib has described this "second technology" as "an emancipated technology which would open up a new *Spielraum*, field of action, beyond domination and instrumental means-ends-relationships between nature and man." Not surprisingly, he refers to this new relation of interplay as a "post-humanist constellation of nature and humankind."[29] Through "second technology," in short, Benjamin attempts to escape from the imperialist understanding of technology as the mastery of nature (and other human beings) by man.[30] Benjamin was aware that social relations are embedded in technology. Thus, technology should not be taken as a type of determinism; it should rather be understood historically as a system that depends upon social structures and relations among people. Indeed, Benjamin thought that technology had great potential to rearrange and reorganize social relations. Esther Leslie argues that for Benjamin there was an elective affinity between technology and humanity and that art was the space where this elective affinity could be played out. For that reason, his writings on the politics of art "attempt to compensate for deficiencies in the social organization of *Technik*."[31] These deficiencies had led to a misuse of technology. In the "Work of Art" essay Benjamin analyses this use of technology, and claims that if the property system continues to impede the natural use of productive forces, the energy deployed by technology will press towards unnatural ends, that is, war and human annihilation.[32] Art, and particularly film, as an emancipated "second technology," acts as the medium through which humanity should perform a salutary collective adaptation of technology and help gain mastery over the new techno-body.

Within posthumanism, there are different, often divergent, trends regarding the relationship of (post)humans with nature. Transhumanism, normally considered to be a different phenomenon to posthumanism, but often introduced as part of the same project, defends human enhancement through the incorporation of science and technology. For transhumanism, this incorporation is inscribed in a biological and technological evolution that is already changing the notion of the human. Francesca Ferrando has criticized transhumanism because in it "technology becomes a hierarchical project, based on rational thought, driven towards progression."[33] In other words, this trend is still rooted in the Enlightenment and in the model of rational humanism. For that reason, Ferrando refers to it as "ultra-humanism." Benjamin's theory is particularly useful here in order to denounce this uncritical embrace of technology by transhumanism. This trend does not

take into account the fact that specific conceptions of technology and science embed a relation of exploitation to other elements of nature – i.e. other humans, animals and the natural environment – and, therefore, their adoption into our own nature may support and encourage those exploitative relations.

Critical posthumanism has nonetheless generally embraced environmentalism as a way of thinking about the world beyond the merely human. Braidotti, for example, has celebrated the link made by environmentalist theory "between the humanistic emphasis on Man as the measure of all things and the domination and exploitation of nature," as well as its condemnation of "the abuses of science and technology."[34] I claim that Benjamin provides a more complex and interesting alternative to understanding *what* and *when* technology should be incorporated by humanity, inviting us to reconsider and rearrange our own relationship to the other elements of his broad conception of nature – which includes the human-made "second nature."

BARBARISM

Benjamin's most important contribution to posthumanism comes nonetheless from his open battle with traditional, bourgeois humanism – although I argue that this cannot be understood without his previous texts on technology and anthropology. His critique of humanism took a programmatic character in a number of texts he wrote in the period ranging from 1931 to 1933, notably "The Destructive Character" (1931), "Karl Kraus" (1931) and "Experience and Poverty" (1933), but also his note on Mickey Mouse from 1931. In these texts, Benjamin reflects on the consequences of the Great War on long, vital experience (*Erfahrung*). Taking advantage of a situation that he refers to as a poverty of experience and culture, Benjamin calls for a programmatic rupture with tradition and for a "new, positive barbarism" that breaks with the cultural heritage of the past. According to Maria Boletsi, this poverty should not be understood as lack, but rather as excess: "an excess of ideas and styles and an oppressive overload of culture in which people are swamped." Thus, Boletsi argues that "the answer to this new poverty should not be sought through an attempt to reconnect with the great past traditions, but by professing this poverty in order to explore new modes of being."[35] This break is first announced in "The Destructive Character," an article that Benjamin wrote for the

Frankfurter Zeitung in November 1931. In this text, he praises the need for a "destructive character" which cleared away and rooted out the traces of that age. Only by separating itself from traditional, bourgeois notions of humanism, argues Benjamin, will a real humanism arise.

In "Experience and Poverty," Benjamin claims that, especially because of the monstrous events of the First World War and its deployment of warfare technology, experience has fallen in value and is no longer passed from one generation to the next. In a Germany blighted by economic crisis, economic poverty was thus joined to a poverty of experience. Long, vital experience (*Erfahrung*), as true experience, was no longer possible, as he suggests in a fragment that he repeats in "The Storyteller" (1936), which focuses on the inability of the soldiers who returned from the First World War to tell stories about their experiences on the battlefield. The new world that emerged from it was, therefore, experientially empty. Benjamin argues that humanity should be honest enough to admit bankruptcy and to acknowledge that such a stage is "a new kind of barbarism." In this way, once it is realized that culture and human experience are now part of a new kind of barbarism, says Benjamin, we can introduce "a new, positive concept of barbarism."[36] The positive barbarian appears here as a posthuman figure able to make that new start, to begin from scratch with a little and build up further.

In contrast to the common understanding of barbarism as the opposite of civilization and *Kultur*, Benjamin famously stated that there is no document of culture free from barbarism.[37] In similar terms to the non-dualistic relation of nature and culture, here Benjamin highlights the blurring distinction, and inherent interpenetration, of the two terms. Although Boletsi frames Benjamin's programme of positive barbarism in the context of the threat of fascism, Khatib points out more accurately that it is not only fascism that Benjamin opposed. The point, claims Khatib, is that for Benjamin "bourgeois culture and Western civilization ... *are* inherently barbaric."[38] Thus, he suggests that Benjamin's project in this age of (experiential, cultural and economic) poverty was to shatter the "fantasies of capitalist progress, perfectibility and sustainability."[39] Coherent with his fierce battle against understanding history teleologically as a continuum, Benjamin suggests that the idea of progress through the intensification and growth of the productive forces of capitalism is incompatible with a positive technological reordering of the relation of nature and humankind. Benjamin's strategy, says Khatib, involves the radicalization of "the experience of capitalist alienation and impoverishment" to the point

of "exceed[ing] the horizon of bourgeois-liberal humanism."[40] At the time Benjamin wrote this article, Europe was faced by either the barbarism of capitalism or that of fascism. He was aware that barbarism could not be fought from an opposing position because culture and civilization are so deeply interwoven with barbarism that any effective critique must be made immanently, from within, adapting thinking to the impoverished reality it aims to change.

POSTHUMAN CREATURES: *BARBAREN* AND *UNMENSCHEN*

As part of his programmatic barbarism, Benjamin argued that art must be mobilized in the creation of a new culture. The select group of barbarians that Benjamin chooses for his own project are mainly modernist artists such as the playwright Bertolt Brecht, the science-fiction writer Paul Scheerbart, the painter Paul Klee and the architect Adolf Loos, but also, as a representative of popular culture and the motion pictures, Mickey Mouse.

Benjamin appreciated in the early, anarchistic figure of Mickey Mouse a playful and ironic relationship with technology. In "Experience and Poverty," he hails the fact that, in these cartoons, the characters imbricate technology into themselves, but they do so without mechanizing their bodies as a result, they rather improvise technology out of them.[41] Benjamin's first text on Mickey Mouse was a collection of notes he wrote in 1931 after a conversation with his friend, the banker Gustav Glück, and Brecht's regular composer Kurt Weill. Benjamin welcomed the fact that Mickey Mouse characters throw off all human resemblance. For him, their non-resemblance to humans disrupts the hierarchy of the animal kingdom which supposedly culminates in mankind.[42] This is, obviously, a new link with posthumanism and, more specifically, with its brand of animalism, for Benjamin criticizes the traditional understanding of the human as being on the top of an evolutionary pyramid that justifies their mastery over animals and other elements of nature. In that respect, Braidotti argues that critical posthumanism proposes a move beyond anthropocentrism and expands the notion of life towards the non-human or zoe.[43] Benjamin stresses a similar point with regard to other positive barbarians, Scheerbart's characters in his science-fiction novel *Lesabéndio* (1913), because they reject the principle of humanism, that is, humanlikeness.[44] These characters, the inhabitants of the asteroid Pallas, have no gender, control the decision to increase or reduce their species

and are absorbed by younger Pallasians when dying. As good posthumans, they can also incorporate technology into their own bodies: they are able to transform their eyes into microscopes, incorporate magnifying lenses to their own photographic apparatuses and contort themselves into radio receivers because of the electrical qualities of their bodies. The fact that Scheerbart's creatures have no gender – and no origin, since they have lived previously in other worlds – can also be understood as a posthuman quality. Along these lines, Haraway associates her cyborg dream with "the utopian tradition of imagining a world without gender, which is perhaps a world without genesis, but maybe also a world without end."[45] Miriam Hansen attempted to find in Benjamin's writings on Mickey Mouse a similar complication of sexual difference, since he referred to the character with the feminine pronoun *sie* (because the German word "*Maus*" is feminine). In order to keep this gender confusion, Hansen translates it as he/she/it.[46] Even if Benjamin consciously attempted to reflect this sexual ambiguity in Mickey Mouse cartoons, I am however reluctant to accept it, since they in fact project traditional gender roles onto animals.

If Benjamin can hardly be regarded as a feminist author (some comments and attitudes point rather to the opposite),[47] some of his utopian ideas about a new society yet to come contain interesting aspects regarding the re-organization of gender. These ideas were actually influenced by the proto-feminism of authors such as Fourier, Bachofen and Bebel – all of whom were significantly male. However precarious it may seem, an analogy can be established between Benjamin's reconfiguration of gender relations and feminist posthuman theory. In her cyborg manifesto, Haraway dreamed of a hybrid of machine and organism that would give rise to a world without gender, where nature would not be distinct from the artificially-constructed world, we would fuse with animals and machines, avoiding any form of primacy, and would take science and technology seriously, as a tool at the service of a feminist-socialist political programme.[48] Notwithstanding the obvious differences between Haraway's feminist-socialist programme and Benjamin's heterodox Marxism, both recall an interpenetration of technology and nature that would change the organic organization of civilization into families. Haraway says: "The cyborg does not dream of community on the model of the organic family."[49] In this sense, it is similar to Benjamin's project, since his idea of developing a positive relationship with nature takes technology as the indispensable medium with which to reorganize social relations and break with the traditional organization of humanity into families (as well as nations).

Besides the barbarian, Carlo Salzani has also linked Mickey Mouse to the inhuman or *Unmensch*, the third figure that Benjamin introduces in his essay on Karl Kraus, depicted as the messenger of a "more real humanism." Salzani argues that the hybrid and inhuman figure of Mickey Mouse dismisses and destroys the eternal values of the false universalism of bourgeois humanism.[50] This link can, in fact, be traced back to the 1931 note on Mickey Mouse, in which Benjamin argued that "In these films, mankind makes preparations to survive civilization."[51] This is indeed a turn of phrase from his essay on Karl Kraus written earlier that year. In that essay, Benjamin claimed that in Kraus's satiric, journalistic and theatrical work "civilization prepares to survive."[52] In order to step onto the new stage, Benjamin claims that humankind will have to merge with technology, unlike the average European, who "has not succeeded in uniting his life with technology, because he has clung to the ideology of creative existence."[53] Benjamin associates this "creative existence" with a dilettante indulging in his creation. By contrast, he argues that a more real humanism will prove itself only through destruction. Benjamin detects in the anarchistic, destructive frenzy of the early Mickey Mouse the potential to radicalize the experience of capitalism and its technologization of all aspects of everyday life to the point of exceeding the model of the human constructed and defended by liberal humanism. Only in this way, and not by means of the myth of creativity, will humanity create through technology a new model of the (post)human.

This posthuman model, argues Benjamin, is devised in opposition to both the "new man" and Nietzsche's *Übermensch*. Some authors on posthumanism have embraced Nietzsche as a potential source for their theories.[54] Such a reading is primarily based on the first part of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, in which Nietzsche claims that now God is dead, the human shall be overcome and replaced by the *Übermensch*, who will treat humans as the same laughingstock or cause of shame that apes are for humans.[55] In contrast to the heroic vision of the *Übermensch*, Benjamin scholars such as Uwe Steiner and Matthew Charles have already noted the imperfectness of Benjamin's posthuman creatures. While, in the aphorism 900 in *The Will to Power*, Nietzsche speaks of "another type of barbarian," who "comes from the heights: a species of conquering and ruling natures, in search of material to mold,"[56] the image of the positive barbarian is diametrically opposed to this. Benjamin's barbarian is antiheroic and words such as conquering or mastering are not in his vocabulary. As I have emphasized, Benjamin called for the

adoption of a technology that would produce a relation of interplay between humanity and nature, but never a relationship of domination of one over the other. The *Unmensch* and the barbarian, who unite their lives with technology, adopt precisely this type of technology, i.e. "second technology." Steiner thus argues that, "For the perspective of technology, Benjamin's positive barbarism is conceived as antiheroic."[57] Furthermore, Steiner claims that his disconcerting definition of politics in "World and Time" (1919-1920) – "the fulfillment of an unimproved [*ungesteigerten*] humanity"[58] – can only be understood as "a turn of phrase in opposition to Nietzsche."[59] In a fragment from the same time, "Capitalism as Religion" (1921), Benjamin reads the conception of the *Übermensch* as a "breaking open of the heavens by an intensified [*gesteigerte*] humanity."[60] For Benjamin, the *Übermensch* is "the first to recognize the religion of capitalism and begin to bring it to fulfillment."[61] The *Unmensch* appears thus at the other pole of this posthuman submission to capitalism.[62]

Matthew Charles understands this opposition between Benjamin's and Nietzsche's creatures as a critique of the individualism of the latter. He argues that Benjamin's *Unmensch* is an inversion of Nietzsche's superhuman, devised as a figure able to surpass the individualism of bourgeois humanism.[63] Benjamin thought that a positive adoption of technology would produce a collective body in which social relations could be rearranged and put to humane ends. For this to happen, Benjamin argued that, as he put it in the "Surrealism" essay, the dialectical annihilation of the bourgeois individual psyche was necessary, because only thus could the new, collective body organized in technology be born or reappropriated by the proletariat. This idea is taken further in a paralipomenon to the "Karl Kraus" essay, in which Benjamin states that humanity "must be abandoned on the level of individual existence so that it can come forth at the level of collective existence."[64] Benjamin's collective, imperfect *Unmensch* may thus provide a better posthuman model to oppose to the humanist prototype of the human as a white, male, individual, liberal self than Nietzsche's *Übermensch* – more than anything because of its anticapitalist and anti-individualist stance. Furthermore, the *Unmensch* also stands in opposition to transhumanism, which has been criticized by Pramod K. Nayar for being "a hagiography of techno-modifications of the human," since it believes in the perfectability of the human, considering the biological limitations of the body something to be transcended by technology.[65]

CONCLUSION

Mickey Mouse and the other creatures of his films do not engage with technology as an external force, but rather, as Miriam Hansen points out, "they hyperbolize the historical imbrications of nature and technology through humour and parody."[66] In this way, these films accomplish the function that Benjamin assigned technological art, that is, to play out the affinity between technology and humanity, in this case through a humoristic and hyperbolic representation of the promises of technology. Mickey Mouse appears, then, as a posthuman figure who has blurred the boundaries between nature and technology, between man and animal. It is also worth noting that Benjamin's programme of a "new, positive barbarism" aims to pursue a more real humanism – hence, far from an anti-humanism that would presuppose the death of man. His objective is rather to escape from the model of bourgeois humanism, which understands the human, first of all, as an individual, which, in turn, belongs to traditional (discriminatory) formations such as families and nations. I suggest that Benjamin's programme should be complemented by other (feminist and postcolonial) posthumanist theories which have criticised this model for being based on a white, European male. Nonetheless, I hope that, in this article, I have demonstrated Benjamin's relevance to current debates on posthumanism. It has been my intention to show that his philosophy may be especially relevant because it enfolds the traditional binary oppositions of nature and culture, human body and technology, barbarism and civilization into more complex constellations. Finally, I would like to argue that the creatures he devises in opposition to the bourgeois subject may also be highly appropriate in envisaging potential configurations of the posthuman.

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[1] Sami Khatib, "A Positive Concept of Barbarism: Benjamin and the Consequences," https://www.academia.edu/10235131/A_Positive_Concept_of_Barbarism._Benjamin_and_the_Consequences, accessed November 12, 2015 (Paper presented at MAMA Multimedijalni Institut, Zagreb, Croatia, February 27, 2015. A reedited version will be published in the journal *Historical Materialism*); Matthew Charles, "Walter Benjamin and the Inhumanities: Towards a Pedagogical Anti-Nietzscheanism," in Vincent W. J. van Gerven Oei, Adam Staley Groves and Nico Jenkins, eds., *Pedagogies of Disaster* (Brooklyn, NY: Punctum, 2013), 331-341; Carlo Salzani, "Introduzione: Sopravvivere alla civiltà con Mickey Mouse e una risata," in Walter Benjamin, *Mickey Mouse*, trans. and ed. by Carlo Salzani (Genova: Il Melangolo, 2014), 5-33.

[2] Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Cambridge: Polity, 2013), 1.

[3] Theodor W. Adorno and Benjamin, *The Complete Correspondence (1928-1940)*, ed. by Henri Lonitz, trans. by Nicholas Walker (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999), 146.

[4] Francesca Ferrando, "Posthumanism, Transhumanism, Antihumanism, Metahumanism, and New Materialisms: Differences and Relations," *Existenz: A Journal of Philosophy, Religion, Politics, and the Arts*, 8 (2013), 31.

[5] Diana Coole and Samantha Frost, "Introducing the New Materialisms," in Coole and Frost, eds., *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), 3-4.

[6] Pramod K. Nayar, *Posthumanism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014), 3-4. Italics in the original.

[7] Benjamin, "One-Way Street," in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Vol. 1 (1913-1926)*, ed. by Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996), 486-487.

[8] "Outline of the Psychophysical Problem," SW1, 395.

[9] "Theories of German Fascism: On the Collection of Essays *War and Warrior*, Edited by Ernst Jünger," *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings,* vol.2, part 1, 1927-1930, ed. by Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland and Gary Smith (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 321

[10] John Bellamy Foster, *Marx's Ecology: Materialism and Nature* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000), 245.

[11] Coole and Frost, "Introducing," 10.

[12] Hansen, "Room-for-Play: Benjamin's Gamble with Cinema," *October*, 109 (2004), 21.

[13] Uwe Steiner, "The True Politician: Walter Benjamin's Concept of the Political," trans. by Colin Sample, *New German Critique*, 83 (2001), 84-85.

[14] "On the Present Situation of Russian Film," SW1, 14.

[15] Ibid., 15.

[16] Benjamin, "Experience and Poverty," 734-735.

[17] Benjamin, "*Erfahrungsarmut*," GS 2.3, 962.

[18] Braidotti, *Posthumanism*, 2-3.

[19] Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 152-153.

[20] Adorno, "The Idea of Natural History," *Telos: A Quarterly Journal of Critical Thought*, 60 (1984), 111.

[21] Ibid., 116-117.

[22] Susan Buck-Morss, *The Origin of Negative Dialectics: Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin, and the Frankfurt Institute* (Hassocks, Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1977), 54.

[23] Adorno and Benjamin, *Correspondence*, 110.

[24] Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility [First Version]," trans. by Michael Jennings, in *Grey Room*, 39 (2010), 19.

[25] Ibid.

[26] "Reply to Oscar A. H. Schmitz," SW2, vol.1, 17.

[27] In the fourth thesis of the second version of the "Work of Art" essay (1936), Benjamin argues: "The way in which human perception is organized—the medium in which it occurs—is conditioned not only by nature but by history," "Work of Art" (second version), *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Vol. 3 (1935-1938)*, ed. by Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, Mass., and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002), 104.

[28] "Work of Art" (first version), 18-19.

[29] Khatib, "Positive Concept of Barbarism," 15.

[30] For a more thorough debate on "first" and "second technology" in Benjamin, see my article: Daniel Mourenza, "Dreams of a Better Nature: Walter Benjamin on the Creation of a Collective Techno-Body," *Teknokultura: Journal of Digital Culture and Social Movements*, 10.3 (2013), 693-718.

[31] Benjamin always uses the word *Technik*, which means both technique and technology, instead of *Technologie*. *Technik* covers both the material hardware of machines and the social and political relations derived from them. To preserve that meaning, Leslie keeps the original term in her book. Esther Leslie, *Walter Benjamin: Overpowering Conformism* (London: Pluto, 2000), 100.

[32] "Work of Art,"SW3, 121.

[33] Ferrando, "Posthumanism," 28.

[34] Braidotti, *Posthumanism*, 48.

[35] Maria Boletsi, *Barbarism and Its Discontents* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2013), 118.

[36] "Experience and Poverty," *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Vol. 2, Part 2 (1931-1934)*, ed. by Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland and Gary Smith (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 732.

[37] In his VII thesis "On the Concept of History," Benjamin writes: "There is no document of culture which is not at the same time a document of barbarism. And just as such a document is never free of barbarism, so barbarism taints the manner in which it was transmitted from one hand to another." *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Vol. 4 (1938-1940)*, ed. by Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (London and Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 392.

[38] Khatib, "Positive Concept of Barbarism," 3. Italics in the original.

[39] Ibid., 2. For a critique of the contemporary uses of "sustainability" from a point of view of feminist posthumanism, see the perceptive article by Stacy Alaimo, "Sustainable This, Sustainable That: New Materialisms, Posthumanism, and Unknown Futures," *PMLA*, 127.3 (2012), 558-564.

[40] Khatib, "Positive Concept of Barbarism," 2.

[41] Benjamin, "Experience and Poverty," SW2, 734.

[42] Benjamin, "Mickey Mouse," SW2, 545.

[43] Braidotti, *Posthumanism*, 50.

[44] Benjamin, "Experience and Poverty," SW2, 733.

[45] Haraway, "Cyborg," 150.

[46] See Miriam Bratu Hansen, *Cinema and Experience: Siegfried Kracauer, Walter Benjamin, and Theodor W. Adorno* (University of California Press: London, 2012), 167 and n331.

[47] There are infamously sexist passages in his oeuvre, such as the following. In a letter to Ernst Schoen from 1918, in which he speaks about the research he is doing for his dissertation on the concept of art criticism in German Romanticism, he criticizes the book *Gedanken Platons in der deutschen Romantik* by Luise Zurlinden and claims: "The horror that grips you when women want to play a crucial role in discussing such matters is indescribable." Benjamin, *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin (1910-1940)*, ed. by Gershom Scholem and Theodor W. Adorno, trans. by Manfred R. Jacobson and Evelyn M. Jacobson (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 133.

[48] Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 149-181.

[49] Haraway, "Cyborg," 151.

[50] Salzani, "Introduzione," 13-14.

[51] Benjamin, "Mickey Mouse," SW2, 545.

[52] Benjamin, "Karl Kraus," SW2, 448.

[53] Ibid., 456.

[54] Stefan Herbrechter, for example, takes Nietzsche as a referent to develop his own notion of posthumanism and, at the same time, criticize "the current widespread post-humanist techno-euphoria." Herbrechter, *Posthumanism: A Critical Analysis* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 2.

[55] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. by Graham Parkes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 11.

[56] Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, ed. by Walter Kaufmann, trans. by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), 479.

[57] Uwe Steiner, *Walter Benjamin: An Introduction to his Work and Thought*, trans. by Michael Winkler (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), 127.

[58] Benjamin, "World and Time," SW1, 226.

[59] Steiner, "The True Politician," 62.

[60] Benjamin, "Capitalism as Religion," SW1, 289.

[61] Ibid.

[62] In a note kept in the Walter Benjamin Archiv in the Akademie der Künste in Berlin, there is a graphic scheme dealing with anthropology in which the prefixes *Un-* and *Über-* appear on either side of the word "human" (*menschlich*). This is, in turn, under the heading of "person," between the individual and the divine, body and language, the daemonic and the law. See Ursula Marx, Gudrun Schwarz, Michael Schwarz, Erdmut Wizisla, eds., *Walter Benjamin's Archive: Images, Texts, Signs*, trans. by Esther Leslie (London and New York: Verson, 2007), 240-241.

[63] Charles, "Walter Benjamin and the Inhumanities," 336.

[64] Benjamin, *Walter Benjamin: Gesammelte Schriften, Vol. 2, Part 3*, ed. by Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977), 1102. Quoted in Steiner, *Walter Benjamin*, 102.

[65] Nayar, *Posthumanism*, 6.

[66] Hansen, *Cinema and Experience*, 174.

HUMAN/CYBORG/ALIEN/FRIEND: POSTWAR *RESSENTIMENT* IN JAPANESE SCIENCE FICTION AND POSTHUMAN ETHICS IN *KAMEN RIDER FOURZE*

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"In this galaxy, there's no one you can't befriend." So declares *Kamen Rider Fourze* (2011-2012), a television and film series representative of the *tokusatsu* (special filming) mode of Japanese science fiction. Over the course of this essay, we will find how this proclamation encapsulates the complex relationship that *Kamen Rider Fourze* shares with its larger historicocultural context. As a *tokusatsu* text, *Kamen Rider Fourze* is part and parcel of a moving picture culture deeply imbricated in the trauma of World War II. Wrestling with the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, *tokusatsu* imagines a reinvigorated nation through images of super robots and cyborg heroes. In essence then, *tokusatsu*, as postwar Japanese science fiction, is characterized by its Nietzschean *ressentiment*. *Kamen Rider Fourze* fits into this trajectory but more importantly it simultaneously represents a radical fissure. Informed by Martin Heidegger's considerations of technology, Donna Haraway's critique of modern subjectivity, and Jacques Derrida's theory regarding the politics of friendship, I will demonstrate how *Kamen Rider Fourze* breaks from a resentful history of trauma. As opposed to the majority of *tokusatsu* heroes, *Fourze* does not perpetuate a violent metaphysics that reproduces the relationship between victim and transgressor. Instead, through its considerations of the potentiality of technology, reflection on human subjectivity, and a rigorous engagement with the tenets of friendship, *Fourze* gestures to the possibility of an entirely different way of being, and of being with one another.

THE *RESSENTIMENT* OF JAPANESE SCIENCE FICTION

In discussing Japanese science fiction, Jeon Yun-gyeong[1] comments on the ubiquity of robots in the nation's culture, both in its media and its industry. According to Jeon, the

fascination with robotics originates in World War II. Jeon begins with the trauma of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6 and 15 of 1945 and the resulting narratives of victimization. For Jeon, that discourse was marked by the desire for an equivalent military response. Analyzing how these sentiments manifest in mass culture, Jeon argues that the proliferation of robots in Japanese media realizes the nation's desire for a super weapon to match the atomic bomb.[2] Informed by Jeon's argument, this essay approaches a substantial part of Japan's industry and mass culture as characterized by Friedrich Nietzsche's notion of *ressentiment*. The vengeful position of *ressentiment* (or slave morality) begrudges the Other, which then determines the corresponding poles of good and evil. We can observe the *ressentiment* in *tokusatsu* from the mode's early moments as it ostensibly begins with 1954's *Gojira* (or *Godzilla*)(dir. Honda Ishirō). As exemplified by *Gojira*, *tokusatsu* consists of live-action science fiction narratives that heavily feature special effects, primarily in the form of actors wearing colorful costumes. The mode includes a number of genres with *Gojira* playing a foundational role in the *kaiju* (monster) genre. In turn, *Fourze* belongs to the *Kamen Rider* (1971–) series, which is part of the superhero genre. To a certain degree, in the same way that all of the disparate genres share formal and narrative traits with *Gojira*, all *tokusatsu* texts engage the atomic bombings to some degree. In the case of *Gojira*, the film's connection with its historical context is well documented. *Gojira* was released on November 3, 1954 – just months after the U.S. hydrogen bomb tests at Bikini Atoll killed twenty-three Japanese fishermen on March 1.[3] Similarly, it is commonly understood that *Gojira* gestures to Hiroshima and Nagasaki while maintaining the prevalent anxieties in mid-twentieth-century global science fiction. But as much as *Gojira* may have engaged an international audience, we must be attentive to the film's role in postwar Japan.

While nuclear warfare was a global concern, John W. Dower emphasizes one of the key specificities to the Japanese context: only the Japanese have directly experienced the effects of a nuclear attack.[4] He comments, "Certainly the most sweeping and searing destruction ever visited upon mankind left an enormous, abhorrent, and lifelong impression in the minds and memories of all its victims."[5] Furthermore, unlike the rest of the world, Japan was unable to immediately engage the experience of the bombings. Implemented in September of 1945, U.S. censorship barred public discourse regarding Hiroshima and Nagasaki.[6] It was not until three years later that the nation was able to publicly broach the matter.[7] Popular culture would follow in six years with the release of

Gojira. The nation's complicit silence was part of a larger concession in regards to the war, as Japan swiftly and unconditionally agreed to democratization in 1945. Following the Potsdam Declaration, the newly drafted Constitution of Japan proclaimed the nation's renunciation "of war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as a means of settling international disputes."[8] The constitution continues, asserting, "Land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of the belligerency of the state will not be recognized."[9] A deep-seated sense of vulnerability accompanied the nation's comprehensive disarmament, evident in the emergence of the new term *higaisha ishiki*, or "victim consciousness."[10] *Higaisha ishiki*, or a specifically Japanese form of *ressentiment*, proliferated throughout mass culture. For example, Anne Allison contends that *Gojira* was a means for "a replaying of wartime memories" but "with a twist." The film "provided a vehicle for reliving the terrors of the war relieved of any guilt or responsibility – solely, that is, from the perspective of victim."[11] Allison makes the connection between *ressentiment* and *tokusatsu* even more explicit by mapping how the anxiety of disarmament shifts into the desire for rearmament. In discussing the censorship following the war, she argues that militarism and patriotism disappear from public life during the American occupation. Seemingly "pacifist," these positions turn into a neonationalist "warriorship" in *tokusatsu* narratives.[12] Crucial is the way in which Allison identifies postwar anxiety in science fiction. In effect then, Allison too is describing how the genre was a privileged site for discursively working through national trauma. The reason for this is because science fiction already shared a connection with what became one of the nation's major concerns following the war: science and technology.

As the nation attempted to work through the atomic bombings, the postwar conversations gravitated towards discussions of science and technology. That discourse was in turn, characterized by a deep ambivalence. A prevalent argument regarding the outcome of the war found fault in the nation's "backwardness" as opposed to the technological superiority of the U.S. And although the Japanese attributed such terrifying power to science, they simultaneously asserted that it held the possibility for recuperation.[13] This newfound fascination with science and technology led to a revived interest in the nation's youth and an immediate prioritization of science education.[14] Moreover, Japan implemented an aggressive push in the advance of science through a number of nonmilitary pursuits and civilian applications. The efforts would succeed, as the nation experienced an economic recovery that was so substantial that it is still

commonly referred to as a miracle. On the level of mass culture, the technonationalism that undergirded the nation's rebuilding efforts were represented through a generation of youthful robotic heroes.[15] These texts suggested that technology could augment the national subject and that the country could be rebuilt through the cyborg's efforts.[16] In addition, these texts asserted that the acquisition of a final weapon would also guarantee that the Japanese would never again have to experience the same debilitating trauma of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

HUMANISM IN POSTWAR JAPAN, POSTHUMANISM IN *KAMEN RIDER FOURZE*

The cyborg hero of *tokusatsu* hints at an underlying concern of the period following World War II – the reorganization of a national work ethic makes evident that national identity was under reconsideration. And this is due to the fact that Japanese subjectivity itself was indeterminate following the war. One immediate example is the new identity that emerged during this period, the *hibakusha* (bomb-affected persons).[17] The *hibakusha* were both shunned for their affliction and coopted in the processes of self-victimization, inhabiting a crucial role in the visual representation of Japanese trauma. For the *hibakusha* themselves, this conflict was part and parcel of "a fracturing of identity."[18] The *hibakusha* spoke of an experience marked by "dehumanization" and the "loss of humanity"[19] and how they capitulated "their identity as human beings."[20] Even though they were alive, the *hibakusha* were not considered to be human, neither by the general public nor by themselves. Here, human beingness and biological life become separated.

While the *hibakusha* were the most obvious testament to the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the anxiety of nuclear warfare did not end with those who were most directly affected. Not only was the entirety of Japan included, but there was also an insistence that the atomic bombs gestured beyond the national borders. To this, Emperor Shōwa asserted that Japanese surrender was necessary to prevent "the destruction of all human civilization."[21] As Dower notes, Japan's capitulation was thus elevated into an act "that saved humanity itself."[22] Similarly, in writing on the need "to abolish nuclear weapons and control science and technology,"[23] *hibakusha* and nuclear physicist Naomi Shono argues for nothing less than the revival of "the true spirit of humanity" and "a completely new way of thinking."[24] A similar strand can be found in other *hibakusha*

accounts. Contrary to the idea that the *hibakusha* inhabited a liminal space between life and non-life, some maintained that the victims had instead transcended both the corporeal and metaphysical body. This formulation of the victim insisted not on a "mere restoration or recovery of psychological functions" but a "higher level of consciousness attained through the strenuous processes of recovering those functions."[25] What we can observe here is that the atomic bombings forced the nation of Japan to reconsider its very understanding of humanity. In doing so, the possibility of an alternative metaphysics was also broached.

As a *tokusatsu* text, *Kamen Rider Fourze* too plays out the logic of postwar *ressentiment* in what Linda Williams refers to as the 'melodramatic mode of narrative.' For Williams, melodrama is not restricted to a genre but rather the fundamental manner in which filmic narratives are structured. Crucial to Williams's melodrama is the morality play where the victim-hero of slave morality begins and ends the narrative in a space of innocence.[26] That movement in turn is facilitated through the protagonist's violence, or what Williams refers to as "a dialectic of pathos and action."[27] What the melodramatic structure of both *tokusatsu* as a mode and *Fourze* as a text reveal is how narrative media is involved in the ideological propagation of Nietzschean slave morality. Relatedly, another implication becomes apparent when we turn our attention to the target audience of the *Kamen Rider* franchise, namely children. Very much a part of Japan's *Kultureindustrie*,[28] *tokusatsu* texts are commodities that bear value by distributing the dominant morality. One of the ways in which *tokusatsu* does this is evident in the central role that toy company Bandai plays. Bandai does not merely produce ancillary products for *tokusatsu* series but instead actively participates in the development of the franchises. A comparable and useful analogy can be made in high concept[29] children's entertainment in the U.S. during the 1980s. Referred to as "the toy-based program,"[30] and "30-minute commercials,"[31] these animated series were the result of close collaboration between animation studios and toy manufacturers in order to increase product synergy and reduce risk. The shared relationship informs the narrative structure of the programs, with each self-contained episode revolving around melodramatic action. The melodramatic narratives then provide "a basic conflict in every story which would capture boys' attention and give structure to their play."[32] That play would then be facilitated through the purchase of toys, which would be used towards the children's simulation of the shows. Much of *tokusatsu*, including the *Kamen Rider* franchise uses this strategy.

To this day, *Kamen Rider* remains one of the most visible and prolific *tokusatsu* franchises. Even though its ostensible market audience is children, the series continues to target a broad demographic that includes adults. One report from 2006 on the Japanese toy industry features retailer comments regarding children's *Kamen Rider* belt replicas and how they have sold surprisingly well amongst thirty-year-old and forty-year-old men. The report also mentions "the potential of a broader market for nostalgia."[33] Toys are arguably the area in which *Fourze* was most successful, with the "DX Fourze Driver" in high demand in late 2011.[34] The toy would go on to win the "2011 Hit Sales" award from the Japan Toy Association.[35] While the actual texts themselves were not as successful as their merchandise, both *Fourze*'s television series and theatrical-release films had a sizable audience. The final ratings for the television series were recorded at 5.1% with a series average of 5.8%.[36] The films performed well at the box office, as is the case with *Kamen Rider Fourze the Movie: Space, Here We Come!* (*Kamen Raidā Fōze Za Mūbī Minna de Uchū Kitā!*)(2012)(dir. Sakamoto Koichi), which opened in the number one position.[37] In addition to the close relationship between ancillary merchandise and film/television text, *Kamen Rider Fourze* maintains all of the formal and narrative practices of both the *Kamen Rider* franchise and the *tokusatsu* mode. The twenty-second *Kamen Rider* series, *Fourze* consists of a weekly episodic television series and four theatrical-release films that adhere to a cyclical, serial narrative format.

The series follows Kamen Rider Fourze aka Kisaragi Gentaro (Fukushi Sota), a transfer student to the fictional Amanogawa High School. In each episode, Gentaro uses the "Fourze Driver" to transform into Kamen Rider Fourze. With it, Fourze battles the "Horoscopes" and "Zodiarts," *kaiju* that take their forms based on constellations. What these antagonists make evident is how *Fourze* is even more explicitly engaged with science and technology as the central motif of the show is the exploration of outer space. But *Fourze* maintains a high degree of uncertainty towards this new frontier: space is the simultaneous location for unlimited potential and unknowable danger. This can be seen in the way that the main protagonists including Utahoshi Kengo (Takahashi Ryuki) and Jojima Yuki (Shimizu Fumika) share their aspirations with the central antagonist, Gamou Mitsuaki (Tsurumi Shingo). While Kengo and Yuki wish for the realization of human potential through space expedition, Gamou seeks to harness the power of space for his own purposes. In the same way that science was both the cause of Japan's complete loss at

World War II and its most viable solution for rebuilding, space in *Fourze* is a sort of deus ex machina that both causes and solves all complications.

Fourze's power stems from the central technology of the series, the Fourze Driver and the "Astroswitches." Although the narrative of *Fourze* demands the weaponization of the technology, the Fourze Driver was designed for the exploration of deep space. Along with the Astroswitches, the Driver channels the "cosmic energy" of space directly into the user. However, Fourze is not the sole possessor of this technology – instead, his enemies also utilize their own versions of the Astroswitches. While Gentaro and his allies use their switches to transform into robotic heroes, the Horoscopes and Zodiarts use their "Zodiarts Switches" to become hybrid monsters. In that sense, even though the Kamen Riders and the Zodiarts are connected through technology, they are simultaneously segregated through their morality. Interestingly enough, the show almost imbues the technology *itself* with morality: in other words, the kind-hearted Gentaro receives the "pure" Astroswitches while the students with warped ethics receive the "tainted" Zodiarts Switches. Actualizing the students' extant ill will, the switches transform the children into Zodiarts, suggesting that the technology merely magnifies the monstrosity that is already within the students' interiority. On the other hand, those who become Horoscopes, a more evolved version of the Zodiarts, maintain an even deeper sense of *ressentiment*. Thus, the text puts Fourze, the Horoscopes, and the Zodiarts into relation with one another through their shared technology. Against that mutuality, *Fourze* taxonomizes the three categories and demarcates them according to a spectrum of morality.

The way that *Fourze*'s hero shares mutual ground with his enemies is not exclusive to *Kamen Rider Fourze*. A central theme throughout *Kamen Rider* and *tokusatsu* history is the tenuous boundary that separates Self and Other. A useful starting point in considering this liminality is the central function and effect of the diegetic technology: transformation. Most, if not all *tokusatsu* heroes undergo some form of transformation or *henshin*, and in many cases the word itself is mobilized as an incantation. As previously noted, the defining feature of *tokustatsu* is its use of actors in elaborate costumes. While computer-generated-imagery is used to a great degree – a point we will return to later – it is readily apparent that live actors are performing in suits as superheroes, robots, and monsters. Non-diegetically, the audience understands that it is observing human actors. On the level of narrative however, the figures lack such legible definition. This is certainly the case

with *Kamen Rider*. Historically, the franchise has featured a series of lone protagonists (as opposed to the team dynamics in many *tokusatsu* texts) who embody some form of hybridity. For example, many of the early Kamen Riders were products of biomechanical experimentation. Yet, the texts only provide such broad, general explanations; the full nature of their transformations is never fully explained.

This unknowable hybridity is central to understanding both *henshin* and *tokusatsu* in general, and the term itself offers important hints. Written in kanji as変身, *henshin* is comprised of the Chinese characters for "change" and "body." Allison finds an explanation for the heroes' super powers (or *chikara*) in ancillary *tokusatsu* literature, which cite *karada no himitsu*, or "bodily secrets" as the source[38] In the logic of *tokusatsu* then, *henshin* is not to be confused with the costumes. While the *kamen* in *Kamen Rider* denotes a mask, it is not that the heroes merely augment themselves with equipment; instead, they rely on actual transformation on the bodily level. The heroes' bodies thus maintain a degree of instability. The resulting fluidity of subjectivity allows these figures to shuttle back and forth between humanity and an alternative, indeterminate hybrid identity. Subsequently, these figures resist the ontological distinctions that separate the human Self from the nonhuman Other. In that sense, *tokusatsu* figures align with Donna Haraway's notion of the cyborg that challenges and dismantles those very binaries. Haraway posits such alternate, radical subjectivities in a posthuman framework in order to allow for the possibility of new coalition politics that resist the humanist traditions of stratification along lines of gender, race, and class.[39] And yet, the continuity between *tokusatsu* and Haraway only goes so far. Ultimately, the *tokusatsu* cyborg does not look to utopian posthumanism. Instead, the cyborg decries Japanese disarmament and realizes a desire for a final weapon. We can see all of this in the majority of *Kamen Rider* series, including the inaugural series.

Kamen Rider (1971-1973) revolves around Hongō Takeshi – referred to in subsequent series as Kamen Rider Ichigō (number one) – and his battles with the terrorist organization Shocker. In order to execute its plan of global domination, Shocker continuously attempts to force the evolution of humanity through its experimentations. The produced monstrosities then serve as weekly antagonists for each episode. The titular hero's kinship to his enemy is even more emphatic in *Kamen Rider*, as the first Kamen Rider is himself a Shocker product, a *kaizō ningen*, or "remodeled human." However, two elements distinguish Kamen Rider

from the other *kaiju*: one, that he can *henshin* at will (unlike the more permanent monstrous states of the villains) and two, that his psyche (and morality) are intact. As we can see here, *Kamen Rider* established a number of features that informed the majority of the franchise including *Fourze*. And yet, there are significant distinctions to *Fourze* that separates it from the other series. While Ichigō and many other early Riders are Shocker experiments, the series still maintain an absolute limit to the affinity between the heroes and their villains – the organization of Shocker is indubitably evil, made evident through the Nazi iconography that *Kamen Rider* generously borrows. As we shall extrapolate later, the key difference to *Fourze* is that the hero's villains also happen to be his *schoolmates*. Another divergence is the politics of *Kamen Rider*, which position its hero as a final weapon that effectively performs the rearmament of Japan through cybernetic technonationalist augmentation. While *Fourze* follows that tradition of the franchise and begins with those politics, it dialectically arrives in a space that hews much closer to Haraway's notion of the cyborg. In other words, unlike *Kamen Rider*'s cyborg, *Fourze* does not reinstantiate the hierarchical divisions between Self and Other. And that is because *Fourze* maintains a distinctive approach to technology.

KAMEN RIDER FOURZE AS *TECHNĒ*

In order to understand the politics of *Kamen Rider Fourze*, we must begin with Martin Heidegger's treatises on technology. For Heidegger, technology encompasses a wide area that includes concerns of epistemology and philosophy. We can see this in the way that Heidegger reestablishes the connection between technology and the act of thinking in his "Letter on Humanism." Critiquing both modern conceptions of technology and modes of thought, Heidegger asserts that modern thinking is a form of "technical thinking," connected with the dominant understanding of technology. In technical thinking, reflection is part of the productive mode of technology that insists on the separation between theory and praxis and is "in service of doing and making."[40] In response, Heidegger returns to the work of Plato and Aristotle to propose an alternative: the notion of *technē*. Beginning with the etymological roots of *technikon*, or "that which belongs to *technē*,"[41] Heidegger positions *technē* or "the activities and skills of the craftsman" and "the arts of the mind and the fine arts"[42] against the technical mode of thinking. Unlike

the conception of technology that is entirely concerned with means and ends, *technē* is inextricably entwined with thinking, being, and truth.

Heidegger makes this relationship clear by citing Plato, for whom *technē* shared close proximity with *episteme*. In turn, both terms indicated a broad sense of knowing.[43] And as he insistently reminds us, the crucial dynamic to *episteme* and more importantly to *technē* is the act of revealing and opening up.[44] This is why *technē* is "a mode of *alētheuein* [truth], a mode, that is, of rendering beings manifest."[45] Heidegger thus places *technē* within *poiēsis* (bringing-forth).[46] And yet, while Heidegger details the specificity that separates *technē* and technology, he also reminds us that the two share relation to one another. After all, according to Heidegger, the productive mode of technology has its origins in *technē*. Along these lines, modern technology too has the potential to reveal and bring forth, although it is clear that this is not its main priority. Instead, modern technology reveals in a manner that changes nature into a 'standing reserve' where energy can be stored for future extraction.[47] Thus in practice, technology stands in diametrical opposition to *technē* for its essential function is not to reveal, but rather to enclose. As Heidegger notes, *gestell* (frame) is "the name for the essence of modern technology."[48]

But because Heidegger is acutely aware of the duality, he invokes Fredrich Hölderlin:

> But where danger is, grows
> The saving power also.[49]

Technē prepares us for "the propriative event of truth" or *ereignis*.[50] It reveals that which is enframed through technology as *gestell*. The two are in opposition but not categorically unrelated. While modern history has moved in the direction of *gestell*, Heidegger is proposing the possibility of *technē*. The uncertainty in this dialectic of potentiality mirrors the comportment towards science in postwar Japan, where the dangerous power that destroyed Japan also contained the saving power. In the same sense, *Fourze* takes the means of destruction that was posited as its resentful recourse, and uses it not to enframe and perpetuate the trauma of the atomic bombs. Instead, Fourze reveals that history and opens up new possibilities of being.

Fourze then signals a break. And while *Fourze*'s conception as *technē* is the driving force behind that fissure, another of its critical engagements further motivates the text: its tendencies as new media. If the posthumanism in Japan following World War II was

cybernetic, then *Kamen Rider* in the last fifteen years has been *digitally* cybernetic, with the titular hero taking on a limitless library-like capacity of digital empowerment.[51] *Fourze* demonstrates the same representability of humanness as data that can be readily modified. This includes Gentaro's obvious transformation to Kamen Rider Fourze as well as the character's codification into computer-generated-imagery. In addition, the digitality of *Kamen Rider* also concerns one of the main ways that *tokusatsu* texts are currently distributed. Domestically, the series are broadcast in High Definition signals on Sunday mornings, but internationally *tokusatsu* television is primarily circulated through the Internet via fan groups that translate, subtitle, format, and code the shows, releasing them through their webpages.[52]

Digitality permeates the narrative of *Fourze* as well, and of the characteristics of new media as posited by Lev Manovich, none are more crucial to *Fourze* than modularity. Manovich asserts that new media texts are those that consist of modular elements that can be combined to form a larger whole while simultaneously maintaining their own distinctive identities.[53] In the case of *Kamen Rider Fourze*, the preoccupation with modularity appears through the diegetic technology. The primary function of the myriad Astroswitches is the summoning of automated prostheses called "Fourze Modules." For example, the four main switches, #1: Rocket, #2: Launcher, #3: Drill, and #4: Radar, correspond to his right arm, right leg, left leg, and left arm, respectively. What we can also see here is the numerical worldview that codes the signal of the text, the textual technology, as well as the body itself. The above are just a few of over forty switches that can be used in different permutations, making the variable options that Fourze has at his disposal virtually limitless. Furthermore, a number of switches are not limited to Fourze's appendages, but rather change his entire comportment; those switches allow him to inhabit different "states" such as "Fire States" and "Elek (electric) States." What becomes apparent in this new media engagement is how *Kamen Rider Fourze* suggests an entirely different conception of the human body.

The body of *Kamen Rider Fourze* is not a homogeneous, autonomous, stable body with fixed boundaries. Instead, it is a body in a continuum that is endlessly potential and always coming-into-being. Through the Astroswitch prostheses, Fourze inhabits a space of contingency, precisely the same realm that the atomic bombs thrust Japan into. The nation ruminated on the boundaries of the human body, attempted to work through its transgression, and considered the possibility of transcendence. *Fourze* enters this dialogue by asserting that humanity *can* be transcended through technology. At the same time, the

malleable conception of the human body is not exclusive to *Fourze* and is present in other *tokusatsu* texts as well. However, unlike those texts and their heroes, *Fourze* does not merely maintain a superficial posthuman sensibility through its cyborg; instead, *Fourze* maintains rigorous posthuman ethics that reveal how the *ressentiment* of *tokusatsu* is decidedly *humanist*. In other words, because *tokusatsu* performs the fantastical rearmament of Japan, the mode also perpetuates the hegemony of humanism, which shares an uncomfortable proximity to the very source of trauma itself.

The connection between humanism and the violence of World War II becomes clearer in Akira Mizuta Lippit's discussion of animality. Referencing Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, Lippit emphasizes how humanism requires the dynamic of exclusion with specific focus on the separation between humans and animals. The exclusion of animals corresponds to the devaluing of nonhuman life, which Lippit argues finds its logical endpoint in the justification of mass murder. For Lippit, this logic finds its correlate in the justification of the Holocaust where the identification of the Jew as nonhuman was paramount.[54] Even more pointedly, Ronald Takaki argues that the atomic bombs were an act of racism, predicated on an identity politics that confronts the Japanese as absolute Other.[55] What Takaki, along with Lippit, Horkheimer, and Adorno are all identifying is what Haraway also contends: the way in which the traditions of militarism, sexism, racism, and violent nationalism are all imbricated in humanism.[56] In proposing a radical conception of humanity as modular and infinitely becoming, Kamen Rider Fourze becomes a figure of *technē* that reveals the historical notion of humanism that essentializes the body into a sovereign unit that not only prevents the coalition politics that Haraway invokes, but also legitimates the very violence that forced the Japanese to confront their own humanity. *Kamen Rider Fourze* then moves beyond the Western metaphysical tradition through its formulation of *technē* and posthuman critique. But there is another key component to the posthumanism of *Fourze*. It is the ethics of Kamen Rider Fourze himself, or to be more precise, of Kisaragi Gentaro. But Gentaro's ethics are not ethics as such. They are the ethics of friendship.

KAMEN RIDER FOURZE AND THE POLITICS OF FRIENDSHIP

In considering the politics of friendship, Jacques Derrida begins his study with a series of philosophical considerations on the matter. He begins with Aristotle and Nicomachean

ethics, which insist on "good men who are friends in the rigorous sense of the term" as opposed to "the others who are so only accidentally and by analogy with the first." Derrida then describes Aristotle's formulation of man as political being and how it leads to 'political friendship.' Counter to political friendship is Aristotle's friendship that is concerned with the matter of justice. This form of friendship is caught in the "asymmetrical and heteronomical curvature of the social space" and emphasizes accountability and responsibility. Against modern notions of the social order, the responsibility of Aristotle's social space comes before the *polis*, governmentality, and determined law. Furthermore, the responsibility of the social space is in essence, one's relation to the Other.[57] Informed by Aristotle, Derrida elevates the Other to the first order of importance and argues that friendship is a constellation with law, violence, justice, responsibility, freedom, and autonomy as its constitutive parts.[58]

Following the line that begins his essay, "O my friends, there is no friend," Derrida insists on the radicality of friendship by arguing that there are no friends; friends, or rather perfect friendships can only occur in the future as part of a completely different potentiality. Instead of operating on tacit assumptions concerning friendship, Derrida instead poses the originary questions of "What is a friend?" and "What is friendship?" In doing so, Derrida follows Heidegger in suggesting that these are philosophical questions that are also fundamentally entwined with being and truth.[59] Moreover, Derrida reveals how even rumination on friendship requires a move towards metaphysics. Similar to the possibility of posthumanism, Derrida suggests that the question of "what is" presupposes the potentiality of friendship before friendship occurs. Thus, for Derrida, it is friendship that makes *being* possible. But this is not to say that Derrida suggests an ontology to friendship – or as he refers to it, the "being-present (substance, subject, essence, or existence)" that corresponds to a causal teleology between it and being. Rather, it is the movement of friendship as *technē* that reveals the entire space. Derrida thus conceives of friendship as "this surpassing of the present by the undeniable future anterior which would be the very movement and time of friendship."[60]

Ultimately, friendship for Derrida culminates in the relation to the Other. Derrida suggests two dimensions to that relation. One concerns the "absolute singularity of the Other" in his relation to the Self. The second dimension sustains the absolute alterity of the Other in that I myself represent the Other to him.[61] But in a characteristic move, Derrida challenges the very dichotomy he himself establishes. Friendship and the Other

generate an aporia through the proximity of these two dimensions that then is further aggravated through friendship. In doing so, the Other's singularity and alterity allow him to pass through the aporia and move beyond the generality of law,[62] which we can understand as the dominant social order. Relatedly, Derrida outlines the way in which friendship can be marked by oppositions such as the "secret, private, invisible, unreadable, apolitical, private, invisible, unreadable, apolitical, or even without a concept versus manifest, public, exposed to witnesses, political, homogeneous with the concept."[63] But Derrida introduces this dichotomous history of friendship in order to insist on contingent potentiality. Michel de Montaigne provides one such model for friendship. Even though de Montaigne works in the Greco-Roman model of reciprocity – thus aligning with a binarized mode of thought – Derrida notes how de Montiagne breaks with the tradition and introduces "heterology, asymmetry, and infinity." Nietzsche and Maurice Blanchot join de Montaigne as further examples that demonstrate how there are no friends but yet there remains the possibility of friendship.[64]

As with these models of friendship, *Kamen Rider Fourze* is located in a history that maintains a certain law. Against this, the transgressive figure of Kisaragi Gentaro introduces contingency realized through *technē*, but made possible through the ethics of friendship. It is those ethics that makes Gentaro such a singular character and *Kamen Rider Fourze* a privileged object of study. In a way, Gentaro's ethics almost constitute the character's essential core. In doing so, *Fourze* too adheres to the metaphysical conceptions of ontological subjectivity. Although Gentaro maintains crucial specificities, we would be remiss to say that the figure completely transcends its context. In fact, Kisaragi Gentaro is an entirely classical protagonist of not only *tokusatsu*, but also of Japanese mass culture in general. The text codes Gentaro as a *yankii* ("Yankee"), a very particular type of twentieth-century delinquent. Interestingly enough, *yankii* culture returns our discussion to World War II. *Yankii* culture originates with jaded, disenfranchised youths adopting American youth culture. Both Gentaro's fashion (pompadour and *sukajan* jacket) and his attitude place him within this tradition. Invoking the sentiments of mid-twentieth-century Japanese counterculture, the old-fashioned Gentaro is woefully behind the times. Much to the chagrin of his hip peers who are unable to relate to his embarrassing sincerity, Gentaro bellows such statements as "Spring is the time of youth!"

Gentaro's outdated sensibility is key to the character. Opposed to the other, highly savvy youths of *Kamen Rider Fourze*, it is precisely Gentaro's old-fashioned way of

thinking that opens up new possibilities of being and relating. Unlike his friends, Gentaro is unable to adopt himself to the highly technologized, fast-moving world of *Kamen Rider*'s Japan. However, he is actually able to make the world around him reconsider its own parameters. His inability to understand technology in addition to his ethics allow Gentaro to assume the Fourze Driver and the position as arbiter of new relationships to forms of nonhuman being. From the very beginning of the show, *Kamen Rider Fourze* defines its protagonist by his will to friendship: "I am Kisaragi Gentaro! I'm the man that will make all students become my friends!" This is the logic of the text that is constantly posited as being anything but. Those around Gentaro insistently emphasize his defiance of logic and common sense. And yet his venture to befriend everyone ultimately succeeds.

With the exception of his childhood friend Yuki, all of the members of the Kamen Rider Club are initially dismissive of Gentaro. The first ten episodes of the series thus chart out the formation of the club as Gentaro befriends all of the central characters that will become his allies. The most important of those relationships is that between Gentaro and Kengo. Immediately disliking one another, their begrudging partnership is entirely provisional, as the full realization of their friendship forms one of the show's central plotlines. The stakes in their relation become clear when Gentaro asks, "How can I befriend the entire school if I can't befriend scum like you?" Gentaro of course does befriend Kengo, and thus the most unlikable student at Amanogawa High becomes his best friend. Along these lines, *Fourze* reveals that Kengo is in fact, not human but a "Core Child," or a being constructed of cosmic energy created by the "Core Switch." Gentaro's greatest friendship is thus with a lifeform that is pure energy. The friendship is so significant that it facilitates Kengo's metamorphosis where he dialectically shifts from humanity to energy before transcending his hybridity to realize his full humanity. Kengo is in that sense, a Pinocchio-like figure set to posthuman politics. Another example is Gentaro's only romantic interest throughout the franchise, Misaki Nadeshiko (Mano Erina). Like Kengo, Nadeshiko is also revealed to be an alien life form. Nadeshiko is a "SOLU" ("Seeds of Life from the Universe") manifest from pure cosmic energy. Even when Gentaro discovers that Nadeshiko is not a teenage girl but rather an alien life form that resembles an amorphous blob, his feelings do not change. Gentaro's romance, which is revealed to be another fold to his friendship, is not predicated on the human subjectivity of the Other. Everything is a possible relation.

Gentaro is so rigorous that neither sentience nor consciousness is a prerequisite for friendship. *Fourze* often emphasizes this for comedic value as when Gentaro is confronted by a personal computer in class. Unable to use the machine, Gentaro instead attempts to befriend it. Shaking the mouse as if it were a hand, Gentaro cheerfully exclaims, "Let's get along, computer." In *Kamen Rider Fourze the Movie*, Gentaro is informed that a satellite with artificial intelligence is threatening to destroy the planet. Gentaro declares that he will stop the robot, but in an entirely unconventional way: "Leave it to me, I'm, the man who will befriend satellite weapons." The narrative strategy of shifting allegiances where former enemies become allies is common in Japanese mass culture and the *Kamen Rider* franchise is no exception. But Gentaro's proclamation is a notable deviation – this is not a situation where a hero begrudgingly allies with his enemy so much as *a figure that views no one as his enemy*. In other words, *Fourze* is the only text where the strategy of alliance is applied wholesale. The rigor of the show becomes clear in how it depicts its ultimate antagonist. Near the end of the series, Gamou, aka the Sagittarius Horoscopes kills Kengo. Although Gentaro and his allies enter the series' climactic battle to stop Gamou, they do not do so with a logic of *schuld* concerning Kengo's killing. Gentaro does not desire a vengeful compensation for the debt of his friend's death. Instead, he and his friends adhere to Kengo's wishes, detailed in a posthumous letter: "If Gamou did kill me, I don't want you to hate him. It wouldn't be like you to hate others." And although Gentaro unsurprisingly defeats Gamou, Gentaro's final, radical gesture to his adversary is to extend his hand. Gamou takes it, and Gentaro's paramount enemy becomes his final friend.

In my mind, even more important is the appearance of the show's supplementary hero, Kamen Rider Meteor. Secretly a transfer student to Amanogawa High, Sakuta Ryusei (Yoshizawa Ryo), Ryusei/Meteor infiltrates the club at the behest of a secret benefactor. Gentaro senses Ryusei's lack of honesty and assures the boy that he can confide in him. In episodes thirty and thirty-one, Ryusei accepts Gentaro's offer. Making a pact with the Aries Horoscopes so that he may save his comatose friend, Ryusei agrees to defeat Fourze. Ryusei succeeds but is forcefully changed back to his human form upon delivering the fatal blow. The forced transformation reveals the true identity of Kamen Rider Meteor to the club. Having heard his explanation, Gentaro addresses Ryusei, his killer. But even in his dying moments, Gentaro expresses his content at being able to truly befriend the other boy: "Your true heart. Your true feelings, I accept them. I'm so happy. Even though it

turned out to be your desire to kill." These are the terms of Gentaro's friendship. The boy's friendship is not couched in terms where the final stakes are the sovereign self, gained through one's mastery of the Other. Instead, friendship is the only true concern, even if it requires the death of the Self.

CONCLUSION

In the first episode of *Kamen Rider Fourze*, Gentaro attempts to acclimate himself to his new school. At lunch, he sits at a "wrong table" in the cafeteria. Yuki immediately chastises him for the action and warns him of the possible consequences. She exclaims, "The seating's dependent on the groups. Look." The subsequent shots feature different groups – modular, homogeneous, easily categorized, and knowable clusters of "delinquents," "studyholics," "goof-offs," "*otaku*," and "musclemen." To this, Gentaro exclaims, "Are you an idiot? I've never heard of such a thing!" Upon finding Gentaro in her seat, the "Queen" of the school and future Chairman of the Kamen Rider Club, Kazashiro Miu (Sakata Rikako) calls Gentaro "*torashi*" or "trash." Miu's boyfriend and fellow future Kamen Rider Club member Daimonji Shun (Justin Tomimori) chimes in, calling Gentaro *gomi* (garbage). Gentaro indignantly blurts out, "Garbage? That isn't funny, I'm trash!" Gentaro's idiotic misunderstanding is commendable, as is his petulant refusal of not only the social law, but also the logic and common sense that undergirds it. In addition to its function as a critique of the way of things, his gesture is also the audaciousness to demand an alternative. It is the willingness to push through trauma and to turn away from *ressentiment*, to see the possibility of a different way of being. It is the admirable ability to have the courage to defiantly say without embarrassment, "I'm trash!"

Manifest in Gentaro's bold proclamation that he is simultaneously trash but also the person to befriend everything in the galaxy, *Kamen Rider Fourze* represents a radical break in the postwar *ressentiment* in the Japanese *tokustasu* tradition. *Fourze* does not merely reject the history of atomic trauma in Japanese science fiction. Instead it fully engages it along with a reconsideration of the dominant understanding of technology, a proposition regarding posthuman considerations of subjectivity, and rigorous politics of friendship. Unfortunately, both *Kamen Rider* series following *Fourze* and other *tokusatsu* franchises

such as *Super Sentai* (1975-) have not followed in *Fourze's* precedent, instead falling back into fantastical representations of vengeful wish fulfillment. Regardless, the larger trends in Japanese mass culture do not annul what *Kamen Rider Fourze* represents. Although we have yet to observe a shift in the dominant, hegemonic considerations of human subjectivity, not only in *tokusatsu*, but also in the global public imaginary, *Kamen Rider Fourze* marks an important moment that demonstrates that such a moment is not outside the realm of possibility.

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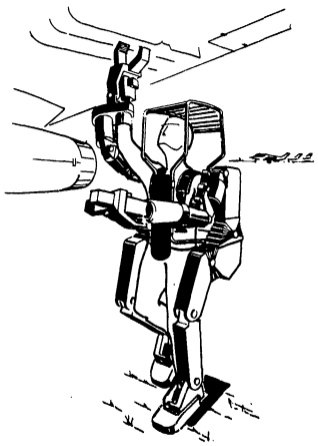
THE HARD TECHNOLOGICAL BODIES OF *ELYSIUM* AND *EDGE OF TOMORROW*

Aaron Tucker (Ryerson University)

INTRODUCTION - WHAT MAKES THE HARD TECHNOLOGICAL BODY?

The recent films *Elysium* and *Edge of Tomorrow*[1] present an evolved yet equally problematic version of the hard body that Susan Jeffords proposed in *Hard Bodies: Hollywood Masculinity in the Reagan Era*[2] For Jeffords, the quintessential 80s action star, exemplified by the character of Rambo, represents a hero that combines distinctly "American values" of individualism and free will with the brute force of an overpowered and super-muscular physical body. This hero-as-biological-spectacle also came with an inherent mistrust of technology that, as the Internet and home computers became everyday devices in the 1990s, pushed the original iteration of the hard body into obsolescence. Twenty years past a Popular Internet, *Elysium* and *Edge of Tomorrow*, using visuals and rhetoric that can be traced back to *Aliens, The Matrix Revolutions*, and *Avatar,*[3] augment the biological body with exoskeletons and, by doing so, present an updated version of the hard body that superficially reflects a 2015 movie-watching audience's extremely symbiotic relationships with their digital hardware and software. This new hard technological body reaffirms and modernizes many of the 80s hard body's troublesome values and, in doing so, heroically presents the exoskeleton-human assemblage as an unhealthy militarized version of the posthuman.



THE POWERED EXOSKELETON PROJECT

Exiting the Second World War, while in the beginnings of the Korean War and the Cold War, a large amount of the early American applications of cybernetics revolved around building "more effective killing machines," such as Norbert Wiener's work in "self-correcting radar tuning, automated antiaircraft fire, torpedoes and guided missiles."[4] Wiener's attempted to dismiss such weaponization by

emphasizing the need for a humanistic approach that firmly planted a "liberal humanist subject" in the middle of any cybernetic apparatus.[5] This raised the question of how much (and how literally) should "the man-in-the-middle…splicing humans into feedback loops with machines" be involved in the systems of military technology and warfare.[6] One of the first illustrative (public) attempts was General Electric's "Prototype for Augmentation of Human Strength and Endurance."[7] As proposed, the G.E. Hardiman (see image) would have been:

> worn as an outer mechanical garment. The exoskeletal structure will be powered to dramatically amplify the wearer's strength and endurance by a factor of approximately 25 to one…The device will provide him with a set of 'mechanical muscles' that enables him to lift and handle loads in excess of 1000 pounds….[it] mimics the movements of its wearer, presenting a literal union (man and machine). Thus the human's flexibility, intellect, and versatility are combined with the machine's strength and endurance.[8]

The "master-slave" device, funded as a "joint Army-Navy program in November 1965,"[9] would be used to load bombs into aircrafts and, more generally, to move cargo. While a full exosuit was never constructed, the illustrations included in the reports are very useful in creating the cinematic iconography of the powered exoskeletons that appear later in *Aliens*, *The Matrix Revolutions*, as well as *Avatar*. These initial filmic representations of exoskeletons are especially interesting as they allow the biological body (most importantly the face) to be viewed simultaneously alongside the technological body in a more overt version of the man-in-the-middle than the sealed *Iron Man* and *Pacific Rim* suits, while also remaining more "human" than the completely mechanical titular figure of *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*.[10] Yet, these early cinematic exoskeletons do not play nearly the central role that they do in *Elysium* and *Edge of Tomorrow*; the exoskeletons inhabited by Max (Matt Damon), Kruger (Sharlto Copley), Cage (Tom Cruise) and Rita (Emily Blunt) are deliberately predominant, a spectacular and heroic blend of the visible human with augmenting technology. Looking remarkably like Warrior Web, a contemporary DARPA prototype,[11] these film portrayals are a nostalgic harkening back to the "hard bodies" of 1980s. According to Jeffords, the markedly white, masculine and American body exemplified by the *Rambo* films was a distinctly militarized projection of a unified national identity; the

hard body, despite the cartoonish "muscular physiques, violent actions, and individual determination," were representative of the "average citizens'" who was "thrust forward into heroism…in defiance of their governments and institutional bureaucracies" who then wished to re-center power back to the "heroic, aggressive and determined" citizens who populated the country.[12] Such a body was "a strong one, capable of confronting enemies rather than submitting to them, of battling evil empires rather than allowing them to flourish, of using its hardened body – its renewed techo-military network – to impose its will on others."[13]

Yet, writing in 1994, Jeffords flagged the shifts away from these hard body into a "more internalized and emotional kind of heroic icon."[14] As explained in more depth later, the explosion of Internet usage and infrastructure from the mid-1990s onward parallels this internalization, turning Americans from the unified group constructed under Regan into a more virtual and globalized populace in the 2000s. Further discussion of how or why the heroic bodies post-Regan film got "softer" is beyond the scope of this paper,[15] but it is clear that the technologically-augmented hard bodies resurfacing in 2015 cinema combine the 80s spectacular and fetishistic physical bodies with the new "mechanical muscles," equally spectacular, of flexibly wearable and networked technology. In echo then of the problematic soldier-bodies created by the "hardness" of characters like Rambo, the hard technological bodies of *Elysium* and *Edge of Tomorrow*, while adjusting slightly to include the female Rita (the "Full Metal Bitch"), similarly give the machinic audience a glorified and spectacular militarized version of the posthuman that is fascinated with the combination of physical muscles and technological weaponry.[16] Specifically, it is the augmentation of the exoskeleton, exalting and paralleling the 2015 militarization and weaponization of the Internet and wearable technology, which gives the same hard-body fantasy of beyond-human capabilities, operating as a steroid-esque enhancement granting exaggerated speed and strength.

These hard technological bodies do very little to reflect the cooperative modes in which the machinic audience engages with their hardware and software and do little to represent the complex and messily internalized ways a 2015 user of the Internet and computerized hardware actually interacts with his/her technology. This encourages the contemporary machinic movie audience to view themselves not as the healthy symbiotic posthuman N. Katherine Hayles promotes, but to instead treat their computerized

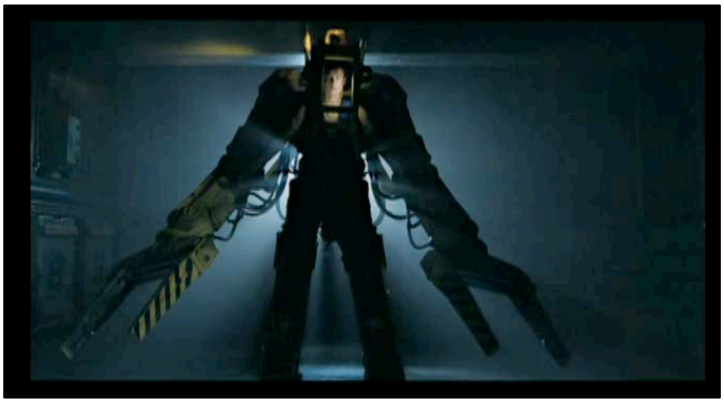
technology (both networked and non-networked) as a weapon to heroically go to combat with.

PART II – JEFFORD'S HARD BODY IN DEPTH AND INITIAL CINEMATIC EXOSKELETONS

The key to understanding the hard body is to recognize that it encourages the movie-watcher to co-identify his/herself as "masterful, as in control of [her/his] environments (immediate or geopolitical), as dominating those around [her/him]."[17] For Jeffords, this manifested in the over-muscled bodies that had "mastered" their own biology and showed themselves in "control" (a term echoing early cybernetics) of the various weapons they wielded, technological (guns, vehicles) and biological (fists) alike. However, the relationship between the hard body and technology, Jeffords points out, is fraught by the tensions between being an "individual" and a (literal and figurative) "fighting machine." She typifies the relationship between the hard body and technology as falling into two categories: in the first, technology is "a military resource"; in the second, technology is meant to "circumvent human 'freedoms'."[18] Therefore, users/soldiers should not over-rely on "technological innovation" to establish mastery of his/her environments, but rather "rely on individuality…as the true basis for American superiority."[19] Jefford's theorizing echoes Wiener's sentiment (as summarized by Hayles) that "the ultimate horror is for the rigid machine to absorb the human being, co-opting the flexibility that is the human birthright."[20] Behind the hard body must be a "free" and (biological) "human" mind: being the "man-in-the-middle" of a radar display or antiaircraft guy is not the "best" use of military technology; the "best weapon" is "not then a tank or nuclear bomb but the 'free' American mind inside a hard body";[21] it is only "'free-thinking' human individualism [that] can put technology to good uses."[22] Extending then to the hard technological body, the exoskeleton potentially takes the best of both machine and human biology and combines them, while still granting the human element control of the whole assemblage.

Importantly, "domestic hard-body films display sophisticated military hardware only in the hands of enemies…and [are] used only to deny human 'freedoms.'"[23] This makes

more sense knowing the relatively small population of "average" movie audiences who had access to "sophisticated" home technology, like personal computers; for the 80s movie-going audience, those technologies would be foreign and especially unnatural next to biologically-based hard bodies. However, home computers became cheaper in early 1990s and the Internet moved from private institutes (military, government, university) into public realms; aided by the 1993 release of the first user-friendly Graphical User Interface (GUI) for the Internet, Mosaic, computerized technologies came into the private home and became normalized components of an average citizen's life.[24] Too, as texts like Manuel De Landa's 1991 text *War in the Age of Intelligent Machines* make clear, artificial intelligence and networked computing had already migrated to national war machines, symbiotically melding with, and restructuring, individual soldiers, larger strategic planning, weaponry, communication systems etc.[25] Though this prism, the hard technological body begins to take shape, with "mastery" shifting from "immediate or geopolitical" concerns to the more globalized and virtual ones surrounding users' incorporation of an exploding machine population into the everyday human body and its actions.



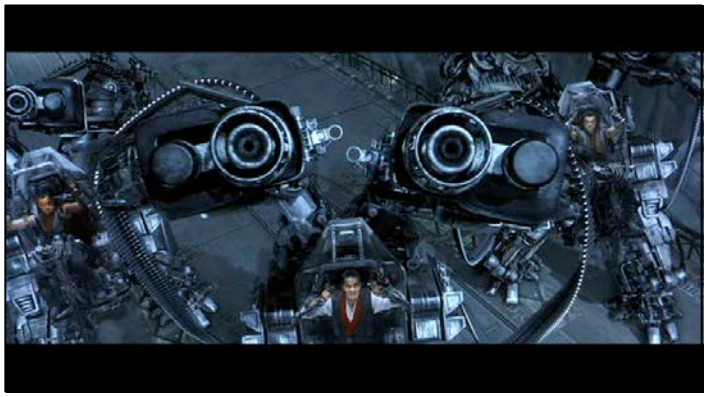
The notion of "borders," both national and corporeal, becomes vital during this transition. Decades earlier, Wiener stressed that borders must not be "inflexible walls": "when the boundaries turn rigid or engulf human so that they lose their agency, the machine ceases to be cybernetic and becomes simple and oppressively mechanical."[26] For the increasingly normalized posthuman of the 1990s, formerly submerged in the values of the 80s hard body, there would have been a need to keep the boundaries between the technological and biological clear; as Jeffords argues, the hard body resists being "messy" or "confusing" and instead responds by "having hard edges, determinate lines of action, and clear boundaries for their own decision-making."[27] The initial film representations of the exoskeleton showcase very distinct and clean boundaries between the technological and biological elements: in Ripley's (Sigourney Weaver) use of

an exoskeleton in her fight against the alien in *Aliens*, the film goes to great lengths to make sure her biological body, though united with the machine, is clearly separated (see image); in particular, the repeated shots of her expressive face, while the machine whirl of the exoskeleton grinds in the background, clearly delineates her machine parts from her human parts and makes apparent her mastery. Likewise, the exoskeletons used by the last human inhabitants of Zion in *The Matrix Revolutions*, as a military-based example, give a similarly clear division between biological-technological as each soldier-assemblage visibly centralizes the human within the exoskeleton. For users in the 1990s and early 2000s still coming to grips with the interpenetration of visible and invisible/virtual technologies into their everyday actions, this reassuringly-present human body, clearly separated, would be necessary; the imagined cybernetic systems/circuits remain under human control and demonstrate that the augmented human has mastered the machine as a tool.

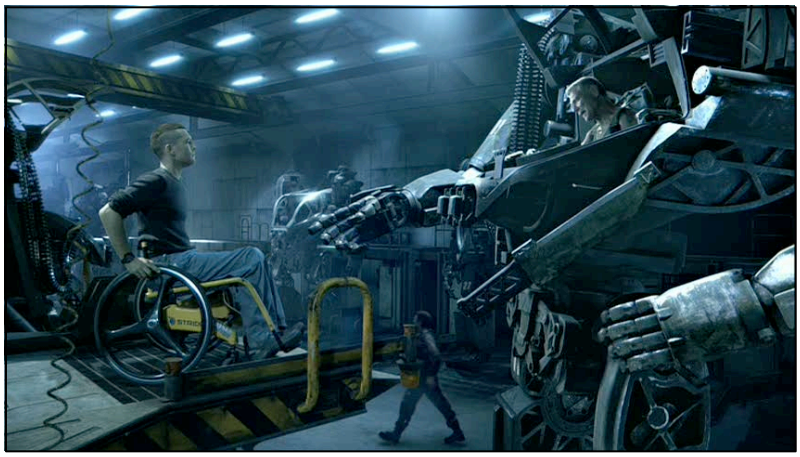
We can also see the beginning small steps towards the hard technological body in *Aliens* and *The Matrix Revolutions* in how spectacular and heroic the exoskeleton/augmented-human is portrayed. When Ripley is chased by the alien queen and forced, in desperation, to don the exoskeleton, she is revealed slowly, dramatically back-lit. The machine itself is imposing: the claws, though obviously artificial and slow, are menacing. While the Frankstein-esque walk forward is awkward and overtly mechanical, far from the "feeling" and mobility of the G.E. Hardiman, Ripley's first blow is powerful, striking the seemingly indestructible queen to the ground. The speed and agility of the queen is offset by the lumbering force of the exoskeleton's amplified muscles, expertly wielded by Ripley, and the repeated shots that exchange between Ripley's concentrating face and the movements of the machine give the audience a sense of their combined power. Less spectacular than later portrayals, Ripley's exoskeleton, repurposed as weapon, is still the heroic assemblage that defeats the queen and saves herself and Newt (Carrie Henn).

Fifteen years later, the military exoskeletons of *The Matrix Revolutions* are amplified and weaponized versions of Ripley's (see image). As the soldiers prepare for the climactic combat scene in Zion, the music swells heroically and the camera stares down the barrels in anticipation of the oncoming enemies. Captain Mifune's (Nathaniel Lees) cry of "For Zion" just as the machines enter recalls the same clichéd patriot-shouts of "traditional" war films. Yet, while Ripley acts alone, the *Matrix* establishes an army of exoskeletons,

showing dozens of them shooting up, together, as a unit. Again, the score underlines the battle and the camera swoops overtop to show three of the assemblages fighting together, guns never pausing; the camera alternates between shots of the mens' faces and the gun barrels firing. As the battle continues and more and more human causalities fall to the machine army, Captain Mifune becomes the film's focal point: his contorted face and primal yelling are underlined by the constant gunfire from his exoskeleton and his heroic fatal sacrifice takes place amidst a literal swarm of enemies. More so than Ripley, the *Matrix*'s exoskeletons are spectacular combat weapons and, even though they are ultimately defeated, their portrayal is closer to Jefford's heroic hard body. With the liberal human at its center, the exoskeleton becomes weaponized, and its hardened "muscles," its added strength and constantly-present guns, give an initial template that is expanded upon later in *Elysium* and *Edge of Tomorrow*.



It is intriguing then that the hard technological body in *Avatar*, in particular Colonel Miles Quaritch (Stephen Lang), bears the same filmic markers of spectacle in the film's focus on guns and super-human strength, but is instead vilified (see image). This runs parallel to *Avatar*'s release year of 2009, a period where the American movie audience had been engaged in a protracted war in Afghanistan and Iraq that their newly-elected president had promised to extradite them from; the negative portrayal of a corporate military aligns itself with that audience's pessimism and fatigue with warfare. Too, the difference can be further parsed by examining the crisis that each hard technological body is responding to. Returning to Jeffords, she states that the hard body is "justified" only when there is "a 'hard' external opponent" and that the hard body then needs to be called upon in order to "meet that threat."[28] In *Aliens* and *The Matrix Revolutions*, the external threat of an invincible alien and a seemingly inexhaustible machine army more than validates the use of the hard technological body; the justifying crises of *Aliens* and *Matrix Revolutions* go beyond the hard body's concern for a national unison, and instead unify the whole human species. However, in *Avatar*, Quaritch's corporate and military is purely



capitalistic and provides none of the unifying that the hard body requires in order to be rhetorically effective. Further, the "threat" of the "soft" Na'vi, a species armed with bows and arrows, is not one that "justifies" the use of the technology, aligning the film's version of the hard technological body with the overpowering alien or machine forces of *Aliens* or *The Matrix Revolutions* and making them, instead, a hard external threat to the protagonist Jake Sully and his adopted Na'vi.

Along these lines, the heroes of the more recent *Avatar* and *Matrix* trilogy are rooted in an internalization of networked technology that parallels the machinic audience's expectations that a relatable hero embodies the same symbiotic relationship they have with their own various networked devices and software. The immense popularity demonstrated by the financial success of the *Matrix* films and *Avatar* should not be ignored. Both movies marginalize early versions of the hard technological body because they are too-simple representations, too "literal," in their union of technology and biology; too, the pure weaponization of these assemblages simplifies the relationships between technology and biology and ignores the myriad interactions that the machinic audience undertakes when interfacing with their surrounding hardware and software. Though "softer," Neo and Jake Sully, the saviors of their films, parallel the machinic audience's complex and internal/mental relationship with their own virtual selves and give positive models for their posthuman audience that is outside the simplistic physical-only blending of the exoskeleton.

Yet, less than 5 years later, there is a pivot away from these virtual ("soft") heroes back to a more visibly blended "hard" human-technology soldier-assemblage.[29] The curious reversion back to a harder body, augmented by an exoskeleton, in *Elysium* and *Edge of Tomorrow* is a reaction to the changing shape of warfare and the general public's awakening to progressively "virtualized" combat; the exoskeleton makes the human visible and in control amongst the increased usage of unmanned drone attacks and

nationalistic cyber-warfare. The old hard body, biologically-based, is a relic, futile and rhetorically ineffective unless it can harness and master the technology (or projected technology) a 2015 machinic audience engages with; the hard technological body is an updated and awesome balance between machine and human. However, this figure's growing cinematic representations echo the same unhealthy spectacle that the hard body provided: instead of co-operating with their technologies, like Neo and Sully, the heroes of *Elysium* and *Edge of Tomorrow* clearly separate their machine bodies from their biological ones and, like the hard body, simply wield the technology as a weapon, using it as a prosthetic, externalized tool rather than as an intimate partner for further posthuman evolution.

THE HARD TECHNOLOGICAL BODIES OF *ELYSIUM* AND *EDGE OF TOMORROW*

We can begin to next unpack the evolutionary step of the hard body in *Elysium* and *Edge of Tomorrow* by returning to the notion that the hard body represents "average citizens …in defiance of their governments and institutional bureaucracies."[30] The "average" member of the 2015 machinic audience has many reasons to be suspicious of the use of technology surrounding their "governments and institutional bureaucracies," including the National Security Agency's tracking of global citizen's Internet usage, as well as the proposed SOPA and PIPA laws surrounding net neutrality. The conflicts within the two films give heroes that are fighting against many of the institutional frustrations that faced Jefford's hard bodies, in turn similarly celebrating the individual's will in the face of a corrupt and ineffective set of infrastructures: in *Elysium*, Max's triumph is over, first, the corporate makers of the robot police force that oppresses the Earth's population and then, second, the ultra-rich citizens of Elysium that are hoarding the wealth and resources; his freeing of Earth's population by his individual sacrifice/death is exactly the returning of power to the citizens that Jeffords argues the 80s hard body represents. Similarly, in *Edge of Tomorrow*, Cage must resist the unwilling and slow moving military infrastructure, headed by a defiant General Brigham (Brendan Gleeson); his breaking away from that infrastructure, as a rogue soldier, and his individual sacrifice/death in defeating the

Mimics at the end of the film demonstrates the same valuing of individuality and trust in the "free" human mind as the hard body.

While the independence of the hard technological body harkens back to Jefford's theorizing, the move to a recognition of a machinic audience's communal (global) identity, beyond strict national identity, marks a change from the 80s counterpart. *Elysium*, not so subtly, is a movie about class relations that sets clear divisions between the quarantined ultra-rich inhabitants of the space station/fortress Elysium and the overcrowded and extremely poor inhabitants of Earth who are further menaced by an army of pre-programmed robots. The film's clear enemies are embodied by the over-zealous figure of Delacourt (Jodie Foster), who is a combination of corporate interests and over-reaching national defense. *Edge of Tomorrow* has a similarly clear enemy in the alien race, the Mimics. As the Mimics run over Earth in conquest, the United Defense Force (UDF) of remaining humans rallies the global population together and begins to fight back, headed by a ground force of soldiers equipped with battle combat "jackets" (or ExoSuits). Yet, these exoskeletons are made and applied with the same desperation against an impossibly superior enemy as Max's donning of a similar device in *Elysium* does; like the 80s hard body, both films treat the exoskeletons as a justified weapon in the face of a dominant enemy. This creates a similar unity to the use of the hard technological body in *The Matrix Revolutions*: instead of uniting around a nation as the hard body did, the hard technological body reflects the increasing recognition of/exposure to other cultures brought on by the lessening of nationalistic borders that comes with an expanded use of the globalized Internet.

This reflection of increased globalization found in the hard technological body of the two films, however, overcompensates by undermining the value of the corporeal body. While the hard body worshipped the physical temples of its warriors, the worlds of *Elysium* and *Edge of Tomorrow* marginalize the biological body and create a bedrock of unhealthy and unbalanced relationships between the technological and biological entities of the film. The human bodies of *Elysium* are potentially immortal: there are "Lazarus beds" on the space station that can cure any illness and mend any physical wound near instantaneously; the villain Kruger is brought back to full health after having his face blown off by using one of the beds. The climax of the film actually celebrates the eradication of death and illness in which the human body becomes disposable and

without stakes, rendered as machine-like and replaceable as the robot army tasked with patrolling Earth. This postbiological future, initially explored by Hans Moravec and Ray Kurzweil and denounced by N. Katherine Hayles,[31] is also generated in *Edge of Tomorrow:* as Cage and Rita are able to manipulate the Mimics' abilities, effectively resetting their bodies and going back in time with each death, their bodies too become disposable. While the film eventually does away with this conceit for the culmination of the film, the first hour upholds this ability to die without penalty, to shed the biological body, as Cage uses each non-death as a means to becoming a better fighting machine. This virtualizing of the body is the unhealthy avatar-only of the overcompensating postbiological, establishing the films too far within a machinic audience's online existence without reflecting the healthy symbiotic blend between avatar-body that a 2015 posthuman experiences.

If the old biological-only hard body, un-augmented, is now too weak, and the postbiological body is too unbalanced, then the exoskeleton-warriors in both films are efforts to situate their heroes between those two poles and, by doing so, retain the troublesome values of the 80s hard body. Interestingly, both films chose to shrink the exoskeletons considerably from previous depictions: unlike Ripley's giant Hardiman-style prosthesis or the bulky, oversized extensions of *The Matrix Revolutions* and *Avatar*, the exoskeletons of the *Elysium* and *Edge of Tomorrow* shape themselves closely to the contours of the human body inside. Far more of the human operator can be seen inside them: not only are the faces of the operators more visible but so too are the muscular arms and legs, especially within Max's and Kruger's. This increased human presence offers counter-figures to the "inhuman" enemies of *Elysium*'s robot police force and *Edge of Tomorrow*'s Mimics. Too, it better reflects a machinic audience's understanding of their hardware and software as less overly mechanical and more flexible (contouring) to their own physical bodies. Most importantly, in contrast to an assemblage like Iron Man's enclosed suits, it establishes itself as compatriot of Jefford's hard body by showcasing the "liberal" human at its center, though augmented by technological muscles, firmly in control of his/her technologies.

Elysium gives two divergent hard technological bodies in the hero Max, a citizen of Earth desperately flying to Elysium to cure his radiation poisoning, and his antagonist Kruger, a secret agent working for Delacourt. On the surface, the "human" messiness of Max aligns him more with Jake Sully and makes him "softer"; yet, it is the clear and

superior enemy of Kruger and Delacourt that, like the 80s hard body, justifies his use of the exoskeleton and "hardens" him. When the audience first sees Kruger, an "asset" mechanically "activated" by Delacourt's earlier orders, he calmly pulls off his ratty overcoat to reveal the pristine and up-to-date exoskeleton underneath. Later, in his first battle with Max and the other "people smugglers" (lead by Spider (Wagner Moura)), when he does engage, he moves quickly and masterfully, walking into bullets and relishing the killing he does in close combat; he is a killing machine much like the military droids the smugglers fight mere minutes prior. The ease with which he uses the technology and his comfort is unsettling and, like Quaritch in *Avatar*, he lacks enough of the individualistic "human" to be considered heroic; he is, instead, an overpowered military machine, or rather one part of a much larger military machinic phylum that echoes the 80s hard body's Communist villains.

While Kruger is one of a unit of exoskeleton-powered soldiers (within a larger military machine), Matt Damon is the only resident of Earth that is shown wearing an exoskeleton. He begins within the corporate-military system, ironically making the very robot soldiers that police the planet; it is at this factory where he is callously exposed to a lethal dose of radiation. This lethal dose serves to remind the audience of his mortality: even in the final battles on Elysium, he has to pause in order to swallow the anti-radiation pills he's been given. While Kruger is able to step in and out of the Lazarus beds, distancing him from his biological body, Max is stabbed in the stomach in an early combat scene and must walk hunched and wounded for the rest of the film, underlined by repeated shots of the blood on his hands and the injury itself. More, Max takes no pleasure in combat: in the first battle, after he has knocked Kruger down with gunfire, he does not finish him, but rather rushes over to his wounded friend Julio (Diego Luna); this is a sympathetic action that is outside Kruger's murderous, asset/soldier instincts. The sick and compassionate human body that Max demonstrates is necessarily "softer" in order to move the character away from the singularly-focused, corporate-militarization of Kruger and to allow Max to enact his own (civilian) will, a key component of the hard body.

This vulnerable humanity is then amplified by Max's literal and figurative connections to his exoskeleton. When the audience sees Kruger stepping into his exoskeleton, they see his muscular body implanted with sensory inputs/hooks for the machine; he is gleeful as he is welded in and there is no bleeding or irritation around his implants as the machine

slides cleanly onto him. In contrast, the surgery scene that attaches the skeleton to Max is grotesque. His exoskeleton, a stolen "third generation exosuit" that is in opposition to Kruger's up-to-date hardware, is attached to him using butcher's tools in a slapdash and dirty surgery room. When the surgery begins, the first shot is of a bloody hole in the back of Max's skull; from there, bolts are drilled into him before the bonesaw cuts into the body. When he is "brought online" at the end of the surgery, there is blood around each puncture into the body; that blood seeps through Max's shirt throughout the movie, reminding the audience of the exosuit's biological body at its core. The lack of a "clean" connection to the technology makes clear that the two entities, his biological body and his technological exoskeleton, are very much separate, unlike Kruger who is so completely bonded to his exoskeleton that the borders between his body and that technology become negligible. Max then demonstrates the clear borders between biological and technological that the 80s hard body relished in; the movement towards a superficially "softer" body distances the hard technological body from the clean corporatized military force in its opposition, aligning it alongside the non-expert citizen that Jefford's says is the hard body's rhetorical target. Too, the "bloody" human within reaffirms that there is a human element (a "free" mind) inside the hard technological body, a body not transformed into a machine, but, rather, one that can then be trusted with mastery and control.

Yet, for all the "softness" Max displays, it's important to note that the hard technological body, in both films, begins with an over-strong physical body which it then straps an exoskeleton onto, making it the same unreal spectacle as the 80s hard body; while the biological body is vulnerable and messy, the exoskeleton hardens it, allowing its wearers the necessary strength to survive in combat. These technological muscles are given the same fetishistic gaze as the previous hard body films, often with the similar tropes of slow motion, close-ups on guns, and dramatic and violent enemy deaths. For

example, when Max transitions into combat, he is given the same admiration typical of soldiers within the hard body genre. In the first combat scene, after clearing his jammed gun, Max rises up and, in profile, fires his gun at the police robot in extreme slow motion (see image); the audience can clearly see the exoskeleton wrapped around his flexing arms, extended by the firing gun, before the enemy explodes. The camera switches to another angle so that the audience gets its destruction from every perspective, allowing them to relish in the spectacular power of Max's new body. A very similar sequence is given later in the film, the bullets flying and dismembering in slow motion, when Max destroys one of Kruger's fellow soldiers. Even when not extended by a gun, Max's hand-to-hand fight against another police robot ends in a slow motion show of extreme strength when Max tears off the robot's head. As the audience is consistently reminded, Max's biological body is disintegrating, so it is the hardened muscles of the exoskeleton that is allowing him to carry out these spectacular feats.

Problematically, the heroic figures of Rita and Cage in *Edge of Tomorrow* are much closer to Kruger's militarized version of the hard technological body and, more clearly than *Elysium*, the film then represents the next evolutionary step of the hard body of the 1980s into the technologically augmented, but distinctly militarized, 2015 posthuman. To begin the film, Cage is a lot like Max in that he is a civilian user of the battle jackets. As a former public relations representative, his incompetence and inexperience gives his fellow soldiers much to ridicule; he cannot even figure out how to turn his suit and gun on for many of the first combat scenes. However, Cage's transformation into a brutally effective soldier, via the Exosuit, is what makes *Edge of Tomorrow*'s version of the hard technological body such a problematic representation. In the film's opening montage, the Exosuits are explained as one of the key turning points in the battle, leading to the first victory against the aliens in five years: as Cage explains "with the new jacket technology and limited training, we've been able to create super soldiers"; the phrase "limited training" is repeated again, underlining how easy the jackets are to master and wield. Rita is held up as the paragon of the technology, said to have "[killed] hundreds of Mimics on only her first day of combat." The "revolutionary technology" is worshipped (see image): following Cage's words there is a shot of the suit by itself, lit from above in reverence; the words "Power" and "Speed" appear slowly overtop the image followed by, in quick succession, "Domination," "Fame," "Dynamic," "Fearless," "Invincible," "Precise,"

"Unstoppable," and "Superiority." These words signal the glamour attached to the Exosuits and make them a weapon to fear, covet and admire. From the beginning, the technology is presented as an unreal "military weapon," part of the oncoming "mechanized invasion" of the Mimics that is used purely for combat and conquering. While *Elysium* provides a minimal counterbalance by giving external technology the positivity attached to the Lazarus beds and the health care robots at the end of the film, *Edge of Tomorrow* immediately weaponizes its technologies and casts all of humanity in the role of soldier. To underline this, Cage confidently states "We fight. That's what we do." The collective "we" is the human race and the conflation of that "we" with the limited training required to master an Exosuit suggests to the audience that any average user can (must) transform into a fighter, a soldier.

As the film progresses, Cage exemplifies this, transforming from the "soft" non-expert into the best soldier in the whole army with the Exosuit as the primary hardening element. That new hard technological body is gazed upon with the same awe as Max's, beginning with Rita's exoskeletal assemblage. She is the super soldier from the opening montage of the film, whirling expertly through the battlefield, guns and oversized swords cutting through the enemy. The film shifts to Cage and as he "dies" and is reborn each time into the same battle, the treatment of the suit gets more spectacular. Yet, whereas *Elysium* slows down to show the hard technological body, *Edge of Tomorrow*'s over-fast treatment amplifies the exoskeletons' "speed" muscles rather than thier "power" components. The film rarely decelerates when in battle: the firing of the guns is more constant and raking, the enemies faster, more agile and far more plentiful. When Rita watches Cage in the training facility, he weaves between enemies, shoots and reloads seamlessly, demonstrating his combat expertise, all made possible by the augmenting exoskeleton. In combat, Rita and Cage don't walk so much as propel: in one sequence Rita jumps incredibly high, spins and slices a Mimic, which is then followed by Cage sliding along the ground and popping back up with his shoulder-mounted guns firing into the

oncoming enemies before literally circling his helpless squad mates to kill their attacking enemies. This all happens stunningly fast, and while the camera doesn't linger like it does in traditional hard body movies, the increased and incredible speed of the new technological body, its inhuman ability to hyperlink and dodge across the battlefield, grant it the same amazed gaze that the hard body garners.

This spectacle, however, undermines a machinic audience's posthuman understanding of potential machine-human cooperation. Both films encourage their audiences to fixate on the combat abilities and weaponization of the technology of their worlds, reducing it to the hard body's understanding of technology only as "military resource." More troubling, *Edge of Tomorrow*'s repetition that the Exosuit requires "limited training" (which Rita and Cage's citizen-to-expert soldier transformations prove) treats technology as a type of steroid, a fast (unnatural) shortcut to larger (faster/more powerful) "muscles." While the hard body of the 80s was an obvious fantasy, the hard technological body within *Elysium* and *Edge of Tomorrow* seems tantalizingly close to that average user/movie-goer. This steers the movie's audience away from considering symbiotic relationships with their machines, co-habitational relationships much closer to how an average user might interact with their daily technologies, and to instead revel in the awesome ability of technology to turn that average user into a killing machine.

In total, the movement from strictly individual into a balance between the "free" mind within a technological environment, in combination with the machinic audience's globalization, evolves the hard body. Yet, the "human" within the machine reigns supreme and the "free-thinking" mind can only be biological and aided subserviently by machines. The cinematic glamorization of the augmenting technology as militarized weapon treats the exoskeleton in the same way the hard body treats her/his gun (as extension, resource), while also encouraging the audience of such films to view their surrounding machine species as combat tools used to control and conquer with.

CONCLUSION: THE FUTURE OF THE HARD TECHNOLOGICAL BODY

Edge of Tomorrow's director Doug Liman's focus on "real" (physical) movie-making[32] makes apparent the last component of the hard technological body and a more positive

prospective path for representations of exoskeleton-human assemblages. At its roots, the hard body is biological and it is that biological body that is at the core of its spectacle and its value systems. While the filmmaking of *Elysium* and *Edge of Tomorrow* have digital effects, in contrast to a massively popular film like *Avatar*, neither provides groundbreaking, or even interesting, computer-generated filmmaking that might meet the machinic audience's experiences with a networked and non-networked technologies outside the theatre. More, the heroes of both films ultimately reaffirm the biological body as the most important and are lacking the virtual counterparts that a machinic audience might appreciate. Neither Max nor Cage's exoskeletons are networked beyond the simplest visual and audio components, resisting the dense networks that the machinic audience thrives in. This lack of networked virtual bodies reminds the audience that the human, a master in control, is the most valuable component of any biological-technological assemblage. Both film's heroic sacrifices of their protagonists' physical bodies reaffirm, like the preceding hard body, that the hard technological body is only heroic when the physical body is the most valuable and vulnerable; it's only after Cage loses the ability to be "reborn" and he is united into one physical body, does the film progress to its heroic climax. By continuing to maintain the clear divisions between machine and human, even when showing the machine-exoskeleton simultaneously with the physical body, the hard technological body is always grounded in "reality"; its physical (weaponized) presence in combat is not blurred with any virtual body and continues to resist the interpenetrated role that computer technology plays in a machinic audience's daily life.

We might then imagine the next iteration of the hard technological body that begins to acknowledge and incorporate a virtual body within a mode of filmmaking that also includes more digital attention. This is essentially the main difference between *Elysium*'s Max and *Avatar*'s Jake: while both are "messy" and "softer" than their enemies, Jake's relationship with the technology of that film acknowledges and celebrates the extension undertaken when enacting as a virtual self whereas Max is still firmly rooted in the physical; his "messiness" is the same human messiness of the hard body and serves to set him in contrast to the inhuman corporate-military enemies of the film that echo the 80s hard body's Communist enemies. A representation that moved beyond the physical-only body would need to balance delicately between an avatar's augmented global presence

and the sensory narrative that a physical body undergoes, an equilibrium very familiar to the machinic audience. Perhaps this is already being done most effectively in video games, wherein the player is able to interactively project into and control a body that oscillates between virtual networks and physical inputs; this type of body, while running the risk of also treating its technology as virtual steroids, is a similar but more complex version of the exoskeleton-human assemblage, the step in-between the G.E. Hardiman and the "tantalizingly close" versions put forth in *Elysium* and *Edge of Tomorrow*. Within film, however, such a figure might be able to acknowledge the continued and still pervasive use of "boots on the ground" physical soldiers in a contemporary warfare that also then blends that soldier with the virtual combat and cyberwarfare that hacking and drone strikes exemplify. That would be a more "real" (honest?) representation of how war is actually waged in 2015 and potentially provide valuable spaces to critique such combat.

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[1] Elysium, directed by Neill Blomkamp (2013. Burbank, CA: Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, 2013) DVD; *Edge of Tomorrow*, directed by Doug Liman (2014, Burbank, CA: Warner Bros. Home Video, 2014), DVD.

[2] Susan Jeffords. *Hard Bodies: Hollywood Masculinity in the Reagan Era.* New Brunswick, N.J. : Rutgers University Press, 1994.

[3] *Aliens,* directed by James Cameron (1986. Burbank CA: 20th Century Fox, 2014), DVD; *The Matrix Revolutions* directed by Lana and Andy Wachowski, (2003. Burbank, CA, Warner Bros. Home Video, 2004), DVD; *Avatar*, directed by James Cameron, (2009. Burbank, CA, 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2010), DVD.

[4] Hayles, N. Katherine. *How We Become Posthuman* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999) 86.

[5] I thinking predominantly of Nobert Weiner's *The Human Use of Human Beings* (New York : Avon, 1967)

[6] The image of the "man-in-middle" arrives via John Stroud at the Macy Conference (Heims, *The Cybernetics Group*, 209); exact quote taken from Hayles, *How We*, 68. My understanding of Macy Conferences is taken from Steve Heims's text *The Cybernetic Group* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991) and N Katherine Hayles's account in *How We Become Posthuman*.

[7] General Electric Company "Final Report on Hardiman I For Machine Augmentation of Human Strength and Endurance" August 31st 1971. Accessed February 23 2015. www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=AD0739735

[8] Ibid, i.

[9] Ibid, 2

[10] My earlier and expanded thoughts on this can be found in my book Interfacing with the Internet in Popular Cinema (New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); *Iron Man 3,* directed by Shane Black (2013. Burbank, CA: Paramount Home Entertainment, 2013) DVD; *Pacific Rim*, directed by Guillermo Del Toro (2013. Burbank, CA: Warner Bros. Home Video), DVD; *Terminator 2: Judgment Day,* directed by James Cameron (1991, Burbank, CA: TriStar Pictures) DVD.

[11] "Warrior Web Prototype Takes Its First Steps." DARPA, May 22, 2013. Accessed February 23rd 2015. http://www.darpa.mil/NewsEvents/Releases/2013/05/22.aspx.

[12] Ibid, 21; 19; 25

[13] Ibid, 25.

[14] Ibid, 22.

[15] Further theorizing surrounding the softening of the hard body can be found in *Postfeminism and Paternity in Contemporary U.S. Film* by Hannah Hamad (New York: Routledge. 2014) and *Millennial Masculinity: Men in Contemporary American Cinema* edited by Timothy Shary (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press. 2013) among many other postfeminist scholarship. As well, Mark Gallagher's *Action Figures* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 2006), specifically discussion of Chuck Norris' increasingly reliance on technology as he progresses into 90s cinema, was very useful.

[16] I explore and define the "machinic audience" in more depth in the previously cited *Interfacing with the Internet in Popular Cinema.*

[17] Jeffords, *Hard Bodies,* 27

[18] Ibid, 54.

[19] Ibid, 40.

[20] Hayles, *How We*, 105.

[21] Jeffords, *Hard Bodies,* 41

[22] Ibid 54.

[23] Ibid 54.

[24] Basic histories of the Internet can be found in: Johnny Ryan. *A History of the Internet and the digital future.* London : Reaktion Books, 2010; Christos J.P. Moschovitis et al. *History of the Internet : a chronology, 1843 to the present.* Santa Barbara, CA : ABC-CLIO, 1999.

[25] Manuel De Landa. *War in the Age of Intelligent Machines.* New York: Zone, 1991.

[26] Hayles, paraphrasing Weiner, *How We Became*, 105.

[27] Jeffords, *Hard Bodies*, 27

[28] Jeffords, *Hard Bodies*, 38.

[29] See note 8 and note 15

[30] Jeffords, *Hard Bodies*, 19.

[31] Ray Kurzweil. *The age of spiritual machines : when computers exceed human intelligence.* New York: Viking, 1999; Hans Moravec. *Mind children : the future of robot and human intelligence.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988.

[32] David Fear. "No 'Tomorrow': Doug Linman on the Blockbuster than Almost Broke Him" *Rolling Stone*. June 6, 2014. Accessed February 23, 2015. http://www.rollingstone.com/movies/news/no-tomorrow-doug-liman-on-the-blockbuster-that-almost-broke-him-20140606?page=2.

POSTHUMANIST PANIC CINEMA?
THE FILMS OF ANDREW NICCOL

Jon Baldwin (London Metropolitan University)

> 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 technology[15], 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 film[18] 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 media[22] 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 been 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 disenchanted 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, biopolitcal 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 films 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 Death; Stephen Hawking, Lou Gerhig's Disease; Jackie Joyner-Kersee, 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–gene–erates' - 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 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. Tanansky 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 *S1m0ne* 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 and *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 semiocapital, 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 content[56]. 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 'necro-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 drone[64]. 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 organs[67]. Likewise, financial operations in the hyper-real economy[68] 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 causalities. 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, it 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 Loren[76] 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 subjects 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 form[80]. 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 disavowals 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.

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[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 Brunswich: 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 imbuement 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.

POSTHUMANISM IN MATTHEW BARNEY'S *CREMASTER* CYCLE:AUTOPOIESIS AND THE "HERMETIC STATE"

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This article conceptualises instances of posthumanism in Matthew Barney's *Cremaster* cycle (1994-2002), a multi-part work that combines film, sculpture, drawing, photography and performance to generate complex non-linear visual narratives. In order to analyse self-referential system of the cycle, a recurrent theme of the "hermetic state" in Barney's project is considered from perspectives drawing on second-order systems theory as articulated by its central thinker Niklas Luhmann, specifically his notions of self-referential autopoietic systems combining operational closure and structural openness. Looking at the theme of the "hermetic state" in both the formal aspects of the cycle as well as the narrative content is especially pertinent for situating the work in the context of recent posthumanist perspectives. Furthermore, I will argue that the *Cremaster* cycle embodies a complex self-referential narrative in tension between differentiation and undifferentiation, where ideas of biological development as well as conventional species boundaries are disrupted through a radically nonanthropocentric depiction. Finally, through the specific embodying and animating of potential nonhuman beings, through their mode of presentation from a certain perspective in conjunction with humans, for instance, or via nonlinearity of the narrative, use of media, the *Cremaster* cycle, I propose, generates new theoretical paradigms central to the larger posthumanist debate.

In my usage of the term posthumanism, which does not constitute a unified field, I refer to a critical discourse set against anthropocentric philosophical and ethical frameworks of humanism and its speciesist structures that reproduce the normative human subject through the dichotomy of humanity/animality. I rely on Cary Wolfe's definition of posthumanism which, to my mind, is theoretically rigorous and systematically engaged with alternative articulations of this discourse while it combines perspectives from systems theory and poststructuralism. Wolfe has been writing on the topic of posthumanism firstly in relation to biologists Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela's, as well as Luhmann's work since mid-1990s.[1] Posthumanism – different from "transhumanism" and the figure of the "posthuman" – is not about "surpassing or

rejecting the human" but rather it is premised on a rethinking of "the human and its characteristic modes of communication, interaction, meaning, social significations, and affective investments […] by recontextualizing them in terms of the entire sensorium of other living beings"; at the same time, posthumanism acknowledges that the human "is fundamentally a prosthetic creature that has coevolved with various forms of technicity and materiality, forms that are radically "not-human" and yet have nevertheless made the human what it is."[2] Posthumanism is focused on the decentering of the human subject as well as challenging the ontology of the human based on animal-human distinction that substantiates the discrimination and subjugation of nonhuman as well as human beings. Wolfe insists that posthumanism is not something that comes after human, or after a transcendence of embodiment, of which it is critical; rather it can be situated both before and after humanism. It is, importantly, not a figure, unlike the posthuman; it is a theoretical direction, critical engagement, the way of rethinking humanist anthropocentric assumptions. In Wolfe's articulation of this field, the concepts developed by Luhmann, who introduced posthumanism into social theory, constitute a significant intervention. [3] Luhmann's theory of social systems offers one of the most sustained and nuanced critiques of the humanist anthropocentric view of society, its systems and environments. His rejection of the centrality of human subjectivity, introduces a radically posthumanist theoretical view, as it reconceptualises functioning of the processes of cognition, communication and observation as not only or primarily human.

Drawing on this theoretical framework, I probe the nonanthropocentric orientation in the *Cremaster* cycle as it surfaces in the use of specific materials, media, modes of display, and in the narrative. Through the analysis of the works, we can observe, how these theoretical paradigms destabilising humanist notion of subjectivity have been taken up in contemporary art. The consideration of the images where humanity/animality divide, and anthropocentrism are radically rethought, is particularly important and interesting, as these visual representations allow for immediate experiential engagement with the alternative perspectives they offer. Through the direct engagement of our perception, these images are a powerful tool contributing to the wider theoretical orientation of posthumanism.

Since the early 1990s Matthew Barney's elaborate multi-media art has attracted significant critical attention as well as criticism, especially in the United States and Western Europe. The recurrent themes in Barney's art picked out by the critics include

biological development and gender differentiation, athleticism, competitive sports and prosthetics, mythology, Masonic references (terms and symbols) and Mormon doctrine, precision dancing and escapology.[4] Barney's *Cremaster* cycle with its wealth of references and contexts teleported into contemporary art creates a very complex, self-contained, and highly coded system. For instance, *Cremaster 3* combines the scenes of Richard Serra creating a Process Art piece with the performance of the famous hardcore punk and thrash metal bands Agnostic Front and Murphy's Law, and also tap dancing women. The artist has articulated specific terms now associated with his works: some related to biological processes or sport jargon, some to known historical figures (such as Houdini as a character of self-restraint and closure), or other more abstract ones such as "field emblem" or his system of "situation", "condition" and "production".[5] Writing on Barney's works tends to wrestle with their complex symbolism and terminology, which is beyond the scope of this paper. His work, however, has not been extensively linked to pertinent posthumanist concerns, thus my interpretation focuses on reading the *Cremaster* cycle in relation to the posthumanist problematic.

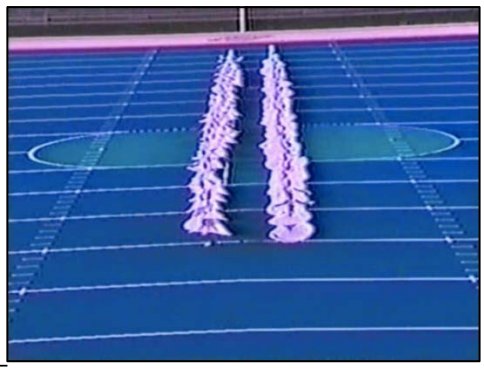
The title of the *Cremaster* cycle illustrates the importance of biological analogy for understanding its narratives. The term 'cremaster' has existed in English since the seventeenth century to refer to "the muscle of the spermatic cord by which the testes are suspended in the scrotum", and is "associated with the descent of the testes into the scrotum in the seventh month after conception, at which point the gender of the foetus is definitively male."[6] Moreover, the cremaster muscles protect the male reproductive system by controlling the height of the testicles in response to fear or changes in temperature. So, for example, in response to a cold temperature the testicles are drawn into the body to retain a stable temperature level.

The sexual differentiation of an embryo takes place with the change in the chromosome structure followed by the change in the height of the gonads. In the first six weeks of foetal development gonads are undifferentiated, later they develop into testicles or ovaries. The downward development of the testes occurs as late as the seventh month. Structurally the *Cremaster* cycle follows the trajectory of sexual differentiation and resistance to it, employing this model of biological development of the embryo with its possibilities of ascent or descent during sexual differentiation.

The *Cremaster* cycle is usually displayed as a single or multi-channel video installation, and/or in combination with sculptural objects, production photographs and drawings. As

a film series it consists of 5 works that were not produced in chronological order: *Cremaster 1* (40 minutes) was made in 1995, *Cremaster 2* (79 minutes) in 1999, *Cremaster 3* (182 minutes) in 2002, *Cremaster 4* (42 minutes) in 1994 and *Cremaster 5* (55 minutes) in 1997. The narratives of the individual works are tied by the visual representation of events and details of landscapes, architectural structures or sculptural objects where the events unfold, while dialogues are reduced to a minimum and there is little character development. Parallel narratives that cut across individual films are experienced as repetitive, due to the overall unhurried pace, which could even be felt as painfully slow despite the spectacular backdrops.

As the *Cremaster* films consist of a complex web of narrative events, writing full synopses of the films would require more than ten pages. In *Cremaster 1*, two large Goodyear zeppelins float above the blue playing field of Bronco football stadium in Boise, Idaho, where Barney comes from. There are four airhostesses on each (representing a descending and ascending team), and two identical tables under which resides Goodyear played by Marti Domination (a fetish dancer and an actress) – a doubled character simultaneously occupying both blimps. She choreographs and coordinates the movements of a team of precision dancers on the field by using grapes from the table. At some point the dancers form the "field emblem" – a symbol representing an oval form and a narrow rectangular bar splitting it horizontally in the middle, it reappears in numerous works by Barney including all five films of the *Cremaster* cycle. Eventually the dancers reproduce the shape of two zeppelins, which also resemble the shape of undifferentiated gonads of an embryo.



Video stills from *Cremaster 1*, 1995 (Copyright Matthew Barney).

In *Cremaster 2* the story of Gary Gilmore (played by Barney) is reenacted. The narrative cuts across different points in time and moves backwards in chronological order from the year of Gilmore's execution (1977) to Harry Houdini's (Normal Mailer) performance at the World's Columbian Exposition (1883), as a possible moment of his meeting with Gilmore's grandmother and the conception of Gilmore's father. The narrative comes back to Gilmore's origin in a circular loop. Gilmore's judgment takes place in the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, referring to his murder of a Mormon gas station worker. And his execution is staged in the Utah salt flats (the flooded Bonneville Salt Flats) as a rodeo where Gilmore is executed through a bull ride. The landscape plays an important role in the narrative construction.

Cremaster 3 has a chronologically more linear narrative, but is complicated by several digressions. The main focus is the construction of the Chrysler building in New York interpreted through the Masonic legend of Hiram Abiff – chief architect of King Solomon's Temple. He becomes the architect of the Chrysler building (played by Richard Serra) with whom the Entered Apprentice (Barney) competes in order to reach the status of Master Mason. As in the Masonic mythology, here too the Architect is killed. The Apprentice gradually moves up in the building by scaling elevator shafts, and becomes a Master Mason by cheating. He is punished for his deeds – all of his teeth are broken, yet he is redeemed by the Architect who fits him with dentures. [7] After that the Apprentice's intestines fall through his rectum, in this act of disembowelment he separates from his lower self, and he soon escapes to climb to the top of the building. He murders the Architect who also climbs to the spire in an ambitious fit, but then Apprentice's head is pierced by the metal attachment of the building. There are parallel narrative digressions in

the film (e.g. Celtic tale of a struggle between two giants). At the same time, the undead corpse appears from the foundations of the Chrysler building, as a reference to Gilmore's death. The longest interlude is the Apprentice's climb inside the rotunda of the Guggenheim building called *Order: Five Points of Fellowship*, where he overcomes five different challenges for the Masonic initiate. In this scene different events unfold on different levels such as cheetah-human hybrid (played by Aimee Mulins, a model with prosthetic legs) attacking the Apprentice, and Richard Serra reenacting his splashing works from the late 1960s (the molten lead replaced with liquid petroleum jelly).

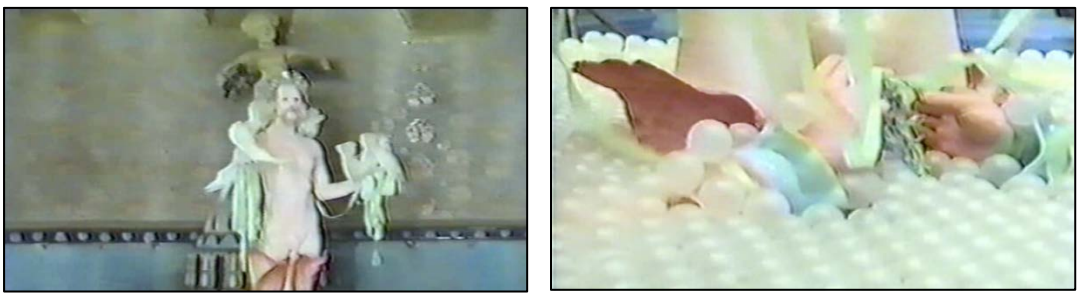
Video stills from *Cremaster 3*, 2002 (Copyright Matthew Barney).

Cremaster 4 focuses on a racing competition between the ascending and descending teams on the Isle of Man where a Tourist Trophy motorcycle race takes place. Barney plays the Loughton Candidate, an animal-human hybrid that resembles the island's native ram species (a Loughton ram). The horns of the ram – two upward and two downward – represent the female and male possibilities of embryo development, a system in equilibrium. The Candidate has four sockets in his head from which potentially the horns can grow. Three fairies played by female bodybuilders attend to the preparation for the race as well as to the Candidates' tap dancing, which results in him falling through the floor on to the seabed. The scenes of the race of the two teams going into opposite directions are intercut first by the dancing Candidate and later by his arduous and long climb through the petroleum jelly smitten visceral channel. The final scene shows that the

downward development has started: in the close-up shot we see a scrotum emerging out of mass of petroleum jelly, tightened and pierced with clasps. Later there is a shot between the legs showing the cords attached to the Ascending and Descending Hacks. Following the general circular spirit of the works, the film begins and ends on the same scene of a building on the pier, where the race cars are parked.

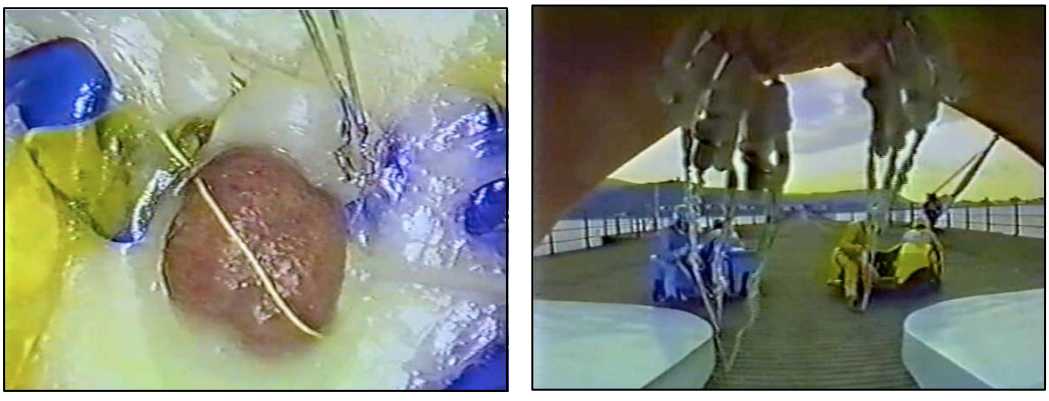
Video stills from *Cremaster 4*, 1995 (Copyright Matthew Barney).

Cremaster 5 is an operatic piece with baroque aesthetics set in Budapest. Jonathan Bepler with whom Barney collaborated for *Cremaster 2* and *3*, composed the score for this lyrical opera. It is a tragic love story between Queen of Chain played by Ursula Andress and her Magician played by Barney. Barney also enacts two other characters: her Diva and Giant. The Queen rests on the throne in the royal booth of the neo-renaissance Hungarian State Opera House, underneath which the thermal baths are located where the narrative of descent unfolds. In the baths a garland of ribbons carried by Jacobin pigeons is attached to the scrotum of Giant, an animal-human-plant hybrid. His testicles descend in the warmth of the baths, and the pigeons fly upwards. Following this, the Queen's beloved Magician wearing shackles leaps off Lánchíd Bridge to his death, resembling famous jumps by Hungarian-born Houdini. The Queen of Chain dies from her grief.



Video stills from Cremaster 5, 1997 (Copyright Matthew Barney).

As can be seen from these synopses, the narratives of these works function as loops, as in reverse chronology of *Cremaster 2* or repetition of the beginning at the end of *Cremaster 4*. The linear narrative is replaced by a circular system that lacks narrative closure. Moreover, the narratives of the *Cremaster* cycle are continuously interrupted by digressions, and strictly speaking outside of the artist's own logic, the narrative events are only loosely connected or at times could seem as totally unconnected (as Celtic legend of the Giants and the construction of the Chrysler building). In terms of filmic language, *Cremaster* series play with viewer's perception via the use of close-ups (especially on body parts), or at times a disruption of the sense of scale (for instance, when the close-up of a scrotum fills the entire screen and the parked race-cars are shot from between the legs in the closing scene of *Cremaster 4*).



Video stills from *Cremaster 4*, 1995 (Copyright Matthew Barney).

If we consider that the *Cremaster* films are to be viewed in a gallery rather than in a linear fashion of a cinema, the experience of them could be very diverse, ranging from just a quick viewing for several minutes at any given point of looping videos to a patient, time-consuming, and quite immersive viewing. The resolution of the individual works,

whether as single or multiple-channel videos, is interrupted via looping. The video screens are physically encountered in the space of a gallery where it is not necessarily dark and where each viewer has choice over bodily proximity or distance. The length of the looping videos also invites the viewers to exit or re-enter at different points of the screening. Importantly, the *Cremaster* videos are often exhibited together with the related sculptures, production photographs and drawings, which enhances the embodied engagement of the viewers with the video screen or screen as another sculptural object. In other words, the use of diverse media engages viewer's body by inviting a physical interaction with objects and representations in the gallery space. Thus, viewing of the *Cremaster* cycle would be different from an immersion characteristic for audiovisual consumption in the cinematic context, where audience cannot alter the experience of viewing to a similar extent, and viewers are presented by the visual continuum within the limits of the screen.

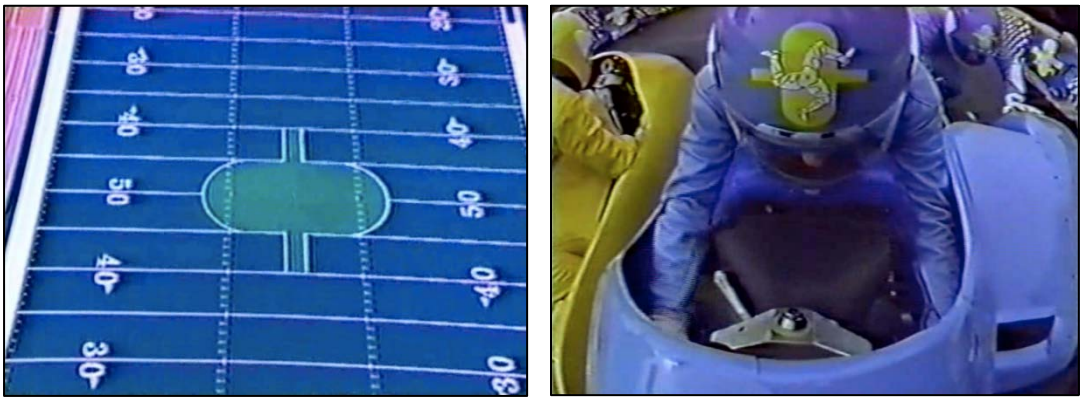
Also, the *Cremaster* cycle could be perceived very differently depending on whether one encounters a single-channel installation of one of the films or a multi-channel installation. With regards to the five-channel video installation of the *Cremaster* cycle exhibited at Sammlung Goetz (Goetz Collection, Munich) in 2008, Brandon Stusoy has pointed out how it is visually impossible to keep up with five monitors simultaneously, although sounds can be more easily absorbed. This, he argues, could invite a viewer to close their eyes and engage instead in close listening that "offers a new point of entry, a new architecture, or at least another way to view the complexity of the *CREMASTER Cycle*" and focus on "a field of sensibility, issues of noise, performance, and collaboration."[8] When the *Cremaster* cycle is played as one piece, the sounds and noises mingle to create a new acoustic experience. As the films are of variable durations, different overlaps throughout the screening period emerge, creating a feeling of never-ending cycle. This enhances the perception of the circular nature of the works, as a loop. Thus, a diverse, open and nonlinear viewing experience of the cycle is possible depending on specific modes of display.

The *Cremaster* cycle functions as a complex autonomous system both closed in its self-referentiality – the work refers to itself and its elements using a private language, and open in its non-linearity (and openness to diverse interpretations). It is this structural complexity, as well as complexity in terms of the content, that makes it interesting to enlist second-order systems theory as an interpretative device, which helps us to understand the

emergence and operation of complex systems, as well as the interrelationships of their elements.

Characters populating the *Cremaster* cycle are not made into articulated and coherent individual protagonists. At the same time, however, the landscape and architecture become important protagonists in the narrative, like in the case of Chrysler Building punishing the Apprentice. Barney's characters have sculptural quality as he uses different organic or inorganic matter and body parts inspired by different species to create hybrids – numerous animal-human or animal-human-plant hybrids or amalgams with inorganic matter. They are performed using elaborate prosthetic devices, costuming, choreography and athletic equipment that results in crossing the boundaries of the biological category of species and the human/animal, flora/fauna, organic/inorganic distinctions. Barney uses his own body as a medium in his performances, as his work engages with the tradition of body and performance art of the 1960s and 1970s, and unsurprisingly he also performs countless characters in his films. Body imagery whether human or nonhuman is central to the *Cremaster* cycle, as is the focus on male anatomy and narratives of biological development, as well a challenge of polymorphous fictional amalgams to human embodiment in terms of definitions, borders, wholeness and organicity. Beings are depicted in a non-hierarchical, nonanthropocentic manner, as are the architectural and organic bodies.

In addition to biological development, bodily performance as a process of the accumulation and release of energy is a recurrent topic in the *Cremaster* cycle. It is linked to what artist describes as "hermetic state". The hermetic closure is a realm of potentiality, of the possibility of form: if the cycle of the discipline and desire related to accumulation and storage of energy in the body "goes back and forth enough times something that's really elusive can slip out – a form that has form, but isn't overdetermined."[9] What is presented here is a possibility of a self-referential, hermetic bodily state, where a system closes upon itself in a cycle between flow of energy and its restraint, a tailspin in a tension between the discipline and formless energy. The "field emblem" which features prominently in Barney's works – a type of signature or a stamp – is linked to the idea of the closing off of an orifice, restraining, imposing resistance and thus, also a hermetic state.[10] The field emblem again challenges the distinction organic/inorganic as it is both a field and stadium for actions (e.g. *Cremaster 1*), and the body.[11]



Video Stills from *Cremaster 1*, 1995, and *Cremaster 4*, 1994 (Copyright Matthew Barney).

The tension between the idea of hermetic closure, on the one hand, and openness and permeability of other aspects of the *Cremaster* cycle seems to be an interesting aspect of these works. There is a tension between self-imposed resistance, a restrained body enacted in his performances, and the possibilities of depicted boundary crossings between inside/outside, human/animal, natural/artificial, organic/inorganic dichotomies. For illuminating this tension, a complex understanding of the relationship between systems and their environment, and specifically operational or autopoietic closure of the systems described within second-order systems theory can be fruitful. Understanding of closure is especially interesting, as it is not the opposite of openness. In fact the two are linked in operation of any system whether biological, psychic or social. Considering the *Cremaster* cycle from this theoretical perspective, allows us to think beyond the intricate symbolism and private mythology of these pieces, and the authorial intention more generally.

Niklas Luhmann's theory of social systems rethinks the concept of human agency, and rejects the centrality of human subjectivity. System/environment distinction is the key coordinate in this theory, where a system's environment is seen as always more complex than a system. Systems cannot come into existence without the reduction of complexity, which is a basic process of differentiation. The starting point of this antifoundationalist theory and its end point is difference.[12] Self-referential systems continuously "make a difference between the system and its environment"; this difference is reproduced by any operation of the system directed at self-reproduction, and it is in this sense that Luhmann talks about operationally closed systems.[13] There is no single all-encompassing environment in Luhmann's theory; each system constructs its own environment "according to what makes sense to that system in the application of its unique coding"

and in this sense environment is "internal to the system but the system sees it as external and delimits what is system and what is environment".[14]

Each social system, be it art, economy, or religion employs its own unique coding that is essential for its process of differentiation. The binary code such as art/nonart in case of the art system is the bases for differentiation. The codes used by a system have to be unique to it, as these determine the system's specificity and difference from other systems.[15] While the yes/no codes of any given system are stable, the system itself is impelled to constantly oscillate between the two values – a negative and positive one of the code, and it refuses to settle for either.[16]

For Luhmann both psychic systems (that operate in the form of consciousness) and social systems are self-referential objects. [17] In Luhmann's theory self-reference as it were replaces the concept of the subject.[18] In this framework, the centrality of the conscious carrier of an operation is displaced, as self-reference "truncates the search for the who or the what" is the subject of observation, description, knowing, distinguishing, and so forth.[19] He defines system's self-reference as the operation of reference that is included in the system which it indicates.[20] "Self" refers to both the self-referentially operating system, and an operation through which a system distinguishes itself from its environment.

In Luhmann's discussion of autopoietic systems, self-referentiality forms and unifies these systems, and they are necessarily closed. Autopoietic systems are self-organising systems that produce their own structures as well as other components such as elements, processes, boundaries, and even the unity of the system, i.e. they constitute their own "identities and differences."[21] The idea of operational or autopoietic closure in Luhmann is based on Maturana's study of the operation of nervous systems and the definition of living organisms as closed systems that construct their reality though their perception. Varela and Maturana defined a circular organisation of the nervous system, where the processes are determined by a system's own internal dynamic, as autopoiesis.[22] Major implication of this theory is that closure of biological systems is essential for them to be alive.[23]

Luhmann takes up this articulation of autopoiesis within biology as "operational closure" of social and psychic systems. In his definition autopoiesis is understood as "a general form of system building using self-referential closure", which can be abstracted from life.[24] For Luhmann psychic systems are based on consciousness rather than life (they self-referentially "reproduce consciousness by consciousness").[25] Furthermore,

observation does not presuppose life, and neither is it generally tied to consciousness, but observations generate consciousness of a system.[26]

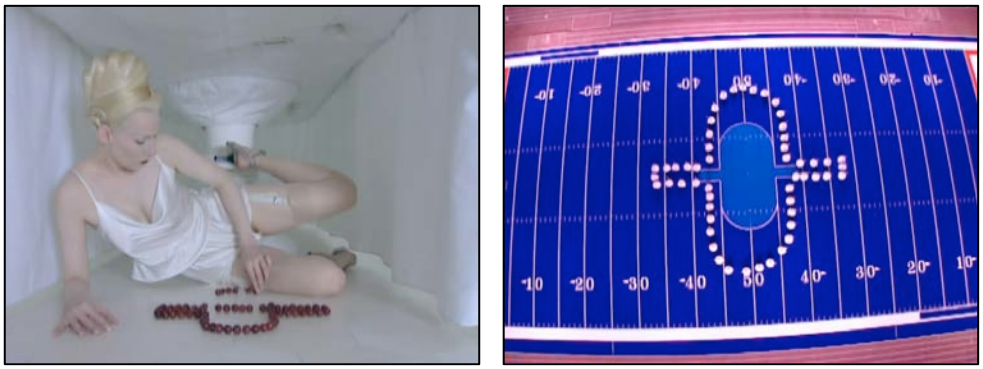
Autopoietic reproduction is based on self-description, which is carried out through operational closure. Autopoietic systems are constructing their own stability out of unstable elements. So, a system owes its stability to itself, it "constructs itself upon a foundation that is entirely not 'there', and this is precisely the sense in which it is autopoietic."[27] On the one hand, closure of systems is only possible within an environment, closure, however, is a prerequisite of interaction with the environment. In this framework, the classical "distinction between "closed" and "open" systems is replaced by the question of how self-referential closure can create openness."[28] In another instance, autopoietic closure is defined by Luhmann as "the recursively closed organization of an open system" that "postulates closure as a condition of openness".[29] He argues: "All openness is based on closure, and this is possible because self-referential operations do not […] conclude, do not lead to an end, do not fulfill a telos, but rather open out."[30] So, operational closure stipulates potentiality of the system.

This relationship between closure and openness – operational closure and structural openness to environmental complexity – is interesting for the discussion of the *Cremaster* cycle. The cycle could be conceptualised as a self-referential autopoietic system. First of all, it has a complex narrative construction that employs diverse references, whether it would be from biology or history of art, in order to refer to itself. Numerous dissimilar references, such as the football field in *Cremaster 1* and racing ground on the Isle of Man, are filtered through the codes of the *Cremaster* as a system. What connects all of them is the final analogy of the biological development of the embryo, the circular unresolved narrative of sexual differentiation. So, the *Cremaster* as an artistic system selects the specific references based on its own internal logic and workings.

Systems cannot include everything from their environment due to its overwhelming complexity, so they operate by selection while remaining closed to the information from the environment. System's self-referential code – a basic filter between system and environment – determines the selectivity. In the case of the *Cremaster* cycle it is possible to think of the ascent/descent or female/male development of the potential organism functioning as a selection code of the system. This prism of a biological narrative of embryonic development reduces the complexity of branching out narratives and ensures

the unity of the different elements from the five films, as well as related sculptural and other artistic material.

The drama of sexual differentiation unfolds in the cycle, as the five videos present a narrative of movement from a sexually undifferentiated state to full descent. The process of formation – sexual differentiation – is set into motion in the first film. While this film is supposed to represent the state of equilibrium (an androgynous state of the embryo), the symmetry is severed when the process of articulation of the form within the work begins. The doubled character of Goodyear creates choreographic patterns with the grapes that are reproduced by the dancers on the stadium; the scenes of her manipulations are cut with the aerial views of the performers forming different shapes. They shift between two parallel lines to a narrow rectangular bar, forming the "field emblem"; or they form two circles out of a larger one. These movements introduce a closure – orifice and its closure in the form of the "field emblem" and closure of the circles – as a state of potential.



Video stills from *Cremaster 1*, 1995 (Copyright Matthew Barney).

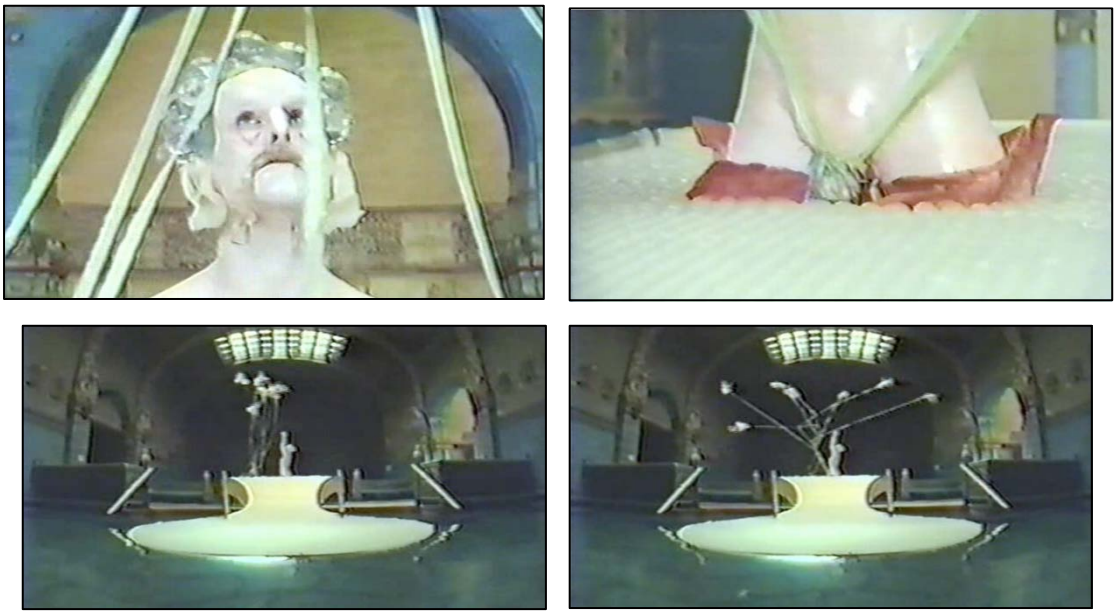
This biological narrative is subverted by a struggle against differentiation in-between, by a constant oscillation between female and male states, and at the same time by a crossing of species boundaries. This recalls Luhmann's discussion of continuous oscillation that takes place in autopoietic systems between its binary codes. In *Cremaster 4*, for instance, there is an intense struggle in the form of the racing competition unfolding between the ascending and descending teams. Their race through the Isle of Man takes place in the opposite direction to signify the opposite directions of development. At the same time, the opening and the closing scene show the race cars parked on the pier, to create closed circularity where oscillation between male and female states remains unresolved.

Luhmann discusses potentiality of "oscillator function" and process of border crossing within the system that keeps the possibilities for the system open:[31]

> With the oscillator function the system holds its future open […] with regard to the fact that everything can arrive different; and this not arbitrarily, but depending on the distinction being used, which, because it includes what it excludes, indicates what in any given case can be otherwise.[32]

The oscillation between ascent and descent taking place in the *Cremaster* cycle, one could argue, points at the possibilities for this normally fixed biological narrative to be otherwise.

Interpreting the descent in *Cremaster 5* and thus the male direction of the development of the organism as possibly a false descent or returning back to the undifferentiated state is relevant here, and it goes along the circular nature of the cycle's narratives. The scene I am referring to unfolds in the Gellért Baths in Budapest. The Giant enters in the fourth act while the Queen rests looking down into the baths through the openings next to her throne. The Giant's legs are thigh-high lily blossoms, he lacks the external signs of sexual differentiation other than abstracted scrotum, his long moustache is a streaming curly crystal, his hair – differently sized glass bubbles, and his drooping ears – lilies. The pigeons that surrounded the Queen fly down through the opening carrying yellow and blue satin ribbons and the sprites make a garland out of them. The sprites gather around the Giant and fasten the garland to his scrotum, and the close-up shot shows testicles descending – pointing to the element of differentiation. But, simultaneously, the pigeons fly upward and pull the ribbons as an affirmation of a movement toward a female direction of development. This possible descent is enacted not by a human agent, but by a hybrid creature and involves other animals (pigeons). This descent counterbalanced by an ascent shows differentiation as a process that continuously oscillates between the states. The *Cremaster* cycle imagines differentiation and difference (in this case sexual) as having an ongoing complex dynamic irreducible to either of the sides on the continuum, but rather oscillating between male and female and androgynous states.



Video stills from Cremaster 5, 1997 (Copyright Matthew Barney).

Thus, the ending scene of the *Cremaster 5* does not pose an attempt to return to the undifferentiated state; the emphasis is away from the "either or" states, but on oscillation, on distinction that does not disappear. In the *Cremaster* cycle the viewer encounters an insistence on the process of transformation, against fixation on the final states, as the cycle focuses on the sexual development that is uncompleted, that remains in tension between female and male possibilities for an organism. The linear understanding of sexual difference is replaced by disruptive oscillation. One could argue that biological model of gender differentiation in the *Cremaster* cycle is employed to visually unsettle this linearity and fixity of difference, to emphasise the transformational aspect within the human development, rather than to present a biological narrative as a metaphor. As a result, a dislodging of foundational narrative of biological development is achieved. The work makes the process of anatomical formation akin to the creation of form in art and its metamorphic quality while relying on the elements from these two distinct systems as its media.

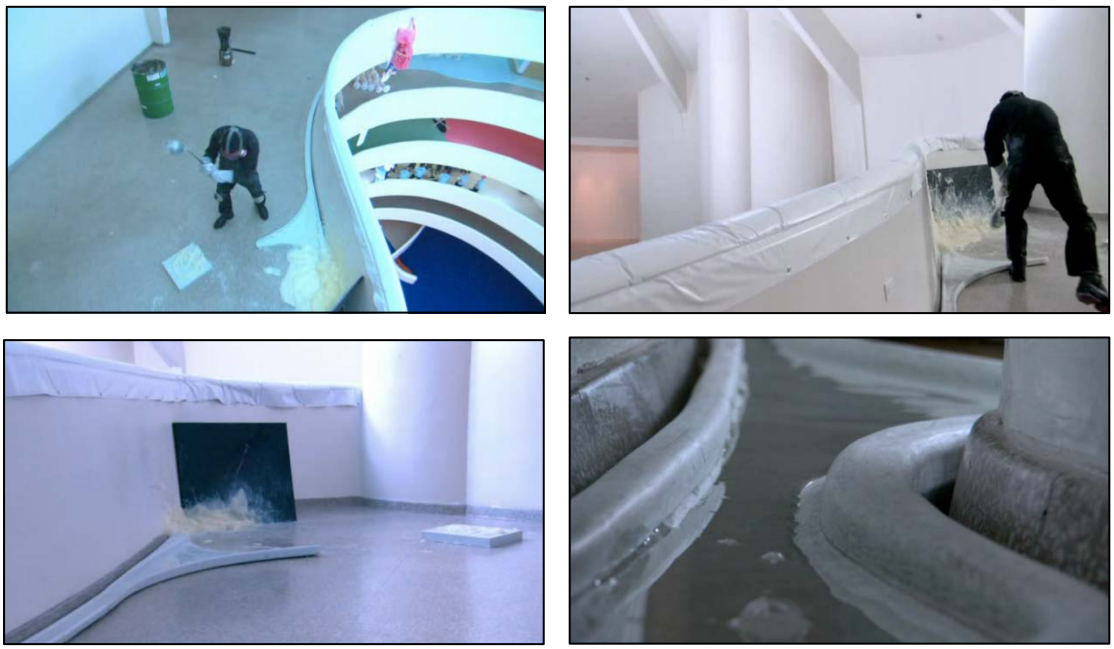
In addition to challenging the hierarchies of species and organic/inorganic distinctions on the literal level (for instance, how the characters are represented), as well as the linear narrative structure, with their circularity and self-reference, the *Cremaster* videos embody a structurally non-hierarchical nonanthropocentric system that does not privilege site over organism, human over animal. Within the framework of autopoiesis, the combination of

hybrid porousity and hermetic closure in *Cremaster* cycle gains critical potential. As it emerges both in Barney's and in Luhmann's work, the system's closure is a prerequisite of possibilities: which is the creation of form in case of Barney, and vital operation of differentiation in autopoietic theory.

Luhmann emphasises that "in the self-referential mode of operation, closure is a form of broadening possible environmental contacts."[33] Moreover, as he demonstrates, under specific conditions "self-referential closure enables a more complex view of the environment."[34] The theory of autopoietic systems – treated as a general theory rather than a functioning model in living organisms – allows Luhmann to question the importance (and relevance) of human agency for social and psychic systems.[35] The centrality of (human) rational influence is dislodged, as well as "the anthropocentric foundations of action theory and liberal or humanist postulations of individual and collective agency".[36] That is why it is interesting to consider "hermetic closure" in this framework, as the concept of autopoietic closure presents us with a posthumanist notion of potentiality.

At the same time, autopoiesis is a very dynamic and even inherently restless process. Luhmann describes how the prerequisite of autopoiesis is "a recurring need for renewal".[37] Perpetual dissolution is the cause of autopoietic reproduction: "Disintegration and reintegration, disordering and ordering require each other, and reproduction comes about only by a recurring integration of disintegration and reintegration."[38] Barney's signature material petroleum jelly used consistently in his sculptures, performances and videos is interesting in this context, as its use embodies the movement or oscillation between order and disorder. As Scheidemann emphasizes in his discussion of Barney's use of the material: "When heated it is liquid, pourable, and unpredictable. When refrigerated, it becomes hard and crystalline, disciplined."[39] It is sometimes frozen to take a strict sculptural shape, or it oozes in liquefied melted form. Or the material alternates between the frozen and melted disintegrated state, like in bigger scale petroleum jelly molds created for *Drawing Restraint 9*, refrigerated with the intention that the sculpture would collapse when the mold was removed, and the collapsed work exhibited.[40] In *Cremaster 3*, Serra uses the material in a liquefied form in his splashing performance in the "Fifth Degree" of the film, and a sculptural installation with the solid collapsed molds titled *Cremaster Field* was prepared to be exhibited along with the film. The centrality of this material can be explained by its particular metamorphic quality that oscillates

between the states of disintegration and reintegration. Petroleum jelly features as it were in-between the process of solidifying and liquefying, briefly taking on a fixed state. It escapes once the harness solidifying it into a form is removed. Thereby, through the use of this particular material the boundaries of the work itself are destabilised, while it moves between a state of form and formlessness. It is also a material that can resemble organic substances changing through pressure and temperature.



Video stills from *Cremaster 3*, 2002 (copyright Matthew Barney).

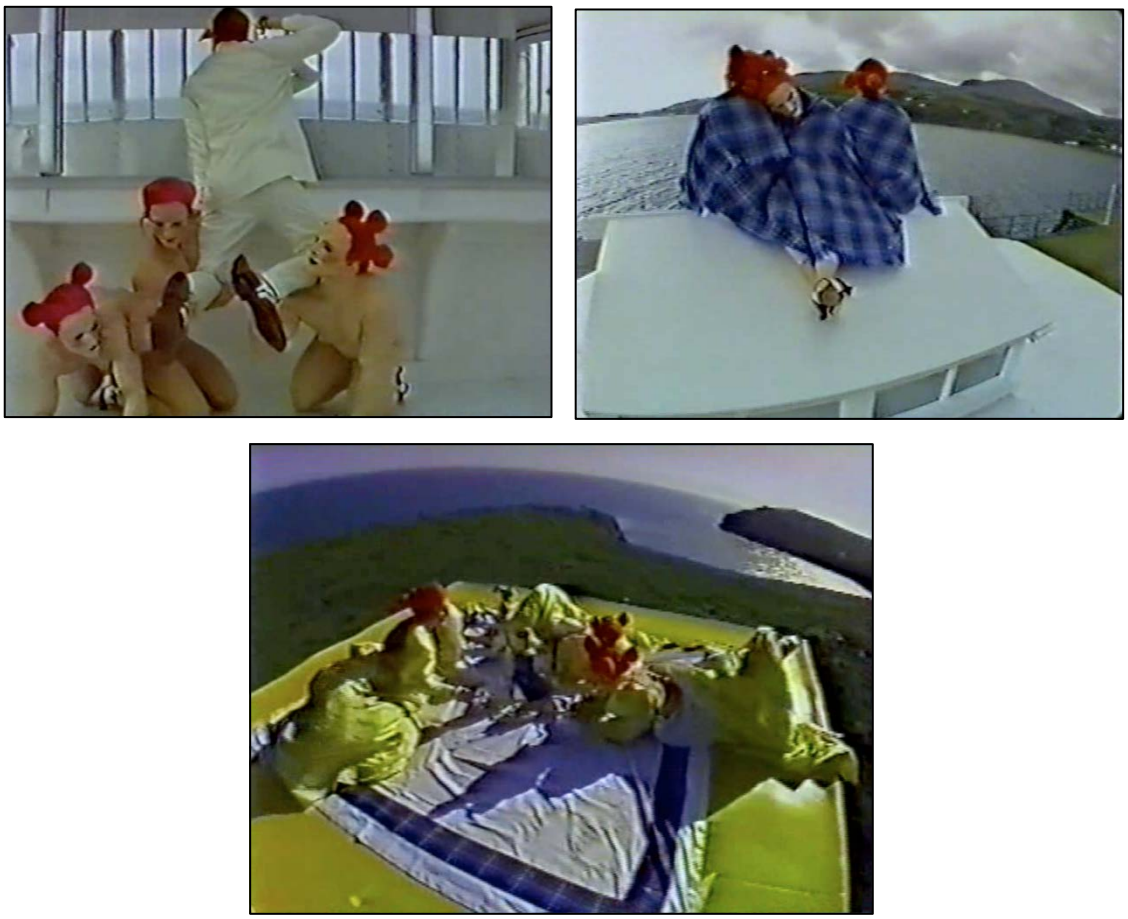
One of the most recurrent characters in the cycle, through which the topics of closure ("hermetic state"), self-discipline and transformation take shape, is Harry Houdini, the famous escape artist, an illusionist, a master of disciplined training and metamorphosis. Houdini who through exercise and discipline achieved extraordinary bodily flexibility, enough to open any lock is related to the idea of self-imposed resistance and closure. He is a character representing training that leads to alteration of form: an ideal representation of defying the boundaries of physical abilities. His self-restrained, resistant and closed-off body is a site where creative potential is played out. His body is a raw sculptural material, elastic and mutating. Its flawless performance ability, however, is coupled with failure: as was described in the synopsis of *Cremaster 5*, Houdini reappears in the guise of the character Magician who dies following a leap into the Danube wearing shackles and weighted balls.

The most relevant appearance by Houdini in the *Cremaster* cycle, however, is the scene with his performance at the World's Columbian Exposition. Houdini used to famously perform his transformation into a woman, by switching places with his wife while escaping from various constraints. In *Cremaster 2*, Houdini's transformation is reimagined through the social structure of bees – the relationship between the Queen bee and her drones – the only function of which is to mate with the queen bee and die. Here Houdini's transformation is an attempt to avoid the destiny of a drone, and the Queen bee (Gillmore's grandmother) attempts to prevent the metamorphosis and so Houdini's possible ascension to her throne. The viewer does not learn the outcome of this conflict. The transformation is not completed in a different manner than when the Apprentice is interrupted in the process of his transformation into a Master Mason in *Cremaster 3.* While metamorphosis into a woman is not concluded, so the division, as well as the difference and possibility to move between the two states – male and female – remain. It could be described as oscillation independent of the ideas of synthesis; oscillation that opens possibilities for the autopoietically closed systems. As "the closure of the self-referential order is synonymous here with the *infinite openness of the world*."[41]

In a rare instance of dialogue in the *Cremaster* cycle, Houdini describes his transformation: it is not about mere physicality, each time he challenges himself to escape from the locks, real transformation takes place. Within the metamorphosis Houdini is fused with the cage that contains him: he digests the lock, it becomes part of him and the walls that imprisoned his body come open. The metamorphosis realised through self-imposed resistance and closure, becomes a condition through which openness is achieved. Metamorphosis is a means of resistance and escape from subject-hood, from the shackles of normative human subjectivity.

Video stills from *Cremaster 2*, 1999 (copyright Matthew Barney).

In the nonanthropocentic setup of the *Cremaster* cycle, the characters often transform to match their environment or architectural sites, such as for instance the three androgynous bodybuilder-fairies from *Cremaster 4*. They change their guises according to the different settings they attend to, so have no pronounced individuality, in this metamorphic curtaining of subjectivity. The metamorphosis of forms – whether sculptural, architectural or that of characters – is an important theme throughout the cycle. In a reversal of traditional narratives of metamorphosis, the posthumanist transformations taking place in the *Cremaster* cycle are focused on the process itself, at times interrupted, at times completed, but never reversed. [42]



Video Stills from *Cremaster 4*, 1994 (Copyright Matthew Barney).

The use of metamorphosis in Barney's works can also be understood as art's self-reference, as art itself is a metamorphic process.[43] As Luhmann argues, art unlike any other social system both orients itself historically and can break abruptly with the past: "art can consciously and ruthlessly create discontinuity" and "is not compelled to

continuity. […] This is why art often produces anticipatory signals in social evolution which can be read retrospectively as prognoses."[44] While the *Cremaster* project engages with creating discontinuity in its structure and formal aspects, in use of diverse media, with the themes of creation of form and metamorphosis, with focus on the process and oscillation between different states, and most importantly, with a posthumanist orientation, it introduces more complexity into the art system, and sends anticipatory signals regarding the broader social context.

What is at stake in the *Cremaster* cycle is the questioning of the notion of human subject with his/her exceptional position in the hierarchy of living beings. The nonanthropocentrism of the works emerges in the use of media and circular narrative, characters and sites, autopoietic closure and process-oriented nature, oscillation between female and male, and human and animal states. The human body is an arena for events to unfold and its boundaries are unfixed. The focus on biological processes destabilises the boundary between human and nonhuman bodies. The body becomes a malleable and permeable structure. There is also a defamiliarisation of the landscape which is shown to be oscillating between organic and inorganic, between internal environment and external setting, between sharp solid forms (of the Chrysler building) and something that is about to start oozing or decomposing (the foundation of the building where undead Gilmore emerged from). Landscape becomes analogous to a body whose boundaries are always permeable. The defamiliarised settings are also doubled with the defamiliarising perspectives of the camera, such as mentioned usage of a human body as a frame (the body becoming nonanthropomorphic).

In the *Cremaster* cycle conventional representations of the human body are destabilised – the body is fragmented and hybridised, and the viewer is invited to observe the landscape rather than the human as the central presence. At times the work itself actively invades the space of the viewer, the gallery space or the filmic space, as for example in the sculptural use of petroleum jelly. Distinctions between nonhuman and human are constantly thrown into question, roles are inverted, our fixed ideas are destabilised, but difference never disappears: no higher synthesis of different elements is produced or promised, there is no evolution to a higher unity or state. The resulting posthumanist vision opens a space for challenging some of the categories and hierarchies ingrained in humanism.

In discussing the *Cremaster* cycle in conjunction with non-hierarchical, non-human-centred posthumanist thought, what emerges are new possibilities for rethinking the

nonhuman and human alike. The model of self-referential closure moves towards genuinely not (human) subject-centred autonomy in the understanding of systemic reproduction and operation. That is why this article considers the cycle's circular narratives with its hermetic logic in the light of the self-reproducing autopoietic closure of a system operating according to structures that it has itself produced. Barney's project follows a similar non-linear logic of restless circularity, in which there is a co-presence of ordering and disordering, alongside interrupted narrative events, and disappearing and sometimes resurrecting characters. This systems-theoretical organisation of the works allows for a fundamental questioning of the centrality of human subjectivity, as well as of artistic subjectivity, a questioning which also has interpretative implications for how we view, understand and communicate about art. The *Cremaster* films together comprise a closed system, in a way that makes encountering them in open and unexpected ways possible, and where the idea of hermetic closure corresponds to posthumanist notions of potentiality. These issues surfacing in artistic production give added urgency to the need for rethinking humanist, speciesist frameworks.

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[1] See Cary Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), xii.

[2] Ibid., xxv

[3] See ibid., xx.

[4] For example, Nancy Spector's influential catalogue essay for Barney's famous exhibition at the Guggenheim in New York emphasises the significance of the analogy of sexual differentiation for understanding the structural composition of the *Cremaster* cycle. (Nancy Spector, "Only the Perverse Fantasy Can Still Save Us," in *Matthew Barney: The Cremaster Cycle* (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 2002), 33.) She argues that the cycle imagines the prospect of suspending the phase of sexual undifferentiation, depicting an internal struggle of an organism. Spector's interpretation focuses on the importance of biological metaphors in Barney's art, but not the cluster of concepts and themes featured in my analysis. Similarly to the majority of interpreters, her writing places an emphasis on the terms and ideas articulated by the artist himself. An example of authors who analyse the *Cremaster* cycle purposefully departing from Barney's notions and symbolism is Alexandra Keller's and Frazer Ward's article in which the authors argue that *Cremaster* encourages us "to consume it as high-end eye candy […]: meaning, that is, is no longer a necessary component to art production or reception". (Alexandra Keller and Frazer Ward, "Matthew Barney and the Paradox of the Neo-Avant-Garde Blockbuster," *Cinema Journal* 45 (2006): 13.) They undermine the critical possibilities of the project (for instance, the questioning of biological narratives and narratives of gender formation) that *Cremaster* cycle offers, as they dismiss the biological metaphor from the beginning of their article. Marquard Smith has discussed the topic of prosthetics and the erotics of the body of female amputee in *Cremaster 3*, and the aesthetic use of the disabled body. Whereas Smith offers a pertinent critique of how "the figure of the disabled body has […] become a living, shining embodiment of posthuman existence in prosthetic times", pointing at its potential dangers, I concentrate on the *posthumanist* orientation of the work and its elements, as articulated by Wolfe. (Marquard Smith: "The Vulnerable Articulate: James Gillingham, Aime Mullins, and Matthew Barney," in *The Prosthetic Impulse: From a Posthuman Present to a Biolocultural Future*, ed. Marquard Smith et al. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2006), 46.) To my mind, bringing out the posthumanist aspects within the cycle, opens wider ranging critical possibilities of nonanthropocentric vision presented.

[5] Barney explains the above-mentioned tripartite system in his short text "The Path" (Matthew Barney, "The Path," In *Matthew Barney: Drawing Restraint 1987-2007*, Volume 5, Neville Wakefield et al. (Koeln: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther Koenig, 2007), 22, 24, 26.), as well as the numerous published interviews.

[6] Arthur C. Danto, "The Anatomy Lesson," *The Nation* 276, (2003): 26.

[7] Barney perpetually exposes his artistic body, and often has it literally invaded in his performances since early 1990s; unsurprisingly this is also carried on into the fictional filmic setting of *Cremaster*.

[8] Brandon Stusoy, "Formulas Fatal to the Flesh – On the sounds of the *CREMASTER* Cycle," in *Matthew Barney*, ed. Karsten Löckemann et al. (München: Kunstverlag Ingvild Goetz, 2007), 180.

[9] Thyrza Nicholas Goodeve, "Travels in Hypertrophia," *Artforum* 33, (1995): 71. (Artist quoted in the interview.)

[10] This argument is based on Barney's articulation of field emblem. (Spector, "Perverse Fantasy," 7.)

[11] See Spector's discussion of anthropomorphic and architectural connotation of the field emblem. (Spector, "Perverse Fantasy," 7.)

[12] Niklas Luhmann, *Social Systems*, trans. Dirk Baecker and John Bednarz. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 498.

[13] Luhmann, "Why Does Society Describe Itself as Postmodern?", in *Observing Complexity: Systems Theory and Postmodernity,* ed. William Rasch et al. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 36.

[14] Michael King and Chris Thornhill, "'Will the Real Niklas Luhmann Stand Up, Please'. A Reply to John Mingers," *The Sociological Review* 51 (2003): 283.

[15] Luhmann, *Art as a Social System*, trans. Eva M. Knodt. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 188.

[16] Ibid., 188.

[17] Luhmann, *Social Systems,* 437.

[18] Ibid., 439.

[19] Ibid., 439.

[20] Ibid., 442.

[21] Luhmann, "Autopoiesis of Social Systems," in *Essays on Self-Reference* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 3.

[22] Francisco J. Varela, "Early Days of Autopoiesis," in *Emergence and Embodiment: New Essays on Second-Order Systems Theory*, ed. Bruce Clarke et al. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 62, 70.

[23] Humberto R. Maturana and Francisco J. Varela, *Autopoiesis and Cognition: The Realization of the Living* (Boston: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1980), xix.

[24] Luhmann, "Autopoiesis of Social Systems," 2.

[25] Luhmann, *Social Systems*, 262.

[26] Luhmann, "Why Does Society Describe Itself as Postmodern?", 36.

[27] Ibid., 48.

[28] Luhmann, *Social Systems,* 9.

[29] Luhmann, "Autopoiesis of Social Systems," 12.

[30] Luhmann, *Social Systems,* 447.

[31] Luhmann, "A Redescription of "Romantic Art"," *MLN* 111 (1996): 510.

[32] Ibid., 510.

[33] Luhmann, *Social Systems,* 37.

[34] Ibid., 11.

[35] King and Thornhill emphasise that Luhmann's work on the concept of closed systems is linked to his critique of human agency, "individualism" and "action theory" in the context of sociology. (King and Thornhill, "'Will the Real Niklas Luhmann Stand Up, Please'," 278-279.)

[36] King, "Real Niklas Luhmann," 284.

[37] Luhmann, "Autopoiesis of Social Systems," 9.

[38] Ibid., 9.

[39] Christian Scheidemann, "Notes from the Laboratory," in *All in the Present Must be Transformed: Matthew Barney and Joseph Beuys* (Berlin: Deutsche Guggenheim, 2006), 132.

[40] These are normally described as "collapsing sculptures". (Scheidemann, "Notes from the Laboratory," 125.)

[41] Luhmann, *Social Systems,* 62.

[42] One could describe such metamorphic narratives as posthumanist. Bruce Clarke makes a case for a transformation of ideas about metamorphosis throughout history and elaborates notion of "posthumanist metamorphosis" in literary and visual narratives. For him, such a narrative has to imply a certain form of "symbiosis and the potential for sociality" with posthuman agents. (See Bruce Clarke, *Posthuman Metamorphosis: Narrative and Systems* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 37.) The narratives of metamorphosis staged by Barney are not followed by a destruction of posthuman metamorphs that affirms the human status quo, or a reinstitution into a natural order; in Clarke's terms the "humanist assumptions" do not preclude the "posthuman possibilities". (Clarke, *Posthuman Metamorphosis*, 10.)

[43] According to Clarke, metamorphoses in mythical or fantastic narratives is a mode of self-reference inherent in transmission of stories. (Ibid., 46.) Barney's work can be observed as a self-referential autopoietic system – the work reproducing its own components, employing its binary code – that makes a theme out of the self-referential nature of art as a system.

[44] Luhmann, "The Work of Art and the Self-reproduction of Art," in *Essays on Self-Reference* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 203.

REDISCOVERING OUR HUMANITY: HOW THE *POSTHUMAN NOIR* ANIME, *DARKER THAN BLACK*, SUBVERTS THE TROPES OF FILM NOIR TO REAFFIRM A HUMANIST AGENDA

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I intended to reason. This passion is detrimental to me....
— Mary Shelly[1]

There is an inherent contradiction at the heart of *posthuman noir*; this sub-genre focuses on science fictional futures where certain characters have moved beyond the traditional boundaries of what is considered human; these posthumans are modified for perfection, often presented as more logical and rational than their human counterparts. However, the emphasis, in all of the Anglo-American films and Japanese anime included in the *posthuman noir* corpus, is on more typically human traits of emotion and irrationality and their awakening/re-awakening in these posthuman characters. This hints that the sub-genre is not in fact positing a truly posthumanist standpoint but reaffirming an older humanist one, assuaging fears that what is traditionally considered human has no place in these technologically advanced worlds.

This article will explore this theory through its application to one *posthuman noir* Japanese anime, Tensai Okamura's *Darker Than Black* (2007), a series which is indicative of the other Anglo-American films and Japanese anime included in the *posthuman noir* corpus between 1982 and 2012. *Darker Than Black*, which aired for 26 episodes between April and September 2007, was produced by animation studios Bones and Aniplex. It was followed by a shorter second series of 13 episodes in 2009 and an OVA (original video animation) of four episodes in 2010. The analysis in this article will concentrate on the first series of *Darker Than Black*.

Focusing on two specific areas where the anthropocentric agenda of *posthuman noir* is particularly evident—narrative structure and characterisation—this article develops an overview of the sub-genre's distinct features. However, before *Darker Than Black* can be

explored in any great detail there are three areas of critical debate which must be raised. Firstly the sub-genre of *posthuman noir* must be introduced and defined; secondly the pertinent philosophical and ontological questions of what it means to be posthuman and posthumanist will be identified; and finally, relevant issues relating to the contested genre of film noir will be examined. The critical concerns drawn from these three areas will then inform and illuminate the ways in which *Darker Than Black*, as a *posthuman noir* anime, validates the continuing status of the human at the centre of focus in technologically advanced, science fictional posthuman futures.

WHAT IS POSTHUMAN NOIR?

Posthuman noir is located at the intersection of science fiction cinema and film noir; it draws on the aesthetic, thematic and structural elements of the latter to explore questions of humanity's place in posthuman futures. The Anglo-American films and Japanese anime included in this sub-genre

have a cohesive set of concerns related to the fears and possibilities afforded by the modification of humanity through actions of "extension"[2] [cybernetics and robotics], "enhancement"[3] [genetic modification], and "extrusion"[4] [virtual realities, connected consciousnesses] and how essential human nature is preserved or perpetuated through these changes. These concerns are presented by this sub-genre by adopting elements found in the body of films labelled as film noir—traditionally considered to span the from *The Maltese Falcon* (John Huston, 1941) to *A Touch of Evil* (Orson Wells, 1958)[5]—and adapting or subverting them.

Each of the Anglo-American films and Japanese anime included in the *posthuman noir* corpus take on atmospheric and aesthetic devices that are associated with film noir; their settings emphasise the "constant opposition of light and shadow...[use] oblique camera angles...[with a] disruptive compositional balance of frames and scenes."[6] This use of aesthetic is evident from the neon and rain soaked streets of *Blade Runner* (Ridley Scott, 1982)[7] to the minimalist art deco inspired locations of *Gattaca* (Andrew Niccols, 1997)[8] to *Dark City's* (Alex Proyas, 1998) nightmarish warren[9] which establishes a distinct visual link to Fritz Lang's expressionist science fiction film, *Metropolis* (1927).[10] Concurrently these visual signifiers of film noir are present in Japanese anime from the constantly

shifting and disorientating angles of *Ergo Proxy* (Shukō Murase, 2006)[11] to the glorious art deco cityscapes of Rintaro's *Metropolis* (2001)[12] to the moody purples and acid greens which dominate, and generate contrast, in *Darker Than Black*; this colour contrast, established in the first scenes,[13] develops as a visual signifier of the rotting, corrupt nature of the world the characters populate.

The worlds of *posthuman noir* are populated with character types drawn from film noir: protagonists tend to be detectives—Rick Deckard,[14] Motoko Kusanagi[15]— criminals and conmen—Vincent Freeman,[16] Hei[17]—or everymen—Neo,[18] Vincent Law[19]— manipulated by their desires for what the femme, or homme,[20] fatale is offering them. Moral ambiguity pervades *posthuman noir* narratives, building a rhizomatic maze of deceit[21] which mirrors the urban maze of the science fictional metropolises in which these stories are based. Finally the sense of fatality that pervades film noir is also an inherent aspect of *posthuman noir*, as J.P. Telotte notes, "in the creation of something better than ourselves we [fear we] may become obsolete."[22]

However, despite the commonality between film noir and this sub-genre of science fiction, there is a surprising trend in *posthuman noir* stories which subverts one of the fundamental elements of film noir, namely, nearly all *posthuman noirs* end positively for the protagonists. Structurally, traditional film noir stories set out a downward spiral of destruction and tragedy for protagonists who transgress societal norms; for these protagonists, "death always comes at the end of a tortured journey."[23] However, the very emotions that condemn the protagonists of traditional film noir are viewed as a saving grace for posthuman characters because they affirm the position of human nature in these science fictional futures. Therefore, the subversion of the film noir structure in *posthuman noir* is an active choice which explores and validates the continuation of a humanist standpoint. It is this subversion that the analysis of *Darker Than Black* in this article will highlight.

POSTHUMAN, TRANSHUMAN, POSTHUMANISM

To analyse the agenda present in *posthuman noir* and how it is applied in *Darker Than Black* it is important to establish the conflicting ideas which colour the scholarly stage of the posthuman and posthumanism—the former being characters who go through a process

which places them beyond what is currently defined as human, but which might not challenge an anthropocentric view of reality; the latter being a philosophical position which aims to shake up pre-existing notions of the human as one isolated and superior to all of creation. [24]

Posthumanism is a difficult concept to define, as Cary Wolfe points out in the introduction to *What is Posthumanism*? "it generates different and even irreconcilable definitions."[25] Opinions on its aims, agendas and even categorisation vary wildly. The divide in ideas can be addressed through the use of two different terms: transhumanism and posthumanism. It is important to understand the difference between these two terms as both apply to the posthuman characters in the *posthuman noir* corpus**.** This distinction has been influential in the selection of the word *posthuman* over posthumanist in the titling of this sub-genre because the all films and anime in this study include posthuman characters but they do not all adhere to a posthumanist philosophical standpoint. Nearly all of the Anglo-American films and Japanese anime in the corpus include both characters who are fully posthuman and those who are in the transitional phase—often referred to as transhuman. In *Darker Than Black* this pattern is displayed through the fully posthuman characters, called contractors and dolls, and through the transhuman characters called moratoriums.

Transhumanism is the branch of posthumanism often described as the true child of humanism.[26] Transhumanism focuses on the rational, logical human who remains at the centre of the universe working to perfect himself through technological means of evolution.[27] Transhumanists view the human body and the individualist identity as markers to be preserved through evolution to posthuman futures. There is little desire to network and blur with non-human elements, be they artificial intelligence or non-human animals. When the boundaries between man and machine break down techno-terror is unleashed to generate fear and reaffirm the need for the human to remain an isolated being.[28] In the *posthuman noir* corpus this position is shown by the favouring of the emotional over the rational. This conforms to a stand on transhumanism, posited by P.J. Manney, which focuses on not only improving the physical human body via techno science but also the need to also enhance humanity's empathetic capacity.[29]

A purer philosophical posthumanism, on the other hand, aims to escape the bounds of the anthropocentric.[30] Posthumanism aims to situate the human within a network of other non-human animals and life forms and look to find way to express humanity through these

networks. As such, posthumanism wishes to break down the binaries which currently define human identity and throw out the pre-existing power structures that seek to limit what is considered 'human.' In this vein, Donna Haraway's *Cyborg Manifesto* calls for the breaking of traditional power structures and binary definitions of the human, and in its place Haraway would like to posit unity of races, genders, man and machine towards a destruction of boundaries.[31]

In *Darker Than Black* contractor, Hei (Hidenobu Kiuchi), and doll, Yin (Misato Fukuen), offer the tantalising prospect of posthumanism through the idea of the networked posthuman. It is Hei and Yin's identities which are formed by encompassing others, embracing the team of both humans and posthumans, as well as their self as human/posthuman hybrids, that ultimately saves them, in contrast to the characters who remain isolated, locked into their identification with their single species. There is also a hint at a further blurring of the anthropocentric boundaries through the character of Mao (Ikyua Sawaki), a contractor stuck in the body of a cat who can possess other animal forms. However, the idea is brought up but not followed, it is always Mao's human identity which dominates and when in the penultimate episode of the show Mao is cut off from the Syndicate—the shadowy organisation he works for—the feline identity overwhelms him and Mao is lost, considered dead.[32] The cat runs away, abandoning Hei and Yin to their fate, which undermines the notion of Mao as a fully posthuman, integrated human/non-human animal, character who retains his purpose and loyalty to the team.

This is because posthumanism is not the philosophical standpoint behind the *posthuman noir* corpus. These texts are not created from the perspective of posthumanism; they are not trying to break the power binaries apart. Instead, they use posthuman characters to promote emotional qualities over rational ones. In the technological age,[33] emotions, that are harder to program, are the sign of enlightened posthumans. In *Darker Than Black* it is the posthuman characters who overcome their rational programming, like Hei and Yin, who survive while those who cling to their rationality, like the contractor Wei (Takeshi Kusao), are ultimately defeated.[34]

Very rarely, if ever, do posthuman characters in *posthuman noir* exhibit traits that shift from an anthropocentric viewpoint.[35] Instead, they embody humanist and transhumanist ideas of self improvement; they are Human 2.0, the next stage in the human operating system. Through scientific methods the human is perfected, which often includes increased rationality; posthuman characters make their decisions based on logic and reason, they are

not emotionally motivated. Film critic Roger Ebert draws attention to the problem of these rationalised posthumans asking: "Why are 'perfect' societies so often depicted by ranks of automatons?... Is it that human nature resides in our flaws?"[36]

These flaws of human nature are the same impulses that are exploited by femme fatales to corrupt the male protagonists resulting the typically tragic endings of film noir. Yet it is these particular flaws that demonstrate our humanity and, once awoken in posthuman characters, result in the change of the *posthuman noir* ending from tragic to triumphant. It is through remaining firm to anthropocentric ideals, not posthumanist ones, that these films demonstrate their true agenda; this is not a posthuman desire to blur and break the boundaries of humanity, or remove humans from the centre of the debate; if anything, it is to place them firmly back into the limelight.

FILM NOIR

Now that an overview of philosophical position of *posthuman noir* has been established, its relation to traditional film noir must now be unpacked. The aesthetic, structural and thematic elements of traditional film noir form the method by which *posthuman noir* pursues its humanist agendas; thus these are the areas of focus for this brief overview of film noir. However, as will become apparent, these elements and the nature of film noir as a genre are highly contested. Still, as Robert Porfiro states, "we must ground the term in some sort of adequate working definition if it is to warrant serious consideration as an object of either film or culture."[37] Thus, this article, and *posthuman noir*, takes the standpoint that there is more than a shared set of stylistic devices that unites the oeuvre that is often referred to as film noir. In the words of Foster Hirsch: there is a unity of "narrative structure, characterisation and theme"[38] which binds these films together. It is the careful manipulation and subversion of these tropes that *posthuman noir* uses to validate its agenda towards consolidating a position for the 'human' in the technological, posthuman world.

The period of traditional film noir is generally agreed to run between *The Maltese Falcon* and *A Touch of Evil*.[39] Yet there is much divergence in critical writing about what constitutes film noir and whether or not film noir is a genre or a cycle of films which are merely united by similar aesthetic tropes.[40] The idea of a dark film, a film noir, stemmed

from Nino Frank[41] who noticed a new tone in the films from America in 1946; these crime dramas were united by a darker and more violent atmosphere which distinguished them from general crime dramas. Raymond Borde and Etienne Chaumenton, in their book *Panorama du Film Noir Américain*, noticed that defining film noir was not a simple task and perhaps, by its very nature, film noir defied coherence. These films could be linked by something more subtle; a common sense of tone and mood.[42] Paul Schrader established a set of elements, or tropes, by which one can identify film noir and which were used as criteria for the *posthuman noir* corpus. Firstly, there are stylistic features which include: low lighting, a preference of oblique and vertical lines, a prevalence of water, voice over narration and complex chronological structures, i.e. flashbacks. Secondly, there are more tonal features which include: paranoia, claustrophobia, plumbing psychological depths, post war disillusionment, alienation.[43]

It must be noted that film noir's distinctive style partially emerged from the German expressionist tradition, which was reinforced in Hollywood by German émigrés — for example Fritz Lang, Billy Wilder, Otto Preminger and Robert Siodmak[44]—in the lead up to, and following, the Second World War. One of the most iconic expressionist films is *Metropolis,* which is also a science fiction narrative that deals with questions of what it means to be human, praising human emotional qualities over the calculating, or industrial, machine. There seems to be a link to science fiction hardwired into the DNA of noir; to that end, the return of directors from the 1980s onward, in a period of equal, if not more, rapid social and technological change than the post war era, to film noir elements to explore posthuman questions might not be so surprising.

As mentioned previously, the key thematic and structural element of film noir which is subverted to follow the humanist agenda in *posthuman noir* is the tragic downfall of the protagonist. Corrupted by his—it is nearly always his—darker emotions, manipulated and seduced by the femme fatale, the protagonist has nowhere to escape to; the only way out of the rhizomatic maze of lies and deceit is death. Walter Neff in *Double Indemnity* (Wilder, 1944), Hank Quinlan in *a Touch of Evil* and other noir protagonists are punished for their transgression from the moral codes of law and order. This is where the noir genre reaffirms the idea that criminals cannot prosper[45], and that failure to repent or atone for sins committed will result in those sins returning to condemn the protagonists.

However, in *posthuman noir* this moral code can be replaced by the code of human nature, transgressions from this are punished, while discovery, or rediscovery, of human

emotions and motivations are rewarded. Neo in *The Matrix* (Lana and Andy Wachowski, 1999) triumphs over the purely rational A.I. Agents, Deckard is allowed to leave with the girl, Rachel, in *Blade Runner*, Hei and Yin in *Darker Than Black* survive while the other emotionless contractors die. The sin, in the context of *posthuman noir*, is the rejection of humanity's emotional flaws in the pursuit of Human 2.0. Once again the human focused agenda, which is present in many science fiction films,[46] comes to the forefront; when a posthuman character stops being considered as 'other' through displays of irrationality, emotion and deceit, *posthuman noir* films tap into the things that make us inherently human and those re-humanised characters are allowed to survive the narrative. This structural subversion will be demonstrated in an analysis of *Darker Than Black* later in this article; both through the macro view of the series arc and through the micro view of individually paired episodes.

One last point that must be made about the development of film noir is the way it developed from the specific social and cultural conditions generated after the Second World War. "One who seeks the root of this 'style' must think in terms of an affected and possibly ephemeral reaction to a moment in history."[47] The era after the Second World War was defined by great change and upheaval in which the position of men, in particular, was unstable.[48] The cynical, morally ambiguous tone which is associated with film noir, a "melodramatic reaction for a word gone mad,"[49] emerged from the changes in attitude in America during and after the Second World War as a reaction, perhaps, to the way seemingly ordinary people, and those in positions of moral authority could commit such major acts of cruelty and violence as the Nazi concentration camps or the dropping of the atomic bomb.[50] The aftermath of this conflict had a profound effect on the Anglo-American and Japanese psyche. The attack on Pearl Harbour which brought America into the war showed that even America was vulnerable to assault,[51] while the effect of the atomic bomb and the occupation of Japan by America in the 1940s had deep implications on the construction of Japanese identity, and especially Japanese masculinity.[52]

It is important to briefly identify the influences behind Anglo-American and Japanese portrayals of the noir figure on the edge of society and the inherent differences as these are relevant to the way posthuman characters are portrayed in relation to society in *Darker Than Black*. Unlike American noir characters, those on the borders or margins in Japanese noir were almost always cast as tragic figures,[53] because they had been cut off from the nurturing environment of the community, the collective society.

In Britain and America neoliberal ideas, which grew from a reaction against the totalitarian, overbearing interfering state, privileged the power and importance of the individual and cast the concepts of a collective identity in a negative light.[54] Therefore the outsider, the individual on the periphery of society, or even alienated from society, who emerged in traditional film noir, remains a popular figure for the neoliberal age.

In contrast, neoliberal ideas did not take such a firm hold on the social and political structure of Japan. Instead, the traditional philosophical, cultural and religious contexts of Buddhism and Shinto continued to play an important role in Japanese society and those ideologies often privileged the collective over the individual.[55] This is also evident in the way the form of becoming posthuman via collective consciousness is cast in a far more positive light in Japanese anime, than in Anglo-American films.[56]

This attitude toward the outsider as a tragic figure is prevalent in the characters of *posthuman noir* Japanese anime, bringing another layer to the analysis of many *posthuman noir* protagonists, who are not only outsiders due to their posthuman nature, yearning to become part of the collective society known as human; but also their false human personas are foreigners to their current environments. Hei and Yin in *Darker Than Black* are both characters who are foreigners in Japan, Chinese and Finnish respectively, their journey to regain their humanity takes on a different allegorical tone when they are also viewed as foreigners trying to find a way to become part of Japanese society. In *Ergo Proxy*, Vincent Law's cover identity as a human is one in which he is also an immigrant to the main location of Romdeau from Mosque. Vincent's greatest desire in the opening episodes is to become a model citizen.[57] In Japanese anime it seems that there is a secondary layer for the positive endings provided to posthuman characters who regain their humanity, because they are also rewarded by being brought back into the fold of society.

The impact of film noir style is evident in the science fiction films and anime which form the *posthuman noir* corpus but what this exploration of other aspects of traditional film noir demonstrates is that there is more than merely aesthetic links between these two genres, hence the use of noir in the titling of *posthuman noir*. This explanation of some narrative and character patterns inherent to film noir is also relevant to the examination of *Darker Than Black* which will now act as a case study through which to observe the theories established in the first part of this article.

DARKER THAN BLACK

Darker Than Black is a *posthuman noir* series which, through the span of twenty six episodes of twenty five minutes, explores questions of what it is to be human in a technologically advanced world. Set in Tokyo in the near future the series follows a team of contractors, dolls and humans who work for a shadow organisation. After an incident ten years previous to the series, two areas of the world have emerged, one in South America labelled Heaven's Gate, one in Tokyo labelled Hell's Gate, which are inhabitable to humans. In Tokyo a large wall has been built around the Hell's Gate, the area being left for scientific research, and the city's occupants have resumed their normal lives. There is a link to the damaged cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in this image,[58] harkening back to the Second World War and one of the influences on film noir. Since the development of these two areas some humans have evolved into posthumans called contractors and dolls.

Contractors are named for the contract, or price, they must obsessive-compulsively pay to use their posthuman abilities, such as breaking their fingers after using an anti-gravitational ability[59] or reverse-aging after using an ability to freeze or manipulate time. Throughout the series, a contractor's rational, logical thought process is constantly held up as a major symbol of their superiority and difference from humans. The other main type of posthuman character in *Darker Than Black*, called dolls, are blank slate characters who have lost all trace of their original human personalities. These dolls can have their minds networked, and act as living surveillance devices, sending their 'spectres' out along wires, through water and through glass to spy on whomever they are ordered to.

In *Darker Than Black* traditional film noir narrative structure and character types are manipulated to follow the humanist, anthropocentric agenda of *posthuman noir*. As previously stated, *Darker Than Black* uses stylistic, aesthetic tropes of film noir; there is even a sense of hardboiled detective fiction and film noir in the title of the episodes: "A Love Song Sung from the Trash Heap,"[60] "Memories of Betrayal in an Amber Smile."[61] "The Scent of Gardenias Lingers in the Summer Rain."[62] *Darker Than Black* is a series which takes care to establish the fictional world of noir so that the subversion of the film noir elements can be viewed as a deliberate choice.

Traditional film noir structure revolves around establishing the male protagonist in his typical routine which is then disrupted by the entrance of the femme fatale. What follows is seduction, the transgression of moral and social boundaries by the protagonist in

pursuit of the femme fatale, and often riches, which inevitably leads to the protagonist's downfall.[63] This is a simplified version of the narrative structure in film noir; however, it is necessary to break the narrative down into these simple sections to demonstrate how *Darker Than Black* on the micro scale of each pair of episodes, and over the macro scale of the whole series, uses this same structure but with an entirely different outcome.

This pattern is established from the first pair of episodes titled "The Fallen Star of a Contract." In this pair of episodes the film noir pedigree of the series is quickly set up; the world is dark, threatening and filled with shadows. The locations feature staples of film noir, including urban spaces of dingy alleys, hostess clubs and the police precinct; while the characters featured are cops, conmen, femme fatales and the protagonist Hei/Li who is simultaneously the hardened conman and innocent everyman. The narrative revolves around a stolen piece of technology which the femme fatale, the traditionally white and red clad,[64] Chiaki Shinoda (Megumi Toyoguchi) has taken. Chiaki seemingly seduces Hei into helping her escape from, and kill, her co-conspirators, ultimately leading him into a trap which should result in his death. When Hei steps in front of Chiaki to defend her from the other contractors, an illogical and emotional move, he is shot in the back by Chiaki.[65] Thus far this is the typical film noir structure, however, this is *posthuman noir* not traditional film noir and Hei has exhibited emotional awakening through his seduction by the femme fatale. When this occurs in *posthuman noir*, the posthuman character is rewarded rather than punished for their transgression from their logical programming. Hei survives the attack while the other contractors and Chiaki, who is in fact a doll, are killed because they are incapable of exhibiting traditionally human traits of emotion and empathy. These characters cling to their pre-determined programming rather than Hei, who shows his own agency in his irrational actions which go against the defining factors, rationality and logic, of his race of posthumans.

All the episodes in the series follow this structure, building a pattern which, in the macrocosm of the series arc, fully reinforces the humanist standpoint. The two main protagonists, Hei and Yin, who to some extent are femme fatale and homme fatal for each other, form emotional bonds, reawakening their human desires and thus functioning more illogically and unpredictably than other posthuman characters. This is important in ensuring their survival and shared positive ending. Once Hei and Yin have regained enough of their humanity their bond is tested in Hell's Gate, the literal rhizomatic maze of the series, a liminal, fog bound dreamscape, in which every step forward towards the

centre leads the characters to become more lost. Hei and Yin are lured into the maze by series femme fatale Amber (Tomoko Kawakami), once again a figure dressed in ironic white,[66] who has managed to manipulate both characters into carrying out her plan. In traditional film noir this seduction would lead to the protagonist's downfall and they would be devoured by the maze. However, these posthuman characters have regained their humanity and thus Yin takes on the role of Ariadne,[67] her posthuman surveillance abilities strengthened by her emotional attachment to Hei, and leads them out of the twists and turns of the noir maze to achieve their combined goal of survival.

The subversion of the film noir structure to reaffirm the position of what is traditionally regarded as human in the centre of focus for the future could not also be achieved without the subversion of film noir character types. One of the noticeable subversions is that of the femme, or homme, fatale. In traditional film noir this character's role is to set in motion the moral and social transgressions, fuelled by the protagonist's sexual desire, which will lead to the protagonist's death. In *posthuman noir*, however, these characters' intervention in the protagonist's life, their seduction, is not fatal; it is exactly the opposite. Amber's emotional manipulation of Hei, and her kidnapping and friendly seduction of Yin, leads to both characters regaining the human qualities which were lost in their posthuman transformations, this enables them to navigate the *posthuman noir* narrative maze and survive. This is a complete reversal of the role occupied by the femme fatale in traditional noir.

Linked to this change in the role of the femme, or homme, fatale is the modification of the role of the protagonist. The main function of posthuman protagonists in *posthuman noir* is to re-engage with their emotional, irrational human side and, in Japanese anime, find a way to reintegrate with society. In *Darker Than Black* the ability to maintain more traditionally human emotional characteristics, as well as harnessing their posthuman natures, equips the protagonists with the skills needed to thrive.

The connection that Hei, the contractor protagonist, has to his humanity allows him to succeed in his missions for the Syndicate. Hei is a character who is both a criminal and a detective—human and posthuman—and the solution to the mystery he is trying to solve throughout the series is ultimately hidden inside himself. Jerold J. Abrams highlights a shift in the nature of the protagonist when moving from traditional film noir to neo noir; that neo noir protagonists are at war with themselves.[68] Hei embodies this concept; his character is defined by the journey he takes to understand his dual human/posthuman

nature and his inability to come to terms with what he is. Ironically, before his posthuman transformation Hei was less human than he is as a contractor. This is noted by the contractor Havoc (Naomi Shindō): "In the old days you were more ruthless than anyone even though you weren't changed like us... But now that you've become a contractor you've somehow stopped acting like one."[69] It takes being considered 'other,' to allow Hei to explore his softer emotional side. He no longer has to act to keep up with the contractors around him; the act of physically becoming less human allows Hei to rediscover his humanity.

Hei's divided nature is represented by two distinct personalities. While Hei's professional persona is a masked, efficient assassin, his everyday persona is the exact opposite. Li Shenshun, is a sensitive, shy everyman. The Hei persona dresses in a black trench coat, his face masked;[70] while Li wears a white, partially untucked shirt with blue jeans.[71] The prevalence of white in Li's outfits symbolically casts Li as the moral half to Hei's criminal immoral killer. The Hei persona fits into traditional hardboiled rational masculine tropes while the Li persona is characterised by the more stereotypically feminine attributes of empathy and intuition.

Hei's human alter ego, Li Shenshun, is a Chinese exchange student; this places him as an outsider in Japan just as being a contractor marks Hei as an outsider to humanity. This outsider identity allows Li to make, and fake, mistakes; it excuses him from knowing Japanese customs which provides him with an alibi when his emotional responses differ to the humans around him. Once again it is important to mention the emphasis on being part of a community[72] which many *posthuman noir* characters rejoin when they regain their humanity. This functions on two levels with characters like Hei or Yin, who are foreigners as well as posthumans. For them finding their community with each other, and within the team they are part of, forms the locus of their transformation back towards their emotions and their humanity.

Hei's change toward humanity mirrored and amplified in the character of Yin who is a doll, the second type of posthuman in the world of *Darker Than Black*. Dolls are blank slates that have the ability to project their 'spectres' through glass, water and cables, to carry out surveillance. They are an example of a posthuman perfectly evolved for a single task, but who lack the capacity to be unreliable, or even function, outside of these roles. Used and abused, as demonstrated in episode arc titled "A Love Song Sung from a Trash

Heap,"[73] dolls are treated as little more than commodities to be traded, not people to be cared about.

At the start of the series, Yin is a typical doll; her facial expressions are constantly blank, her eyes fixed in the middle distance, her breath imperceptible, as if she were really a doll.[74] Yin is introduced through the stylised features of her 'spectre,' which is indistinguishable from any other doll's spectre. This emphasises that she is no longer a human being with an individual freewill or consciousness.[75]

Due to her emotionless appearance, when Yin begins to manifest emotions their impact is far more visible. In episode 14, Huang (Masaru Ikeda) comments that "this is ridiculous, dolls can't cry"[76] as he watches the tears rolling down Yin's cheeks. This is the beginning of Yin's transformation, she rejects her past life for the place she has as Hei's partner, as part of the team. At the end of the episode Yin uses a finger to raise the side of her mouth into a smile. [77] This is the first moment Yin actively makes a decision and the first moment she is acknowledged as a person, rather than a doll.

Yin's spectre, which is visually and thematically tied to ideas of the spirit, is deliberately used to show her first moment of rebellion, externalising and visualising the changes that are occurring within. Once Yin's transformation begins it is unsurprising that she has been constructed with an affinity to water. This element is tied to the unconscious and ideas of introspection and interiority;[78] water acts as a mirror which can reflect and conceal. The clear, still surface hides currents and depth, just as Yin's blank exterior conceals an evolving emotional core.

This growing ability to lie to protect those she cares for generates stronger bonds with her friends, allowing Yin to track them more quickly when they are in need of help. Therefore, Yin's increasing human emotions improve her posthuman abilities; this is the same for the nameless doll in the arc "A Love Song Sung from a Trash Heap". Emotional awakenings, especially romantic, are shown to aid and enhance a doll's posthuman abilities, rather than hinder them. Once again the humanist agenda appears to demonstrate how the balance of emotions and rationalism are preferable in posthuman characters. Yin's evolution could be seen to conform to Buddhist ideals of unity through the bonds she shares with others.[79]

Yin's final moment of change occurs in the Hell's Gate as she shouts, "Don't leave me alone,"[80] which saves Hei's life. The fear of being alone is one of the most basic of human fears which Yin, as a doll, should not feel let alone express. Through being treated as more

than a tool by Hei, Yin develops inconsistencies in her perfect posthuman reprogramming and begins to rediscover her humanity. Once again, it is through this rediscovery that Yin becomes another example of the way *posthuman noir* rewards characters who exhibit humanist values. While the protagonists of noir are "emasculated" by love,[81] in *posthuman noir* they are redeemed by it.

A POSTHUMAN NOIR?

As this exploration of the first series of *Darker Than Black* has demonstrated, there are specific features that define the sub-genre titled *posthuman noir* which draw inspiration from critical discourse around posthumanism and transhumanism, while also taking the stylistic, structural and character elements of traditional film noir. This is a sub-genre which, despite the prominence of posthuman characters, perpetuates older, more humanist, notions of what it means to be human and reaffirms the position of human values and inherent human traits in posthuman futures. Although there is potential in the use of characters who blur the clearly demarcated boundaries of what constitutes a human being, the emphasis is not placed on the ways these characters could represent a truly posthumanist standpoint. Instead *posthuman noir* is primarily concerned with using traditional film noir tropes to place posthuman characters into situations where their emotional human traits re-emerge. When these situations occur, the posthuman characters able to harness both their posthuman, and more traditionally human traits, are rewarded with endings which are positive, compared to their counterparts in traditional film noir who are damned by their desires. The second series and OVA of *Darker Than Black* corroborate and develop this concepts, as do the other anime in the *posthuman noir* corpus.

There is no posthumanist agenda at the heart of *posthuman noir* as it currently stands; however, this leaves the field open for new Anglo-American films and Japanese anime to fully explore the possibilities of a posthumanist noir. Can human creators truly think beyond their anthropocentric tendencies and generate posthumanist narratives? As notions of what it is to be human evolve in the current technological age perhaps a true *posthumanist noir* will emerge.

[1] Mary Shelly, *Frankenstein* (London: Penguin, 1992), 141.

[2]Julie Clarke, *The Paradox of the Posthuman: Science Fiction/Techno-Horror Films and Visual Media* (Saarbrücken; VDM Verlag Dr. Müller Aktiengesellscchaft & Co. KG, 2004), 203.

[3] Ibid., 203.

[4] Ibid., 203.

[5] Although the period between *The Maltese Falcon* and *A Touch of Evil* is generally considered the period of traditional film noir there are some who consider it starting earlier and finishing earlier. See Joan Copjec, ed. *Shades of Noir*: *A Reader* (London: Verso. 1998) and James, Naremore, *More Than Night: Film Noir in its Contexts Updated and Expanded* (London: University of California Press. 2008).

[6] Mark T. Conard, ed. *The Philosophy of Film Noir* (London: University Press of Kentucky, 2007), 1.

[7] *Blade Runner*, directed by Ridley Scott, (1982; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2007), DVD.

[8] *Gattaca*, directed by Andrew Niccol, (1997; Los Angeles, CA: Columbia, 2004), DVD.

[9] *Dark City,* directed by Alex Proyas (1998; London: Entertainment in Video Ltd, 1999), DVD.

[10] *Metropolis*, directed by Fritz Lang (1927; London: Eureka, 2005), DVD.

[11] "The Pulse of Awakening/Awakening," episode 1, *Ergo Proxy*, directed by Shukō Murase, (2006; Chepstow: MVM Entertainment, 2007), DVD.

[12] *Metropolis*, directed by Rintaro, (2001; Culver City, CA: Columbia Tri-star, 2002), DVD.

[13] "The Fallen Star of a Contract... Part One," episode 1, *Darker Than Black*, directed by Tensai Okamura, (2007; Los Angles, CA: Manga Entertainment Ltd, 2010), DVD.

[14] *Blade Runner*, Scott.

[15] *Ghost in the Shell*. directed by Mamoru Oshii, (1995; Los Angles, CA: Manga Entertainment Ltd, 2010), DVD.

[16] *Gattaca,* Niccol.

[17] *Darker Than Black,* Okamura.

[18] *The Matrix*, directed by Larry and Andy Wachowski (1999; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 1999), DVD.

[19] *Ergo Proxy*, Murase.

[20] In Japanese anime there is a prevalence of the homme fatal. For more on notions of the feminised man see Yumiko Iida, "Beyond the 'feminization of masculinity': transforming patriarchy with the 'feminine' in contemporary Japanese youth culture" *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 6:1 (2005) 56-74, accessed October 8, 2013,doi:10.1080/1462394042000326905

[21] Jerold J. Abrams, "From Sherlock Holmes to the Hardboiled Detective in Film Noir" in *The Philosophy of Film Noir*, ed. Mark Conard (London: University Press of Kentucky, 2007), 72.

[22] Susan J. Napier, *Anime: From Akira to Howl's Moving Castle – Experiencing Contemporary Japanese Animation* (London: Palgrave McMillan, 2005), 11.

[23] Raymond Borde and Etienne Chaumenton, "Towards a Definition of Film Noir" (1955) in *Film Noir Reader*, ed. A. Silver and J. Ursini (New York: Limelight editions, 1996), 19.

[24] The boundaries of what can be considered 'human' has been debated since antiquity. For a detailed overview of humanist debates see Tony Davis, *Humanism* (New York: Routledge, 1997). Also see Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Cambridge: Polity, 2013), 13-25.

[25] Cary Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2010), xi. See the rest of the introduction xi –xxxiv for detailed examination of these debates. See also Pramod K. Nayar, *Posthumanism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014) for an overview of the complexity of defining posthumanism.

[26] Ibid., xiii.

[27] Male gendered pronouns are more often used in humanist discourse, for more on this see Nayar, Posthumanism, 5.

[28] See Michael Ryan and Douglas Kellner, "Technophobia/Dystopia" in *Liquid Metal: The Science Fiction Film Reader*, ed. Sean Redmond (London: Wallflower Press, 2004), 48-56 and Emily E. Auger, *Tech Noir Film* (Bristol: Intellect, 2011).

[29] See P.J. Manney, "Empathy in the Time of Technology: How Storytelling is Key to Empathy," *Journal of Evolution and Technology*, Vol. 19 Issue 1 (2008), 51-61 accessed February16, 2015 http://jetpress.org/v19/manney.htm

[30] See Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism*?, xiv-xx.

[31] Donna Haraway, *The Cyborg Manifesto* in *The Haraway Reader* (London: Routledge, 2004), 35.

[32] "Meteor Shower," episode 24, *Darker Than Black,* Okamura.

[33] Notions of the technological age have developed throughout the twentieth century, and ideas of what it is to be human have also changed in relation to various technological breakthroughs. See David Bell "Cybercultures Reader: A User's Guide," in *The Cybercultures Reader*, ed. David Bell and Barbara M. Kennedy (London: Routledge, 2000), 4.

[34] "Meteor Shower," episode 24, *Darker Than Black*, Okamura.

[35] Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, 190.

[36] Clarke, *The Paradox of the Posthuman*, 126.

[37] Robert G. Porfirio, "No Way Out: Existential Motifs in the Film Noir" (1976) in *Film Noir Reader*, ed. Silver and Ursini, 77.

[38] Conard, *The Philosophy of Film Noir,* 9.

[39] Alain Sliver, "Introduction" in *Film Noir Reader*, ed. Silver and Ursini, 11.

[40] Andrew Spicer in Mark T. Conard, *The Philosophy of Film Noir*, 10.

[41] Borde and Chaumenton, "Towards a Definition of Film Noir," 17.

[42] Paul Schrader, "Notes on Film Noir" (1972) in *Film Noir Reader*, ed. Silver and Ursini, 53.

[43] Ibid., 57-58

[44] Charles Higham and Joel Greenberg "Noir Cinema" (1968) in *Film Noir Reader,* ed. Silver and Ursini, 27.

[45] Philippa Gates, *Detecting Men: Masculinity and the Hollywood Detective Film* (Albany: State University of New York, 2006) 84.

[46] Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, 107.

[47] Borde and Chaumenton, "Towards a Definition of Film Noir,"19.

[48] Gates, *Detecting Men*, 84.

[49] Tom Flinn, 'Three Faces of Film Noir,' (1972) in Alain Silver and James Ursini *Film Noir Reader 2* (New York: Limelight editions, 1999), 35.

[50] For more on levels of moral ambiguity and morality in general in film noir see Aeon J. Skoble 'Moral Clarity and Practical Reason in Film Noir,' in Mark T. Conard, *The Philosophy of Film Noir*, 41-48.

[51] Robert Porfirio 'Forward' in Conard, ed. *The Philosophy of Film Noir*, xii.

[52] Napier, *Anime: From Akira to Howl's Moving Castle*, 27.

[53] David Desser "The Gunman and the Gun: Japanese film noir since the late 1950s" in *International Noir* ed. H. Petty and R. Palmer, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 121.

[54] See N. Marsh, P. Crosthwaite, and P. Knight, "Show me the Money: The Culture of Neoliberalism" *New Formations: A Journal of Culture/Theory/Politics*, Vol. 80-81 (2013) 209-217 accessed February 6, 2015, http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/new_formations/v080/80.marsh.html

[55] M. Anesaki, *History of Japanese Religion: With Special Reference to the Social and Moral Life of the Nation*, (London: Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd. 1930) 66. See also Paul J. Bailey, *Postwar Japan 1945 to the Present* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1996) 155.

[56] The issue of collective consciousness continues to form a distinct difference between the two cultures *Transcendence*, directed by Wally Pfister. (London: Summit Entertainment. 2014) DVD, once again casts a negative tone on the use of collective consciousness as a means of becoming posthuman.

[57] "The Pulse of Awakening/Awakening," episode 1, *Ergo Proxy*, Murase.

[58] Napier, *Anime: From Akira to Howl's Moving Castle*, 29.

[59] As demonstrated by the character of Louis in *Darker Than Black,* Okamura, "The Fallen Star of a Contract... Part One," episode 1 and Amber in "Memories of Betrayal in an Amber Smile" episode 16.

[60] "A Love Song Sung from the Trash Heap," episodes 17 and 18, *Darker Than Black,* Okamura.

[61] "Memories of Betrayal in and Amber Smile," episodes 15 and 16, *Darker Than Black,* Okamura.

[62] "The Scent of Gardenias Lingers in the Summer Rain," episodes 7 and 8, *Darker Than Black,* Okamura.

[63] J. P. Telotte, *Voices in the Dark: The Narrative Patterns of Film Noir* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 217.

[64] Kathrina Giltre, "Under the Neon Rainbow: Colour and Neo Noir" in *Neo Noir*, ed. Mark Bould, Kathrina Giltre and Greg Tuck (London: Wallflower Press, 2009), 20.

[65] "The Fallen Star of a Contract... Part Two," episode 2, *Darker Than Black*, Okamura.

[66] Giltre, "Under the Neon Rainbow," 20.

[67] For more on detective as Theseus in noir see Jerold J. Abrams *From Sherlock Holmes to the Hardboiled Detective in Film Noir* in Conard. ed. *The Philosophy of Film Noir*.

[68] Jerold J. Abrams, "Space, Time, and Subjectivity in Neo-Noir Cinema" in *The Philosophy of Neo-Noir* ed. Mark T. Conard (USA: University Press of Kentucky, 2007), 10.

[69] "Red Giant over Eastern Europe... Part Two," episode 6, *Darker Than Black,* Okamura.

[70] "The Fallen Star of a Contract... Part One," episode 1, *Darker Than Black,* Okamura.

[71] Ibid.

[72] Desser, "The Gunman and the Gun," 133.
[73] "A Love Song Sung from the Trash Heap," episodes 17 and 18, *Darker Than Black,* Okamura.
[74] "The Fallen Star of a Contract... Part One," episode 1, *Darker Than Black,* Okamura.
[75] Ibid.
[76] "A Heart Unswaying on the Water's Surface... Part Two," episode 14, *Darker Than Black,* Okamura.
[77] Ibid.
[78] C. G. Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* (Routledge: Hove. 1959), 24.
[79] Anesaki, *History of Japanese Religion*, 72.
[80] "Does the Reaper Dream of Darkness Darker Than Black?" episode 25, *Darker Than Black,* Okamura.
[81] Jackie Stacey, *The Cinematic Life of the Gene* (London: Duke University Press, 2010), 160.

ZOMBIE CINEMA AND THE ANTHROPOCENE: POSTHUMAN AGENCY AND EMBODIMENT AT THE END OF THE WORLD

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INTRODUCTION

The Anthropocene, the name for our current geological epoch proposed by Crutzen and Stoermer,[1] poses significant challenges to traditional humanistic conceptions of human agency and embodiment. The claim that these and other scientists make is that human beings as a species have, beginning with the industrial revolution, made an impact upon the biosphere on a planetary scale equivalent in magnitude and duration to those of (other) natural forces such as glaciation, plate tectonics, and asteroid strikes. On this view, human effects on the globe are of such a scale that they are no more subject to human control, intelligence, and agency than are other forces of nature. Human beings aren't so much actors as actants, producing far ranging effects in concert with other non-human actants.[2] Thus, ironically the Anthropocene, literally the epoch of the human, is the first posthuman epoch.[3]

In this paper I argue that the cinematic trope I will call "the fast zombie" of recent zombie cinema serves as a figure for the posthuman in the age of the Anthropocene.[4] I trace the lineage of the cinematic zombie, the first movie monster nearly without precedent in non-cinematic art forms,[5] from the "voodoo zombie"[6] of the thirties and forties, through the "slow zombie" of George Romero and Romero-inspired films, to the fast zombie of the post-millennial era. As I will demonstrate, despite their differences, these monsters share a common lineage, common features, and collectively provide a fictional analogue to social and economic forces that have led to our current environmental crisis.

As we will see, the voodoo zombie of the early zombie movies such as *White Zombie* (1932) and *I Walked with a Zombie* (1943) serves as a signifier for slavery and colonization. The trope of the voodoo zombie, whether reanimated or merely drugged, stands in place

of the slave, deprived of agency and doomed to a life (or death) of alienated labor in service of a master, the voodoo priest. The slow zombie of the Romero films—*Night of the Living Dead* (1968), *Dawn of the Dead* (1978), and *Day of the Dead* (1985)—also signifies alienated labor deprived of agency and subjectivity yet now presented as a shambling force under the control of no human intellect. This zombie represents a threat to the civilized order en masse as well as a fear of contamination. The work of the slow zombie is to reproduce itself through consumption. The figure of the fast zombie found in post-millennial cinema in films such as *28 Days Later* (2002), *World War Z* (2013), and the remake of *Day of the Dead* (2008) signifies a fear of contagion occurring under deterritorialization,[7] abject masses swarming over borders and laying waste to the countryside by sheer force of numbers. It reflects the fear of powerlessness and lack of agency that appear to be part of the posthuman condition in the age of the Anthropocene while, at the same time, expressing a set of desires that seem to be more acute in our current epoch including a desire to become natural and to become more fully embodied. Post-millennial zombie pictures also represent a kind of hopeful apocalypticism that Susan Sontag characterized in terms of the aesthetics of catastrophe.[8]

What these different types of zombies share is, as Allen Ameron puts it, an excess of embodiment.[9] In this way they represent an antidote to the disembodied, technophilic posthumanism of the cyborg cinema of the 1990s and early 2000s. Whereas the latter represent the intellect dematerialized,[10] the former represent embodiment run amok. In addition, insofar as colonization and slavery provided the capital for the industrial revolution, which in turn is the direct cause of anthropogenic climate change, the evolution of the cinematic zombie marks a fictional trace of the human and posthuman forces that have brought about the Anthropocene.

DYING TO WORK: AGENTIAL ANXIETY AND THE CINEMATIC "VOODOO ZOMBIE"

When they first appeared on the silver screen, zombies at once expressed fantasies about absolute control and anxieties about loss of agency and autonomy. At the same time they performed bordering operations between the human and the less-than-human while problematizing these very boundaries. Although according to Peter Dendle the figure of a

voodoo zombie made its way into American popular culture by way of William Seabrook's *The Magic Island* which, in turn, inspired a Broadway play and the first zombie picture, Victor Halperin's 1932 *White Zombie*,[11] Ann Kordas points out that various references to zombi, which is a "captured soul" appear in the American press in various places in the nineteenth century.[12] Interestingly, she writes that, "by the mid-nineteenth century, the word 'zombi' had…come to be associated in the minds of some Americans with a creature of African 'origin' that willingly performed services for whites."[13] Given this lineage, the fact that the cinematic zombie is more an object of fascination rather than fright is perhaps not surprising. Kordas argues that the reason that zombies became so popular in early 20th century America is that they represented a white fantasy figure: a docile (black) labor force that would never revolt, never demanded better working conditions, were insensitive to pain, and that could work day and night devoted entirely to carrying out the wishes of the zombie master.[14]

This raises the obvious question of why zombie pictures were (and are) classed as horror films rather than depression-era fantasy productions along with, say, the musicals of Busby Berkley or the films of Shirley Temple. The gothic elements of the zombie pictures are part of the answer to this question. The first film, *White Zombie*, after all, starred none other than Bela Lugosi, the very embodiment of the gothic genre in the twentieth century. The primary answer to this question, however, is that the object of terror is not the voodoo zombie, who is a figure to be pitied rather than feared, but the zombie master.[15] The zombification of black Haitians is, in these films, not a plot point. It is rather taken as a matter of course, as if this is merely an extension of the disempowered, abject lives of black workers. The plots of films such as *White Zombie* (1932), *Ouanga* (1935), and *I Walked with a Zombie* (1943) turn upon the zombification of whites, which is perceived as a violation of the natural order of white supremacy. The zombie master who typically is a creole, neither black nor properly white, represents illegitimate uses of power and the undermining of the social order.[16]

The main victims of zombification in these pictures are not only typically white but are white women. Peter Dendle goes so far as to argue that these movies "served as a cinematic mechanism for raising awareness of gender issues and empowering women."[17] When the female leads of these films are zombified they become mere automatons whose existence is exclusively defined by their subservience to their (male) zombie masters.[18] In this sense *The Stepford Wives* (1975) can be seen as a kind of zombie picture.[19] However, as

Kordas notes, the women who become zombies in these movies typically fall victim to their fates because of some kind of sexual transgression.[20] In *I Walked with a Zombie*, Jessica is zombified after she plans to run off with another man. In *White Zombie*, Madeline kicks off the plot by befriending a man who is not her fiancé, a local planter who falls in love with her and so, in order to posses her, conspires with Murder Legendre (Bela Lugosi) to turn her into a zombie. Moreover, these women don't manage to free themselves from their subservient status. Rather, a male hero is required to defeat the machinations of the zombie master and restore the "proper" social order, hardly a model for feminist cinema. Indeed, on this reading, the voodoo zombie picture represents not just white, middle-class fantasy but white, male, middle-class fantasy. Even so, the voodoo zombie picture *is also* a horror film and as such it serves, to borrow Dendle's phrase, "as a barometer of cultural anxiety."[21] Specific anxieties represented by the Hollywood voodoo zombie include loss of memory, individuality, and autonomy. In the following I will analyze the ways that these particular anxieties play out in voodoo zombie cinema and how these anxieties relate to the discourse of posthumanism.

The cultivation of amnesis is a key feature of zombification in voodoo zombie cinema and, in fact, is a feature that carries over from practices of Voudou. According to a typical account of zombi creation the bokor administers a special powder to the victim that either kills the person or creates a condition that is indistinguishable from death. After burial, a few days later, the bokor returns, disinters the victim, and reanimates it. Importantly, however, the victim is not yet a zombi. In order to complete the process the victim must be brought to its home in order to forget its former life. If this step is not completed, the victim will fall out of its trancelike state, remember its former life, and return to it. Zora Neale Hurston is emphatic on this point:

> *This* is always done. *Must* be. If the victim were not taken past his former house, later on he would recognize it and return. But once he is taken past, it is gone from his consciousness forever. It is as if it never existed for him…He will work ferociously and tirelessly without consciousness of his surroundings and conditions and without memory of his former state.[22]

In order to become a zombi, a victim must be made to forget and interestingly, must be reminded of its former life to facilitate the forgetting.

That losing one's memory is fundamental to becoming a zombi (or a zombie) should not be surprising because, as Jennnifer Fay argues, zombies "have their origins in narratives of erasure."[23] What she means by this is that the immediate context of *White Zombie* is the United States' military occupation of Haiti from 1914 to 1934, a context that goes unmentioned in the film. During the occupation, the Marines reinstituted the practice of conscripted forced labor called *corvée*, which reminded the Haitians of the loss of sovereignty in the institution of slavery under the plantation system.[24] Thus the imagery of the Haitian zombies laboring in Legendre's sugar mill serves as a double image for both colonial slavery and neocolonial labor conditions. According to Fay, the film itself enacts its own sort of zombification insofar as the resolution of the story requires the forgetting of the forgetting, as it were. As Fay explains,

> In the final scene, Legendre's zombie servants are tricked into jumping off a cliff. Then Beaumont, in a semisomnambulistic state, tries to redeem himself by pushing Legendre into the ocean before taking his own life. Free from both her European witch doctor and her American necromancer, and with no "surviving" evidence of zombie slaves, Madeline suddenly—and against even the film's own voodoo lore—comes back to life from the dead. As the magic haze clears, she recognizes her husband's face and, smiling, wistfully declares: "I dreamed." Her memory of servitude apparently erased, it's as if her enslavement—and the occupation it elusively signifies—never happened.[25]

The forgetting of the conditions of labor is thus essential to preserving the conditions of labor under a modern administrative order. Thus, one significant anxiety embodied by the cinematic zombies of the thirties and forties is that of exploitation that is facilitated by an induced amnesia: losing one's autonomy by becoming insensitive to dehumanizing conditions.

After describing the necessity of induced amnesia, Hurston goes on to note that the zombi not only cannot remember; it also cannot speak. A zombi loses its power of speech unless, for some reason, it is given salt.[26] If we recall that for Aristotle, it is the possession of speech that distinguishes humans from other animals, this loss of the power of speech signifies the loss of reason, the feature that for Aristotle is essential to one's humanity. As Rosalind Hursthouse explains,

> That no being can have speech without having reason is more "obvious" in ancient Greek than it is in English, for the word Aristotle uses, *logos,* means not only "reason" but also "discourse", "saying" and "word". So to say in ancient Greek that a creature has *logos* is to say, simultaneously, that it has reason and speech.[27]

So becoming a zombi means becoming something that is non-human insofar as it lacks memory and speech or reason while it continues to resemble the person that it once was. It is to become something that is not human but not quite inhuman either. It is this posthuman aspect of zombification that renders it troubling, more troubling than merely dying, because the zombi carries on in human form while being essentially inhuman.

Even more troubling perhaps is the fact that, at least for Aristotle, a being without *logos* is incapable of recognizing good and evil.[28] A being that is without speech/reason lacks the capacity for moral judgment. We see this in the case of Madeline who is made to forget her love for Neil and seemingly performs any number of services for Beaumont with nary a qualm. Without attending to the speechlessness of zombies, Fay makes this point:

> The unearthed body, like an animal and without a soul, is humanity's mechanical nature come to life. Or, it is the biological remainder of politically and legally denuded existence. Already dead, the zombie can experience neither life nor death, nor is it beholden to categories of justice.[29]

Zombie existence is, in this sense, even in these early films, is, to use Agamben's term, a kind of "bare life",[30] a point made by Norris,[31] Stratton,[32] and Sutherland.[33] The early zombie cinema thus could be understood as already expressing anxieties about aspects of what has come to be known as the posthuman condition, one that is at a significant remove from the sense of that term as employed by Robert Pepperell[34] yet also expresses anxieties about border crossings between the human and the inhuman.

Thus the voodoo zombie can be understood as enacting the apotheosis of alienated labor under conditions of powerlessness and voicelessness that is found in slavery, whether that instantiated during the colonial era or in Nazi labor camps. A crucial feature of this enactment involves forgetting and historical erasure, which are necessary conditions for creating the Voudou zombi as well. We will return to the issue of erasure and history when we turn to "fast zombies" and climate change.

THE ROMERO ZOMBIE AND THE CONSUMPTIVE LOGIC OF LATE CAPITALISM

With his 1968 film *Night of the Living Dead* and its sequels, George Romero can be credited with single-handedly (re)inventing the zombie film. In that film and its sequels undead revenants roam the countryside in search of human flesh to consume.[35] Even so, it makes sense to ask whether Romero's monsters are zombies and whether they bear any relation to the earlier, "voodoo", zombie pictures. The undead revenants of the first film are not called zombies. In addition, they engaged in—indeed their main motivation was—anthropophagia, an attribute never attributed to cinematic voodoo zombies. And finally, apart from an oblique comment made by one character in *Dawn of the Dead*, there are no reference whatsoever to Haiti, black magic, or Caribbean culture. Romero himself has said that he was not inspired by the voodoo zombie pictures but rather took Richard Matheson's novel *I am Legend*[36] as a key source of inspiration.[37] That novel explores the idea of a society that comes after society and examines what the human might look like to posthumans. However, Matheson's character refers to the creatures as vampires, not zombies. While situating the movie within the discourse of posthumanism, it isn't immediately obvious that we should consider Romero's "zombie" pictures to be about zombies at all. I want to make this connection, however, because it is important to my larger argument about the connections between slavery and the Anthropocene and our ability to utilize zombies of all kinds as means to think about posthumanism in this context. Moreover, careful attention to significant features of Romero's zombies and the way in which the idea of cannibalism relates to the idea of voodoo give us good reasons to make this connection.

In "'They are not men…they are dead bodies': From Cannibal to Zombie and Back Again," Chera Kee wonders about the relationship between the cannibalism of Romero's zombies and the apparent lack of connection between them and the voodoo zombies.[38] Kee observes that, "anxiety about Haiti in the United States translated into an anxiety about Voodoo, which was increasingly linked to cannibalism in the U.S. popular press to underscore supposed Haitian primitivism.[39] Haiti was after all, the world's first Black Republic, the product of a slave rebellion.[40] As David Inglis points out, much of the justification of slavery and of colonialism was the idea that blacks could not govern themselves. As a result, the idea of a Black Republic was anathema to the colonial order that extended into the neo-colonialism of the U.S. occupation. In order to justify foreign

(European and United States) management of Haiti's affairs it was necessary to depict Haitians as primitives.[41] Kee makes this point as well, arguing that the idea that Haitians practiced cannibalism, human sacrifice, and orgiastic religious rituals was used to underscore the primitiveness of the Haitians and therefore to justify their alleged need for outside governance.[42] Voudou was central to the Haitian revolution and many chronicles from the early Haitian Republic claimed that Haitians eat or otherwise sacrifice their children in the context of Voudou rituals.[43]

For reasons that are unclear—though perhaps there was too much publicity in the modern era under the occupation to sustain claims about Haitian cannibalism—the association between cannibalism and Voudou had begun to recede at the time of the U.S. occupation but the association between Voudou and the Zombie began to rise.[44] Kee reasons that "linking the zombie to Haiti simply traded the idea of an overt threat (cannibalism) for a fantasy marking the entire country as a nation of eternal slaves."[45] The plodding, brutish figure of the voodoo zombie played the double role of ideological critique of alienation in modern forms of capitalism—the post-colonial sugar plantation and mill being a prime example of this in the Caribbean—and sustaining the practice of according identity to white westerners while treating Haitians as anonymous drudges.[46] It should not be surprising then that when Romero (re)invents the postmodern zombie he bestows upon it the practice of cannibalism in order to underscore its brutishness and the degree to which it is powered by animal or otherwise inhuman drives while at the same time eliding (though making use of) the imagery that had associated the zombie with voodoo.

Fear of loss of identity is an anxiety common to both voodoo and Romero zombies. Indeed, a running joke in Romero and post-Romero zombie pictures are the small idiosyncrasies that marked their former identities that only underscore the anonymity of the zombie mob. In these films you find nurse zombies, truck-driver zombies, stockbroker zombies. While superficially different they are all fundamentally anonymous in their desire to eat brains or other forms of human flesh. This magnification of anonymity through superficial identity shows up in Matheson's novel as well in the form of Ben Cortman, Robert Neville's former friend and vampire (zombie) neighbor whom Neville hunts during the day and who tries to eat Neville at night. In their nightly encounters Cortman repeatedly calls for Neville to come out of his house so that he can be eaten,

giving Cortman something of a unique identity. However, this uniqueness tends to underscore the (apparent) lack of individuality among the undead revenants of the novel.

This anxiety about preserving or asserting one's identity in the case of the Romero film by means of consumerism is a different sort of anxiety than that which faces the slave or the colonized, which is represented by the figure of the voodoo zombie in the earlier movies. In the latter case the main problem is that of alienated labor. While this is an issue that is treated in Romero and Romero-inspired movies as well (*Shaun of the Dead* 2004 is a noteworthy example), a separate issue is the problem of asserting one's individuality in a culture overrun by mass-produced consumer goods made possible by the industrial revolution. In this situation the only solution to mass consumption is more consumption, an activity that reproduces the consumer and threatens to overwhelm the planet, much as the zombie hordes overwhelm human society in the Romero and post-Romero pictures. In any case, this concern about identity expressed in both sub-genres tends to be heightened in the Romero films especially as it interacts with issues of consumption and reproduction.

Because it is undead, the voodoo zombie does not have to eat. The Romero zombie by contrast, though also undead, is driven by its desire to consume. In this way the cannibalism (or, more properly anthrophagism, since zombies don't eat other zombies, only humans) of Romero's zombies goes beyond the "normal" excesses of cannibalism because it is purely excessive consumption. The consumption of the Romero zombie serves no purpose whatsoever except to produce more zombies. If the implications of this idea for contemporary capitalist and consumerist society were not already obvious enough in Romero's first zombie film, Romero's second film, *Dawn of the Dead* (1978) is actually set in a shopping mall. It is there that the humans not only fortify themselves against the zombie hordes trying to get in but also satisfy their every materialist whim, raiding the now-vacant shops of the mall for the kinds of luxury goods that they were not able to afford when a money-based economy still held sway. In so doing they seek to individualize themselves in the way that many citizens of capitalist economies do, by distinguishing themselves by their patterns of consumption. However, the absurdity of consumerist ideology can only be underscored in the context of a zombie apocalypse.

I noted above that the only "purpose" of zombie consumption in the Romero films and Romero-inspired films is zombie reproduction. Zombies eat humans in order to make more zombies. This is a very different form of reproduction from the voodoo zombie films

in which it is the zombie master who reproduces himself by making zombies from humans in order to carry out his will. This difference represents a transformation of the anxiety of loss of autonomy represented in these two sub-genres. In the voodoo zombie movies, the zombie has lost its own autonomy. Even so, at least there is still someone in charge. In the Romero films, there is no longer anyone "running the show". In these pictures, zombies are self-reproducing, driven by a primal urge that is channeled through crowd dynamics. In this way we could say that the Romero zombies represent a further development of posthumanism, one in which the very notions of human agency and autonomy are undermined. In the voodoo zombie films the zombie master might be evil and up to no good, but s/he is still understandable on a human level. In the voodoo zombie world human motivations still count for a lot. By contrast, in the Romero and post-Romero films, human motivations tend to be usurped by more primal urges, such as the zombie's desire to eat and the humans' desire merely to survive.

This movement of human toward the inhuman is taken a further step in Romero's third zombie film, *Day of the Dead* (1985), in which seemingly the whole of the world (or perhaps just the North American mainland) has been taken over by zombies and the only survivors seem to be the inhabitants of a military-scientific outpost. In this film it is the humans who have been reduced to brutality and conditions of bare life. While the conflicts in the Romero zombie pictures among the humans have always been more fraught and full of tension than human-zombie conflicts, in the third film the humans are turning upon one another. Not only their treatment of the zombies but also their treatment of one another reveal the inhuman nature of the condition to which they have descended. Perhaps to highlight this point, by the third film the zombies—one of them at least—takes on human characteristics. "Bub", a captive zombie manages to master tool use and the rudiments of communication. He is even more sympathetic than earlier Romero (or voodoo) zombies as he appears to still possess human feelings in a way that the human characters of the film do not. This progression is, I should add, taken further in Romero's fourth zombie film, *Land of the Dead* (2005), in which the zombies actively cooperate and work together even as social hierarchy, exploitation, and capitalist structures are preserved among the humans. Moreover, this film comes to mirror Matheson's novel in which a new, nonhuman society has come to replace the human one.

Anxiety is not all that is at play in the Romero and Romeroesque "slow zombie" pictures. Just as the voodoo zombies represented a fantasy figure in the form of the ideal

worker or the possibility of work without labor,[47] the Romero zombie is also a figure of desire. In this sub-genre the zombie represents a fantasy of simplicity and solidarity. A zombie's needs are, after all, quite simple, in contrast to the temptations and frustrations of contemporary human life. Moreover, zombies (for the most part) seem to get along with one another. When one becomes a zombie one is overtaken by the Dionysian urge to become one with the mass, to lose one's identity in the zombie swarm. Thus, in the Romero films the temptation is not to own or create zombies and thus obtain free labor, but to become one, and to have one's "work" become greatly simplified.

We see this desire at play in *Night of the Living Dead* when Barbara is confronted at the farmhouse by her brother (now zombie) Johnny. Johnny is now part of the zombie mob and Barbara, who has been in the nearly catatonic state of a trauma zombie since the incident at the beginning of the film in which Johnny was killed, doesn't have to traverse a great deal of psychological space to become an actual zombie. Undoubtedly this process is made easier by the fact that life in the farmhouse isn't very pleasant, not only because the farmhouse is beset by zombies but also because the humans in the farmhouse aren't very pleasant to each other. Thus, it is the easiest choice for her to give into her filial ties and join her zombie brother in post humanity. While it is true that one tends to find humans giving in this explicitly to zombification in other Romeroesque zombie pictures, the trenchant critique of human society can only raise the question of whether the effort to preserve that society is worth it. Moreover, since, in the Romero films at least, there isn't very much hope that human society will be preserved, one wonders whether one might as well go ahead and give in to one's zombie future. In this section I have argued that the Romero and Romero-inspired zombies give voice to anxieties that have arisen in late capitalism, specifically loss of autonomy and individuation. I have also called attention to the connection between alleged Voudou cannibalism and zombie anthropophagia, a relationship that both links the Romero zombie to its classical Hollywood predecessor and ties anxieties about labor and consumption to their colonial and late-capitalist contexts.

CLIMATE CHANGE, THE ANTHROPOCENE, AND THE EPOCH OF THE POSTHUMAN

Since 2002 when Paul Crutzen and Eugene Stoermer proposed the term "Anthropocene" to replace the term "Holocene", which had been proposed by Sir Charles Lyell in 1833 and

adopted by the International Geological Congress in 1885, to designate our current geological epoch, humankind has been forced to reevaluate its relationship to the life of the planet as a whole.[48] This is because the term "Anthropocene" calls attention to the idea that human activity is now for the first time altering the climate on a planetary scale. In the past, nature typically had been conceived as a relatively fixed and independent backdrop against which the dramas and comedies of human history unfolded, unaffected by events taking place on stage. The "environment" was just that, a ground to the figure of human activity. Now, however, the very distinction between nature and culture has been thrown into question with the realization that not only is humankind a part of nature but that nature itself is being (and has been for some time) radically transformed by human activity. This turn of events, no less significant for our concepts of "the human" and "nature" than the Copernican revolution or the discovery of evolution by natural selection, threatens to destabilize and transform our understanding of what it means to be human. At the very least, as a number of authors have pointed out, the Anthropocene and anthropogenic climate change raise challenges for and call for a rethinking of human agency. For the aggregate of individual human actions to effect changes on a geological scale suggests that human beings have become a force of nature, no less sublime or any more manageable than tectonic collisions or hurricanes. While some thinkers – Bill McKibben, for example – interpret this development as heralding "the end of nature", a time when no place on the planet is unsullied by the imprint of human beings, another, equally, if not more plausible interpretation is that we have entered the era of the posthuman.[49] The image of human beings as a natural force transcends, even undermines, the vision of humans as rational, rights-bearing subjective agents that emerged in the Enlightenment. As such, the zombie picture appears to be an ideal vehicle for the depiction of these anxieties and their associated desires, this time speeded up even as geological time appears to be both extended and foreshortened by the emergence of the Anthropocene.

As I have argued, voodoo and Romero zombies embody anxieties about loss of agency albeit in different ways. In the voodoo zombie film the zombie's autonomy is stolen by the zombie master. Human agency remains in the story, it's just that the autonomy of the master erases that of the zombie. In the Romero zombie film, zombies also lose their autonomy, overtaken as they are by an all-consuming desire for human flesh. In this case, however, no one is responsible. In the Romero films the cause of the zombie epidemic is

never explained. Rather, the cause of the outbreak remains a subject of speculation. Various possible causes are entertained: is it an effect of gamma rays or an interaction between the atmosphere and the tail of a comet? We never find out, but it doesn't really matter because causality is beside the point. Humans lose their agency and in doing so become inhuman.

In the post-millennial or "fast zombie" picture, the situation is different. There is usually a cause and that cause is usually us. In the case of *28 Days Later* (2002), for example, the cause is the "rage" virus, a human-created virus that has been deliberately introduced into chimps who then escape their cages and infect first the scientists and then the general population. The cause of the zombie outbreak in this case is human activity: meddling with the forces of nature and abuse of our nonhuman neighbors. However, there is no mad scientist analogue to the zombie master at the center of this plot. The villain in this case is technology run amok. Human technology and bureaucracy have gotten out of control. Humans are the cause but they cause the outbreak without effective agency insofar as no individuals are seen to be responsible.

This experience of human causation without agency depicted in this film is the fictional analogue of our experience of climate change in the Anthropocene. Humans are the cause of climate change but insofar as human activity has taken on the qualities of a force of nature, humans no longer seem to be in control. Post-millennial zombie pictures are fast zombie pictures because they depict human beings like forces of nature. The de-individualization evident in the voodoo or Romero zombie film has been put on steroids. In *World War Z*, for example, waves of zombies pile upon each other and wash over the walls of Jerusalem like a swarm of bees or ocean waves washing over a sand castle. Individual reason, responsibility and choice have completely given over to group dynamics. Zombie hordes appear to be governed not by free will as much as the strange attractors of chaos theory. Moreover, the lesson seems to be that even if individuals do make choices, those choices are irrelevant upon a large scale (notwithstanding the hopeful dynamic introduced by individual heroism and small group cohesion, which I will discuss shortly). This is the model of humanity given to us by second order cybernetics and it is a far cry from the humanism of Enlightenment rationalism.

Post-millennial zombies represent another anxiety that is embodied in the swarming nature of the fast zombie and that is the fear of contamination under deterritorialization. Since Romero, zombies have represented anxiety about contamination and the task that

faced the humans was how to throw up effective barriers to prevent the spread of the epidemic.[50] While this might have seemed like a reasonable hope in the sixties, seventies, and even into the eighties when the Romero films were made, it seems to be an increasingly remote possibility in an age of instant communication, fast air travel, and globalization. It also means that there is nowhere to escape. In contrast, when previous civilizations collapsed, humanity continued along because civilizations were local. Today we have one civilization and its fate is a fate that will overtake us all. Moreover, the flows of people, goods, and information increasingly show the futility of trying to police boundaries and borders.

Additionally, the zombie horde, of the fast zombie picture swarming over borders and barricades in a flow that is too fast to stanch represents a northern and western anxiety regarding the abject in a global society. I have previously called attention to the use of the zombie in othering the non-white worker, de-individualizing her and remaking her in the picture of a natural slave. In the post-millennial zombie picture this othering process is extended. As John Stratton puts it, "Zombies provide a monster for our time because they express our anxieties over the relationship between bare life and the modern state."[51] Stratton argues that the zombie represents the kind of bare life lived in many parts of the world and produced, in large measure, by globalization. Globalization, in addition to creating conditions of abjection, also creates the "problem" that we can't erect effective barriers to keep the abject from entering into and contaminating "our" world. The terminology used to describe asylum seekers and economic refugees is evoked in the image of the fast zombie swarm in recent zombie films:

> Terms such as 'wave' and 'flood' use the water reference to conjure up some overwhelming and amorphous force. They are dehumanizing expressions that identify the asylum- seekers as a mass rather than as individuals.[52]

Moreover, Stratton continues, anxiety about bare life is not just about keeping those who are subject to it out. Rather, the fear is that under current economic conditions, "we" might become subject to it as well:

> At the same time, in the modern state, bare life is the basis for the treatment even of citizens of the state. The zombie is the mythic expression of racialized bare life striving

> to enter the state but, at the same time, the zombie is the condition that awaits all of us from whom the state withdraws protection…In the neoliberal version of that state, where rights are dependent on what people within the border of the state can offer to its economic wellbeing, the degree to which one is reprieved from bare life depends on one's economic worth.[53]

Thus, fast zombies embody the anxiety of becoming othered ourselves by processes that seem to be, at least for practical purposes, beyond anybody's control.

Just as the earlier sub-genres represented desire and fantasy as well as anxiety, so too does the post-millennial zombie picture. In the first place, the lack of agency and posthumanism represents a kind of escapism in the face of cataclysmic events. If humanity acts as a force of nature, then I can't personally be held responsible for what is happening. As Margo Collins and Elson Bond put it, in the post-millennial zombie picture the "threat from the reanimated dead has supplanted individual conscience and volition with a collective but (usually) uncalculating malice."[54] At a global scale, events are too big and too impersonal for anyone to be held accountable, either for bringing the situation about or for not doing anything about it. Forces of nature simply cannot be controlled. If humanity has become a force of nature, humanity cannot be controlled. This is in some ways an extension of the desire to give in we saw in Barbara in *Night of the Living Dead*.

There is another, associated desire literally embodied in these films that relates directly to the naturalization of the human. Collins and Bond call attention to the fact that post-millennial life is one of hyperconnectivity. We tend to interface more with screens and information than we do with bodies and things. Information, to put it in Katherine Hayles' terms, has become disembodied.[55] As such, the hyper-embodiment of the fast zombie represents a relief from this dematerialization. If inhabitants of a global technoculture have become all mind and no body, zombies represent an antidote to this insofar as they are all body and no mind, pure carnal desire.

Another feature that distinguishes most post-millennial zombie pictures from Romero and Romeroesque films is their hopeful nature. *World War Z* is set in the years after the zombie apocalypse in which society is being rebuilt. In other pictures there is typically some (reasonable) hope that somewhere someone has survived and that human civilization can be rebuilt. The Romero pictures offer little if any such hope. The most that is offered is the symbolic fact that Francine, who is pregnant, manages to escape the mall.

Where she will go is unclear and with each Romero picture the situation becomes only direr. What should we make of the hopeful apocalypticism of the post-millennial zombie films? I think that this can be best understood in terms of what Susan Sontag calls "the aesthetics of disaster."

In an essay entitled "The Imagination of Disaster," Susan Sontag begins an analysis of the aesthetics of catastrophe by describing the key elements of "the typical science fiction film".[56] At some point, the following occurs, with minor variations:

> In the capital of the country, conferences between scientists and the military take place…A national emergency is declared…All international tensions are suspended in view of the planetary emergency. This stage often includes a rapid montage of news broadcasts in various languages, a meeting at the UN, and more conferences between the military and the scientists. Plans are made for destroying the enemy.[57]

Interestingly and perhaps not surprisingly this narrative element of science fiction in the twentieth century appears as a key element in the dominant narrative of science fact, at least in the way that climate change gets presented. The idea is this: in climate change humanity faces an existential crisis of such great proportions that the only rational thing to do is to suspend all other conflicts and concerns, which pale in comparison, in order to unite, nationally and internationally, to solve this problem.

Regarding the aesthetics of catastrophe, Sontag remarks that, "the lure of such generalized disaster as a fantasy is that it releases us from normal obligations."[58] It can be refreshing to imagine clearing away one's everyday conflicts and obligations with one fell swoop, even if that swoop imagines laying wholesale waste to society at large, potentially requiring the deaths of millions of people. The suffering and destruction are, in many of these films, recuperated by the final peace and unity achieved after the worst has occurred and the problematic situation is resolved. Sontag observes that in these films, "Some scientist generally takes sententious note of the fact that it took the planetary invasion to make the warring nations of the earth come to their senses and suspend their conflicts."[59]

But the problem with climate change, one that prevents it from conforming to the simplicity of the apocalyptic fantasies of science fiction films is that it is not, as Dipesh Chakrabarty notes, "a one-event problem…because it defie[s] rational and optimal solutions…because it impinge[s] upon too many other problems to be solved or

addressed at the same time."[60] Climate change cannot be addressed by sweeping away or setting aside all the other national and international conflicts that trouble us today because *it is not separate from them.* Rather, it is composed of them. For this reason climate change resists what Mike Hulm, a climate researcher, calls a "global solution-structure". "Solving" climate change means solving all of the political and philosophical problems with which we have long struggled and that define us as human beings:

> What is the ultimate performance metric for the human species, what is it that we are seeking to optimize? Is it to restabilise population or to minimize our ecological footprint? Is it to increase life expectancy, to maximize gross domestic product, to make poverty history or to increase the sum of global happiness? Or is the ultimate performance metric for humanity simply survival?[61]

These are problems that would have to be solved in order to address climate change on a global scale and, not coincidentally, these are problems that we are not likely to solve once-and-for all—certainly not with a one-size-fits-all answer or on a global scale—if we are ever able to solve them. Post-millennial zombie pictures indulge in a fantasy of apocalypticism in order to disrupt the anxiety that accompanies our felt lack of agency.

In this article I have tried to show a lineage and developmental relationship between the three sub-genres of zombie picture along with specific anxieties and desires that each illuminates or gives voice to. Each deals with anxieties turning upon the question of the relationship between the human and the nonhuman in related but different ways, each relative to a specific era and problematic. The voodoo zombie picture expresses anxieties and desires from the context of slavery and colonialism. The Romero zombie picture takes this work and expands upon it, adapting it to concerns of late consumerist capitalism. Finally, the post-millennial zombie picture addresses issues of posthumanism involving agency (or its lack) and other issues that emerge with the recognition of the Anthropocene. Now, interestingly, each sub-genre of zombie cinema marks a fictional trace of the social and economic forces that gives rise to the next. Robin Blackburn makes the case that it was slavery, echoed in the voodoo zombie picture, that created the wealth that gave rise to the industrial revolution, the results of which are the focus of the anxieties and desires embodied in the Romero zombie picture.[62] Moreover, we know that it was this process of industrialization that has brought about the Anthropocene, concerns

about which I have argued are marked in the post-millennial fast zombie picture. Andreas Malm and Alf Hornburg have recently argued that we should explicitly consider the connection between climate change and capitalism, a connection that they suggest gets buried in the concept of the Anthropocene.[63] I have argued that the fast zombie is an appealing figure in the context of the Anthropocene in part because of its ability to naturalize the human and to dilute and defer responsibility. Moreover, the fast zombie picture enacts the process of double-forgetting that has been crucial to the zombie throughout its literary history, from slavery through industrialization, post-colonialism, and capitalism, right up to our present moment, which has come to be known as "the Anthropocene". Thus, while each type of zombie film represents concerns specific to its own era, the evolution of the zombie picture from the depression and wartime voodoo zombies through the post-millennial fast zombies of recent cinema mirrors economic and political developments with the corresponding eras. What I have also tried to show is how the cinematic zombie in various forms is a cultural representation of and provides a way of reflecting upon various issues related to posthumanism and what it means to be human.

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[1] Paul Crutzen and Eugene F. Stoermer, "The Anthropocene," *Global Change Newsletter* 41 (2000), 17-18.

[2] Bruno Latour, "Where are the Missing Masses? The Sociology of a Few Mundane Artifacts," in *Shaping Technology/Building Society: Studies in Sociotechnical Change*, ed. Wiebe E. Bijker et al. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992), 151-180.

[3] I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for helpful comments and suggestions that have improved the article. Any errors that remain are my own.

[4] Sarah Lauro and Jeffrey Cohen also discuss zombies in relation to ecological questions though neither explicitly addresses zombies in relation to climate change or the Anthropocene. Sarah Juliet Lauro, "The Eco-Zombie: Environmental Critique in Zombie Fiction," in *Generation Zombie: Essays on the Living Dead in Modern Culture*, ed. Stephanie Boluk et al. (Jefferson, North Carolina and London: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2011), 54-66. Jeffrey Cohen, "Undead (A Zombie Oriented Ontology)," J*ournal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 23 (2012), 397-412.

[5] Chera Kee,"'They are not men…they are dead bodies!': From Cannibal to Zombie and Back Again," in *Better Off Dead: The Evolution of the Zombie as Post-Human*, ed. Deborah Christie et al. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011), 20.

[6] In this essay I use the term "voodoo" to mark the cultural (mis)appropriations of Afro-Caribbean "black magic" that provide the backdrop for early twentieth century zombie pictures and "zombie" to designate the movie monster that is the center of these pictures. By contrast I will use the term "Voudou" to refer to the Haitian religion and "zombi" to refer to the captured spirit or body that is created by Voudou priests or bokors.

[7] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983).

[8] Susan Sontag, "The Imagination of Disaster," in *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (No City: Picador, 1965), 209-225.

[9] Allen Ameron, "Zombie Media: Transmission, Reproduction, and the Digital Dead," *Cinema Journal* 52 (2012), 80.

[10] N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1999).

[11] Peter Dendle, "The Zombie as Barometer of Cultural Anxiety," in *Monsters and the Monstrous: Myths and Metaphors of Enduring Evil*, ed. Niall Scott (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2007), 45-46.

[12] Ann Kordas, "New South, New Immigrants, New Women, New Zombies," in *Race, Oppression and the Zombie: Essays on Cross-Cultural Appropriations of the Caribbean Tradition*, ed. Christopher M. Moreman et al. (Jefferson, North Carolina and London: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2011), 16.

[13] Ibid., 16.

[14] Ibid., 20-21.

[15] Ibid., 20-21.

[16] Ibid., 21.

[17] Dendle, "The Zombie as Barometer of Cultural Anxiety," 48.

[18] Ouanga renders this interpretation problematic, however, insofar as the zombie master is a woman.

[19] Kevin Boon classes the eponymous wives of *The Stepford Wives* (1975) as "tech zombies." Kevin Boon, "The Zombie as Other: Morality and the Monstrous in the Post-Nuclear Age," in *Better Off Dead: The Evolution of the Zombie as Post-Human*, ed. Deborah Christie et al. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011), 58.

[20] Kordas, "New South, New Immigrants, New Women, New Zombies," 27.

[21] Dendle, "The Zombie as Barometer of Cultural Anxiety."

[22] Zora Neale Hurston, *Tell My Horse: Voodoo and Life in Haiti and Jamaica* (New York: Perennial Library, 1990), 183.

[23] Jennifer Fay, "Dead Subjectivity: White Zombie, Black Baghdad," *The New Centennial Review* 8 (2008), 83.

[24] Ibid., 88.

[25] Ibid., 99.

[26] Hurston, *Tell My Horse*, 183.

[27] Rosalind Hursthouse, *Ethics, Humans, and Other Animals: An Introduction with Readings* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 63.

[28] Ibid., 64.

[29] Fay, "Dead Subjectivity," 92.

[30] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1998).

[31] Andrew Norris, "Giorgio Agamben and the Politics of the Living Dead," *Diacritics* 30 (2000), 38-58.

[32] Jon Stratton, "Zombie Trouble: Zombie Texts, Bare Life, and Displaced People," *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 14 (2011), 265.

[33] Meghan Sutherland, "Rigor / Mortis: The Industrial Life of Style in American Zombie Cinema," *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media* 48 (2007), 64-78.

[34] Robert Pepperell, *The Posthuman Condition: Consciousness Beyond the Brain* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2003).

[35] Steven Shaviro, *The Cinematic Body* (Minneapolis: the University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 84.

[36] Richard Matheson, *I am Legend* (New York: Tor Books, 2007).

[37] "Interview: George A. Romero on Diary of the Dead," Mariana, McConnell, accessed January 29, 2016, http://www.cinemablend.com/new/Interview-George-A-Romero-On-Diary-Of-The-Dead-7818.html.

[38] Kee, "'They are not men…they are dead bodies!'."

[39] Ibid., 9.

[40] David Inglis, "Putting the Undead to Work: Wade Davis, Haitian Vodou, and the Social Uses of the Zombie," in *Race, Oppression, and the Zombie: Essays on Cross-cultural Appropriations of the Caribbean Tradition*, ed. Christopher Moreman et al. (Jefferson, North Carolina and London: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2011), 45.

[41] Ibid., 44-45.

[42] Kee, "'They are not men…they are dead bodies!'," 10-13.

[43] Ibid., 12.

[44] Ibid., 13-14.

[45] Ibid., 14.

[46] Ibid., 14.

[47] Comoroff and Comoroff discuss the way that this fantasy is at play in reports of zombies in contemporary South Africa. Also worth noting in this context is that in the Haitian context zombification is a rare form of punishment that is reserved for those who achieve great wealth at the expense of or apart from the rest of the community. Thus, in that context "actual" zombification is punishment for being too successful at zombie capitalism, that is, miraculously achieving great wealth without great labor. Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, "Occult Economies and the Violence of Abstraction: Notes from the South African Postcolony," *American Ethnologist* 26 (1999), 279-303 and Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, "Alien-Nation: Zombies, Immigrants, and Millennial Capitalism," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 101 (2002), 779-805.

[48] Crutzen and Stermer, "The Anthropocene."

[49] Bill McKibben, *The End of Nature* (New York: Random House, 2006).

[50] Shaviro, *The Cinematic Body*. Literary representations of this fear of contagion and contamination go back much farther and literary tropes regarding these anxieties are often found in zombie films. See Stephanie Boluk and Wylie Lenz, "Infection, Media, and Capitalism: From Early Modern Plagues to Postmodern Zombies," *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 10 (2010), 126-147.

[51] Stratton, "Zombie Trouble," 277.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid., 278.

[54] Margo Collins and Elson Bond. "'Off the page and into your brains!': New Millennium Zombies and the Scourge of Hopeful Apocalypses," in *Better Off Dead: The Evolution of the Zombie as Post-Human*, ed. Deborah Christie et al. (New York: Fordham, 2011), 188-89.

[55] Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman*.

[56] Sontag, *The Imagination of Disaster*.

[57] Ibid., 210.

[58] Ibid., 215.

[59] Ibid., 219.

[60] Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Postcolonial Studies and the Challenge of Climate Change," *New Literary History* 43 (2012), 13.

[61] Mike Hulme quoted in Chakrabarty, "Postcolonial Studies," 13.

[62] Robin Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern 1492-1800* (London: Verso, 1997).

[63] Andreas Malm and Alf Hornborg, "The geology of mankind? A Critique of the Anthropocene Narrative," *The Anthropocene Review* 1 (2014), 62-69. Malm also makes this argument in a shorter essay, "The Anthropocene Myth," *Jacobin Magazine*, March 30, 2015, accessed September 26, 2015, https://www.jacobinmag.com/2015/03/anthropocene-capitalism-climate-change/. These critical comments are based upon the work in historical materialism on "fossil capital" published, for example, in Andreas Malm, "The Origins of Fossil Capital: From Water to Steam in the British Cotton Industry," *Historical Materialism* 21 (2013), 15-68.

BOOK REVIEWS | RECENSÕES DE LIVROS

INVESTIGATING IMAGE AND GESTURE:
CINEMA AND AGAMBEN:
ETHICS, BIOPOLITICS AND THE MOVING IMAGE

Tom Lordan (Kingston University)

Henrik Gustafsson, Asbjorn Gronstad (eds). New York and London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014, 264 pp. ISBN 1623563712/ 9781623563714.

Emerging in 1970 with his first publication, *L'uomo senza contenuto* (*The Man Without Content*) Giorgio Agamben has become one of the most respected philosophers of a generation including the likes of Slavoj Žižek, Jacques Rancière, Alain Badiou and fellow Italian Antonio Negri. In these past four decades, discussion pertaining to Agamben's contribution to contemporary philosophy is usually relegated to strictly political and ethical spheres, mostly in reference to his 1995 work *Homo Sacer: Il potere soverano e la vita nuda* (*Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*). In this collection of articles released by Bloomsbury however, the contributors wish to escape the dominant trends of writing with respect to Agamben's oeuvre, and instead utilise his work in an engagement with the cinema.

Gustafsson and Gronstad's introduction to *Cinema and Agamben: Ethics, Biopolitics and the Moving Image* is notable, in the sense that it reads more like an academic clarion call than merely an introduction to a text. In two short paragraphs, Gustafsson and Gronstad comment upon what they perceive as an area of academia which lacks active engagement and research, that is, the area of intersection between film studies and philosophy. Citing Deleuze and Cavell as paradigmatic writers of a new mode of interaction between the two disciplines, Gustafsson and Gronstad remark that although both Cavell and Deleuze are highly (and rightly) praised for their articulations of cinematic philosophy, the lesson which they had seemed to impart (that one might apply a categorically philosophical framework upon the edifice of cinema, thereby highlighting new connections and uncovering new concepts), hasn't been as influential as one might have expected. There are of course exceptions to the rule, and the authors cite the establishment of various

journals and organizations which solely concern themselves with this interdisciplinary field as evidence. But, as they state clearly, "the epistemological potential of this engagement certainly seems far from exhausted" (1).

By publishing this collection, the "first book of original scholarship on the nexus between its two titular subjects" (2), Gustafsson and Gronstad seek to draw attention to the enormous potential that exists in combining an extant body of work by a philosopher with an investigation into either general questions concerning cinema as a whole (it's conceptual themes, mechanical processes, aesthetic qualities etc) or more localized questions regarding only one film. That Agamben's writing hasn't already been examined in depth *vis a vis* cinema is certainly a surprise, given the degree to which his oeuvre is interspersed with visual concerns. This concern is evident in the opening articles of *Cinema and Agamben,* written by the Italian philosopher himself, which, according to the book's blurb, are seen here for the first time translated into English: 'For an Ethics of the Cinema' and 'Cinema and History: On Jean-Luc Godard'. Due to their enormous impact on the other articles, we should briefly outline the core arguments of Agamben's texts.

The first is a succinct glance at the transformation undergone by the actor, passing from the era of live theatre into the era of cinema and beyond. Agamben categorises live theatrical actors under the heading of "Persona," for their method is one of transformative withdrawal, a mode of relinquishing their own identity in order to wear the mask (*persona*) of another – usually a more recognizable individual, a Hamlet or Oedipus. Cinema's actors, on the other hand, are categorised under the heading "Divo" (or "star"), for their identity, by way of contrast, supercedes the chosen role – Gary Cooper is never not Gary Cooper, no matter the character he is inhabiting on screen. Thus a remake of a film (think of the recent *Spiderman* reboot) is not the same film as its originator, but a totally new film, in a way that is incomparable to two separate productions of *King Lear*. In addition to this clever reversal, Agamben complexifies the star's individuality by noting that, when we refer to "Gary Cooper" or "Marlene Dietrich" we are not truly referring to the individual, but rather to "something that set theory would describe as classes containing only a single element (singletons) or belonging to themselves" (22). The star of the cinema is therefore an entity that obscures the boundaries between the individual and his/her collective image, or between individuation and serialisation.

Agamben's latter article is even shorter than 'For an Ethics of the Cinema', yet is utterly fascinating. 'Cinema and History: On Jean-Luc Godard' teases the reader with an insight

into a potentially new ontology of cinema, as rich and diverse as that of Deleuze's, as though we were glimpsing something wonderful through a key hole, with only enough time to sketch its form before it vanishes. Drawing most explicitly on Deleuze and Walter Benjamin, Agamben investigates the "constitutive link between history and cinema" manifested in Jean-Luc Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinema* (1988-98) (25). The history implicated in Godard's seminal work is, according to Agamben, "a very particular history, a messianic history" (25). This history is non-chronological, the word "messianic" referring instead to a process of exposure and renewal in Godard's work, within which an eidetic property of the cinema is "saved" by the French filmmaker. What the property is, is simple: it is nothing less than the image. And how does the image become messianic? That answer too, is simple: through montage. In Agamben's eyes montage is a means by which the image resurfaces, by which it challenges anew. The conditions of the possibility of montage are named by Agamben as "repetition" and "stoppage". Repetition is characterized as the return of the possible, *qua* Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger and, of course, Deleuze. In this way cinema is differentiated from the media, which only produces a content without its concomitant possibility-to-be-otherwise: cinema is analogous to memory, but a memory of that which never happened, whereas the media is a blanket, a unigeneric tool of tyranny, that makes the public powerless to imagine what *else* is/was possible. Stoppage is characterized as "revolutionary interruption", *qua* Benjamin (26). In this sense Agamben likens cinema to poetry, which, unlike prose, is also capable of producing ellipses, caesura and enjambents, or in other words, cinema and poetry share a capacity to upset the normative relation between a sensible construct and it's meaning, by arresting the movement from signifier to signified. By means of montage, and its dual operation of repetition and stoppage, cinema can truly become a site of resistance, whereby the filmmaker can "decreate" otherwise tyrannical and omnipotent facts.

The introduction and opening two essays are both conceptually rigorous and intriguing, a genuine pleasure to read.The ensuing collection of eleven articles are, at first glance, relatively disparate, and yet on closer inspection one can see that they are broadly split (though not exclusively) into three categories; those that are mostly concerned with "gesture" (Chapters 1-3 and 6); those pertain to neorology/biopolitics (Chapters 4 and 5); and those that discuss "the archive" with relation to the Holocaust (Chapters 9 and 10).

There is a wealth of novel ideas and strongly argued positions contained within these chapters. However, unfortunately for the reader, on occasion we are subjected to less than

consistent critical reasoning. Such instances are rare – hence we mention them in the beginning, so that we might move through them quickly and spend more time on the positive aspects of this compelling collection.

The very first article following Agamben's work is one of those that seems to assert far more than it justifies intellectually. To be fair, James S. Williams' 'Silence, Gesture, Revelation: The Ethics and Aesthetics of Montage in Godard and Agamben' begins with a sense of promise: the author's intention to investigate the provocative meaning of the "messianic" potential of cinema, by examining Godard's *Soigne ta droite* (*Une place sur la terre*) (*Keep Your Right Up*, 1987) is an intriguing premise for an article. When he starts to discuss *Soigne ta droite* in depth, however, we encounter problems. Of one image, that of a sunset seen through a half-open window, where the window (cast in shadow) juxtaposes with the brightly lit cirrus clouds of the sky, Williams comments that "[i]t gleams with possibility: all is still to play for in this ultimate return to something approximating photography or silent cinema since all is still to be heard" (41). Mere sentences later, Williams states of the entire film that "we're left with the continuum of *light as sound* – the unquenchable hope of the recovery and redemption of love and innocence" (42). Over the page, of a horse galloping in stop-motion, Williams writes "the horse carries no-one on its back and is thus free of the burden of death or of any other type of symbol" (43). It is not the content of the claims which trouble us (they are indeed stimulating), but the rapidity with which Williams moves from one thought to another. We are too frequently forced to ask questions such as "Why is a horse, depicted riderless, immune to symbolization?" without receiving an answer. As though he were suddenly aware of a consistent absence of reasoning, at one point in the text Williams writes

> as I have shown elsewhere, 'horizontal' moments of confluence, contiguity, conjunction and coincidence, which resist the vertical pull of [Godard's] characteristically dense, rhetorical and aggressively intellectual manoeuvres, constitute a kind of counter movement in the videographic montage... (44)

To refer to one's work prior to the current essay is perfectly acceptable, but this is not the first time Williams does so, nor is the above quote an insignificant step in the essay. As such to displace the argumentative grounding of Godard's "horizontal moments" onto another text presents a difficulty to the reader. However, though imprecise at times,

Williams' essay is eloquent and vivid. Such clarity is not always present in the other chapters. Take, for instance, this summary of Michael Haneke's *Caché* (2005), in Garret Stewart's article 'Counterfactual, Potential, Virtual: Towards a Philosophical Cinematics':

> *Caché* (2005) opens famously with a node of what we might call counterfactuality degree zero: representation per se, a virtual counterspace held to the rectilineation of the image plane itself. We think we are watching a movie, but we are watching an inexplicable video within it. And this is an optical planarity disclosed, only after the fact, to be under observation by others than us, and at one remove from the manifest scene – namely, scanned by a French couple in voice-over watching a mysterious tape of their apartment exterior, onto whose street they then emerge (in front of the "primary" camera) in real time, only to appear next before the monitor by whose playback the inaugural image of the same house front has been activated as mysterious purview. (170)

As one can see, only the second sentence in this linguistic warren is particularly communicative. The obfuscation is a shame, as Stewart's text is thoughtful. He seeks to refine the discussion of Agamben *vis a vis* cinema to two pedagogically fruitful dimensions: 'narrative' on the one hand and the 'materiality of film' on the other.

These (prominent) issues aside, there is much to be lauded in this book. Janet Harbord's article 'Gesture, Time, Movement: David Claerbout meets Giorgio Agamben on the *Boulevard du Temple*' is an excellent treatise on how the movement of time is represented in the artist's work, and the theoretical means by which Claerbout's film installations interact with Agamben's conception of temporality, which, as Harbord deftly shows, is heavily indebted to Benajmin's notion of *kairological* time. Both Benjamin Noys' article 'Film-of-Life: Agamben's Profanation of the Image' and Silvia Casini's 'Engaging Hand to Hand with the Moving Image: Serra, Viola and Grandrieux's Radical Gestures' eloquently illustrate the subtleties of gesture in Agamben's writings, with illuminating references to cinema. Noys perhaps deserves more praise than Casini, as her didactic interplay is relatively straightforward: she investigates gesture in three artist's films, whereas Noys' analysis initially handles a comparison between Agamben's philosophy and the fiction of Franz Kafka, before using the consequences of such a collision to write engagingly on films as various as George Romero's *Living Dead* trilogy (1968-2010) and

Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946). Pasi Väliaho's article 'Biopolitics of Gesture: Cinema and the Neurological Body' provides an admirable platform for the interaction of contemporary aesthetics with a historically-informed discussion of neurology and biology. Finally, and unsurprisingly, editor Henrik Gustafsson's essay 'Remnants of Palestine, or, Archaeology after Auschwitz' rounds off the book with an intricate, thoughtful critique of Godard and Claude Lanzmann, apropos of their interest in the Middle East and Nazi concentration camps. To begin this far-reaching task, Gustafsson utilises the fact that a young Agamben appeared as an extra in Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* (*The Gospel According to Matthew*, 1964) to highlight the pair's intertwining "vocabularies and genealogies of thinking that underpin their respective projects" (208). In so doing Gustafsson emphasises the importance that notions of place and homeland have in both men's oeuvre, seguing smoothly into a discussion about archaeology – both the historical kind and the philosophical. In the case of philosophical archaeology Gustafsson claims, referencing Agamben's *Signatura rerum. Sul Metodo* (*The Signature of All Things: On Method*, 2008), that the goal in such an endeavour is not to recover an artifact which would actualize a history of ownership, or of origin, but rather to uncover something far more profound: that the place of origination itself never was, but has only been retroactively constructed over time. Utilizing this inverse dynamic of origin-after-event, Gustafsson carries the reader into a discussion about the meaningfulness of testimony, allowing the full weight of that word to resonate (primarily) with Lanzmann's *Shoah* (1985) and Godard's *Film socialisme* (2010), though other works by the two are also embroiled in the discussion. Gustafsson's work is clearly the product of an enormous amount of labour, and the dedication to his wide-ranging topic is embedded in every thought-provoking paragraph.

In summary, *Cinema and Agamben: Ethics, Biopolitics and the Moving Image* is a significant, urgent book. It offers excellent content, that is only rarely undermined by over-enthusiasm (a failing which we may easily forgive). For those of you interested in the confluence of Agamben and cinema, there is plenty here to come to grips with, not least in the articles we criticised. And as a whole, this collection makes a statement that feels contemporary and necessary, i.e. that film studies and philosophy are categories of scholarship, which, if synthesized, can provide valuable, invigorating results. I look forward to reading more such publications, taking steps down the same road. I just hope that they, whatever they are, can pull off such research with slightly more consistency.

SEEING THE LIGHT: EXPLORING ETHICS THROUGH MOVIES

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Wanda Teays. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012. 367 pp. ISBN13 978-1-4443-3287-2.

There are at least two things about introductory philosophy textbooks that can generally be taken to be true: firstly, their chapters will feature readings chosen more for their comprehensive breadth of content rather than their depth of explanation, and secondly, only a precious minority of any given class will actually read them. In the last fifteen years or so, perhaps motivated by such pedagogical concerns, a number of publishers have produced introductory texts that incorporate a new tool for the teacher looking to liven up a classroom: approaching philosophy through a variety of popular films. While a cursory glance might suggest that Wanda Teays' *Seeing the Light: Exploring Ethics Through Movies* is simply the latest in a growing sea of such works, this book has positioned itself at the nascent edge of what promises to be a useful new tool indeed. Not only is it specifically focused on a single facet of introductory philosophy, but it has been carefully constructed to value examples over explanation, placing *Seeing the Light* among the first of a new take on textbooks entirely, for it seems to be written not only for those readers new to the study of moral philosophy, but for those new to the teaching of the subject as well.

Taking more than a few cues from Aristotle, Teays divides her book after the triplicate pattern of dramatic stories that dates back at least as far as the Philosopher's *Poetics*. Unit One lays out a case that moral philosophy is necessary by demonstrating several of the commonplace ethical decisions that are made on a daily basis. This establishment of the need for Units Two and Three trades heavily on the matters that plague existentialist schools of thought, bringing in the examples of more than two dozen films to discuss questions of authenticity, identity, autonomy, and inner courage. Unit (or, perhaps, "Act") Two offers something like a "rising action" when Teays presents seven different chapters that each focus on specific systematic moral theories. Although every chapter here is tuned to a different theory, with another diverse collection of films used as examples, Teays consistently reminds the reader throughout the entire unit of the expository case she made in Unit One for the necessity of some form of systematic method of reasoning

through difficult questions. The climax of this effort comes, as usual, in Act/Unit Three when Teays presents several practical concerns about the process of ethical decision making and offers several methodological suggestions for future action. This unit is certainly the least traditional of the three and offers several new observations about realistic situations that will undoubtedly appeal to newcomers to the discipline.

Indeed, that appeal is one of *Seeing the Light*'s greatest strengths: Teays has written a book that explicitly expects no familiarity from the reader whatsoever with either the philosophical subject matter or even the desire to study said material. Whereas a defense of ethical theories *qua* theories might seem out-of-place in an ethics textbook, Teays clearly has a wider potential audience in mind and wants to welcome readers who might be skeptical of the need for such a book (or a class that would assign readings from such a book). Certainly there is no shortage of such "Philosophy for the Every person" material available, but the specific focus of *Seeing the Light* on ethics affords the opportunity for more space than normal for a deeper and more nuanced discussion of philosophical content, since there is no need to include chapters on epistemology or metaphysics. Still, within its discipline, this work covers a good deal of ground and touches on each of the ethical theories that one would expect to discuss in an introductory ethics class (indeed, with full chapters on egoism and feminist ethics, it actually offers a few additional, less predictable theories).

However, this is not a long book and much of its page count is devoted not to that philosophical content, but to the exposition of the many movie plots on which it relies for its examples. Curiously, although so much space is given to describe events and characters from the many films, those case studies will likely come off as unhelpful unless the reader has personally viewed each film in question. Despite the book's claim to the contrary, it was repeatedly evident during this reviewer's reading that various sections would likely be more sensible if he had spent more time at the cinema. This may also be due to the book's inconsistent focus on the philosophical content, with several chapters consisting almost entirely of what would otherwise appear to be a film review, save for a few references to a philosophical school or a quote from a philosopher at the end of a section in a manner that sometimes felt more like a dropped name than an educational point. Consequently, because of Teays' tendency to assume that a simple description of some movies will suffice to get a reader thinking philosophically, it seems hard to imagine that this book would succeed as a stand-alone text for even an introductory-level course.

In sum, it comes off more as an anthology of readings (or, in its case, viewings) rather than a textbook that explains those readings in detail.

That is not to say, though, that *Seeing the Light* is not without considerable merit as a textbook, particularly for a professor preparing new lessons or looking for new ways to discuss old ideas. In each chapter, Teays offers multiple films as illustrations of the concepts up for discussion, but to varying levels of scrutiny. Whereas some movies are dissected in-depth over the course of several pages (what she calls "Spotlights"), others are given only a few paragraphs (under the "Short Takes" and "Outtakes" subheadings). This allows for a reader to select a case study with a degree of analysis appropriate for the need at hand (Teays says explicitly in her introduction that the book is designed to be read in any order) – precisely what a professor looking for an in-class example might need. And although the vast majority of the films discussed in the book come from the United States, effort towards internationality is evident. At any rate, extensive lists of works cited, online resources, and discussion questions (with several robust indices at the back) make this book particularly useful for classroom preparatory work.

But for the student, whether self-directed or at university, Unit Three will likely be the most notable section of the text, for it is here where a more unusual offering is made. Whereas book chapters with the name "Ethical Dilemmas" often dive into specific questions of topics like genetic manipulation or animal rights, *Seeing the Light* instead follows the work of Anthony Weston and attempts to map the process of ethical decision-making itself. With chapters (filled with cinematic examples) on boldly confronting dilemmas, encountering evil, and reflecting on one's decisions after the fact (with a valuable chapter on the importance of perspective in between), this unit wraps up the existential threads that began the book by placing them now personally in the hands of the reader.

While details about Teays' philosophy of film are debatable (for example, she seems easily willing to equate full-cinema-features with candid videos uploaded to Youtube), such issues are largely irrelevant: this is not a book on the philosophy of film, but a book on the philosophy of *teaching with* film – something it offers several unique ideas towards. Although it may not be sufficient as a sole assignable in-class text, this introductory work may well assist many fledgling students and teachers in years to come.

PHILOSOPHY AND BLADE RUNNER

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Timothy Shanahan. Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. 217 pp. ISBN 978-1-137-41228-7

Timothy Shanahan's *Philosophy and Blade Runner* aims to show, as the author puts it, "not only that [*Blade Runner*] raises philosophical questions, but also that it suggests *answers* to at least some of them" (179). Shanahan also provides many of his own answers to these questions. These efforts might seem misguided given what the film's director Ridley Scott has said about his film, for example, as Shanahan reports, that he did not attempt to make an intellectual film (6) and that it is only entertainment without any deep meanings (179). Shanahan nevertheless succeeds in his aims and manages to reveal the philosophical richness of *Blade Runner* with respect to a wide range of topics: personhood, identity, freedom, ideas of the good, God, and death. In doing so, Shanahan provides support for his claim that "the meaning and significance of any work of art is not entirely within control of the artist" (180).

Shanahan advocates for the popular principle, although one not universally endorsed, that we should always prefer the interpretation of an artwork that makes it the richest and most interesting, regardless of what meaning its artist might attribute to it (20). He explicitly applies this principleto the issue of whether Rick Deckard, the hard-boiled hero of *Blade Runner*, is a replicant, that is, one of the manufactured organic creatures that he is tasked to hunt and kill. Shanahan disregards Scott's rather explicit statements that Deckard is a replicant and usually assumes throughout his book that he is human. Without that assumption, the film loses its "moral gravitas," according to Shanahan, which depends on the apparent morally relevant differences between humans (represented by Deckard) and replicants being progressively undermined over the course of the film (19).

The issue of whether Deckard is a human or not (the so-called "Deck-a-Rep" debate) and a lot of other ground is covered in the book's first and introductory chapter. In addition to reviewing the evidence for both positions in this debate, and making the case for the position that Deckard is a human, Shanahan discusses the literary source of the film, Philip K. Dick's novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* He mentions Dick's initial

dissatisfaction with the film's script (Dick wrote sarcastically, "It was terrific. It bore no relation to the book" [7]). Shanahan also discusses the various versions of the film (there are seven, including not only a "director's cut," but a subsequent, and probably final, "final cut"). From these discussions and ones elsewhere in the book, it appears as if Shanahan has read everything written on *Blade Runner*; he at least references many commentaries on the film, and he reveals a thorough knowledge of all its versions, including their deleted scenes. This chapter also contains a brief synopsis of the film, but Shanahan tells his readers in the preface to watch the film (again, if that happens to be the case) before reading the book.

Understanding and appreciating this book does not require any more familiarity with the film than what can be obtained from a single viewing. It also does not presuppose any background in philosophy. It introduces philosophy to a general audience, but it does not have the patronizing tone adopted by many of the recent popular culture and philosophy books. Its style is academic, yet accessible and engaging. It is very thorough in its coverage of the relevant philosophical topics, and its explanations of them are clear and exact. For these reasons, the intended audience of this book seems to be students in introductory philosophy courses and those independently inclined to acquire a general understanding of philosophy. Those who know philosophy very well would probably find much of the book tedious, but any fans of the film, including philosophers, can still get something out of reading it. While it breaks very littlenew philosophical ground, it provides rich and perceptive philosophical interpretations of the film. Film theory and the philosophy of film are not among the topics covered by the book.The issue touched on above about the relevance of filmmakers' intentions to interpretations of their works only receives slight treatment. Instead, the book focuses on the perennial philosophical topics that are illuminated by *Blade Runner*.

The topics of the second ("Being Human") and third ("Persons") chapters are closely related. In fact, I do not see the need for separate chapters. While the "Being Human" chapter addresses the issue of whether the replicants are human, Shanahan does not approach this issue in the typical way, which is to treat this as a question of biology. He even denies—oddly—that the terms humans and *Homo sapiens* are synonymous (40). The film does raise some interesting questions about whether replicants are humans. They are manufactured, but they are supposed to be physically identical to humans. To distinguish them, a personality test of sorts (the fictional Voight-Kampff test) must be administered.

So, a physical examination, even a blood test, is apparently unable to detect the difference. This raises interesting questions about the criteria for inclusion in a biological category, and even more broadly a natural kind, such as whether creation in the normal way (for example, sexual reproduction, if that is case, and physical growth) is a necessary condition for inclusion in such a category. Shanahan does not examine such issues. Instead, he investigates those non-biological characteristics that the Voight-Kampff test attempts to detect and asks both whether they are possessed by the new variety of replicant Deckard is hunting (the *Nexus 6* model) and whether their possession is sufficient for being a human. These are characteristics like empathy, self-awareness, and intelligence. However, they seem more relevant to a consideration of personhood, which is the subject of the "Persons" chapter. Person is a moral category, not a biological one, and this chapter asks whether replicants are persons for the sake of examining what the characters in the story are allowed to do with them, including whether they should have created them.

Some of the most interesting (and disturbing) discussion in the "Persons" chapter revolves around a thought experiment proposed by Stephen Petersen involving *engineered human servants* (EHS).[1] EHS are very much like the replicants in *Blade Runner*.They are persons created to do tasks that most people dislike, but they thoroughly enjoy doing them, such as—I imagine—cleaning floors or digging ditches. They would certainly provide many practical benefits to us, but are there any moral objections to our creating such persons? Shanahan understandably has trouble thinking of a reasonable objection. We are, after all, to imagine that they are "perfectly content with their lives" (53). It seems we would have an obligation to provide such persons with floors to clean and ditches to dig so as to ensure that they remain content, but as long as we did that, is there any moral objection to their creation?

I do not think we can assume that these creatures would be entirely content with their lives. Any creature with desires is susceptible to grief and displeasure when the satisfaction of those desires is delayed. We cannot imagine being able to constantly supply them with dirty floors or ditches to be dug. Even if we could, the pleasure from these activities would inevitably wane. As Arthur Schopenhauer, among others, has noticed, the degree and frequency of our pleasures is a function of our suffering. However, if this were an argument against creating replicants or EHS, it seems it would also be an argument against having children. But there is an important difference between children and EHS.

The latter are created only to serve our interests, and they are implanted with a limited range of desires to ensure that they do this. Schopenhauer also noticed that even the constant satisfaction of desires does not entail a *meaningfullife*. While everyone is prone to regarding his or her life as meaningless, EHS—who, as persons, possesses self-awareness—would probably be more susceptible to this realization given their lowly and limited desires (they would be dissatisfied pigs, to adapt John Stuart Mill's analogy), and the psychological impact of it would likely be more severe. This is a strong reason against creating such creatures; we would be creating persons with truly meaningless lives. It seems that this is the realization that the replicants in *Blade Runner* reach about their own lives. They were created to perform tasks that most others did not want to do, like prostitution and combat. They were also given pre-determined and short lifespans so they would be easier to control. They return to Earth despite the death sentence for any replicants caught there in order to seek a prolongation to their lives. They do not succeed, but in their struggle they manage to acquire some autonomy over their desires by exploiting them to serve their own interests, and not those of their owners.

A replicant's despair after learning about her true nature motivates the topic of the fourth chapter, "Identity." The replicant Rachael Tyrell does not initially know that she is replicant. This fact has been concealed from her because she has been implanted with the childhood memories of the niece of her creator, Dr. Eldon Tyrell. She eventually learns all of this, which raises questions about personal identity, both for her and us. In offering possible answers to these questions, Shanahan reviews the most popular theories of personal identity. Shanahan's own proposal is to treat identity as a matter of *degree*, but that position seems indistinguishable from skepticism about personal identity. This might be the correct position to hold, but it is not compatible with any substantive notion of the self.

I will comment on some of the book's remaining chapters more briefly. Chapter Five, "Consciousness," ingeniously uses *Blade Runner* to introduce the mind-body problem and a wide range of suggested solutions. Chapter Six, "Freedom," uses the situations of the film's characters to investigate the topic of free will. It is similarly comprehensive in its discussion of theories of free will, including the influential ideas of Harry Frankfurt on the topic.[2]

Shanahan introduces the ideas of a variety of philosophers in his book. Chapter Seven, "Being Good," introduces the ideas of Friedrich Nietzsche in an examination of the various uses of the word "good" and the role judgments about the good play in our lives, a topic about which Nietzsche had a lot to say. The chapter relates well to the book's focus

on the moral themes of *Blade Runner* and, like all the other chapters, draws its examples from the film. Nietzsche is also relevant to *Blade Runner* given the inevitable comparisons between the type of replicant pursued by Deckard in the film (the *Nexus 6* model) and *Übermenschen*. Shanahan points out that the replicants do not display the self-discipline that is an essential characteristic of a Nietzschean *Übermensch* (127). However, he might have also discussed, as I did briefly above, how the replicants manage to achieve some self-realization by exerting themselves; this is a central element of the strategy for living that Nietzsche offers as an alternative to the pessimism of Schopenhauer.

Chapter Eight, on "God," is an examination of revenge, particularly revenge against one's creator or god. It begins with a review of revenges of this type in literature, such as in *Paradise Lost* and *Frankenstein*. It then uses the existentialism of Jean-Paul Sartre to examine the replicants' revenge against their creator, Dr. Tyrell. Chapter Nine, "Death," is on a central theme of *Blade Runner*. Most of the chapter is devoted to testing the Epicurean view that death is not something to be feared. This chapter is closely connected with the final one; Chapter Ten is on "Time and Meaning" and it contains a very rich discussion of the relationship between mortality and a meaningful life, a topic that is very will illustrated by the situation of the replicants of *Blade Runner*.

While I do not agree with all of the conclusions that Shanahan reaches on the philosophical issues, he successfully shows that they are raised by *Blade Runner*. Perhaps Ridley Scott was being insincere when he claimed that his film was not philosophical (although, as Shanahan argues, Scott's view that Deckard is a replicant does drain the film of some of its philosophy), or perhaps the ideas of its literary source unwittingly seeped into his film (Dick, after finally seeing the film, came to believe it did a great service to his novel [7]). Regardless of the explanation, the film's artist has not had the final word on its meaning. Shanahan has confirmed for fans of the film that it is a philosophically significant work; for others, particularly those new to philosophy, he has used the film to edify them on some of the most interesting and profound topics in philosophy.

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[1] Stephen Petersen, "The Ethics of Robot Servitude," *Journal of Experimental and Theoretical Artificial Intelligence* 19 (1): 43-54.

[2] I find questionable, however, Shanahan's references to the less sophisticated writings of Sam Harris on the topic, whose writings get referenced a couple more times in the book.

MISE-EN-SCÈNE AND/OR MISE-EN-CADRE?: QUESTIONS FROM THE BOOK *POST-CINEMATIC THEATRE AND PERFORMANCE*

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Piotr Woycicki. Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. 268 pp. ISBN 978-1-137-37549-0.

Piotr Woycicki is a Lecturer in Theatre and Performance at Aberystwyth University. His main teaching areas and research are *New Media Performance* and *Shakespeare in Performance*. The title of Woycicki's *Post-cinematic theatre and performance*, published in 2014, refers to a new classification of a specific area of artistic hybridisation. It is a field where cinema, theatre and performance are mixed; and from which, through reception, a critical perception of space can be created following the conventional cinematic codes.

In analysing these post-cinematic practices, he uses an empirical corpus made up of several theatrical works, but also a film: Robert Lepage's *Elsinore* and *The Andersen Project*, Station House *Opera's Roadmetal Sweetbread* and *Mare's Nest*, the Wooster Group's *House/ Lights* and *Hamlet*, Katie Mitchell's *Wunschkonzert,* Imitating the Dog's *Hotel Methuselah*, Duncan Speakman's *As If It Were The Last Time* and also Lars Von Trier's film, *Dogville*.

Woycicki defines "post-cinematic" through the existing analogous theatre studies' theoretical conceptualization: "postdramatic theatre", which was defined in 1989 by Hans-Thies Lehmann in his book of the same name. Woycicki focuses on what he calls a subset of "intermedial theatre" and / or "multimedia theatre", a category that has been analysed by Freda Chapple and Chiel Kattenbelt (2006); and his main thesis is based on what Lehmann presents in *Postdramatic Theatre*, an aesthetic in which new forms of multi-perspective narrativity and new "politics of perception" or "response-ability" are generated. In the case of the post-cinematic, these forms are translated into potentialising a critical reflective stance from the spectator (p. 3).

As he states: "what interests me here is what is politically and culturally at stake, and how post-cinematic theatre and film can interrogate and perhaps exhibit a form of resistance to this dominant cinematisation through deconstructive intermedial practice" (p. 4). Other authors, such as Bolter and Grusin and their book/concept

Remediation (2000), or Auslander with his book/concept *Liveness* (2002) are also referred to in framing what Woycicki calls "post-cinema as a cultural phenomena".

For a more specific analysis of the empirical artistic corpus, he applies post-structuralist theories by Jean- François Lyotard, Emmanuel Lévinas, Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Rancière and Jacques Derrida, which allow him to "articulate what is perceptually at stake in the aesthetics of disorientation, undecidability, multiplicity and aporias", but also the "deconstruction of cinematic conventions from different angles: political agendas, ethical perceptions, perspectivist approaches to narratives [and] moral frameworks" (p.6).

Despite this theoretical framework, which allows Woycicki to make a highly interesting approach to the analysis of the works that serve him as an empirical corpus, there are also some limitations. One concerns the very idea of cataloguing, such as the post-cinematic proposal, in that we can question this proliferation of concepts that are often merely different and subjective views of the same things. This is cataloguing that really does not add any truly new approaches in developing analysis of the field. There are also limitations with regard to the "evolution" of artistic practices and the various "metamorphoses" in the history of media spectacle. In other words, this classification advances to what "comes after" without taking into account the history of existing intersections between theatre and cinema in the early 20th century and, crucially, without considering the history of cinematic theatre.

The book also lacks an approach to the role of the theatre in the first filmic productions. These practical examples of shows, together with the "montage theories" of Eisenstein and Brecht, could have been listed and discussed. Among others, Piscator and his political theatre could have figured here. Woycicki might here have discussed the trajectory of the post-cinematic terms theatre and performance, as well as concepts such as mixed-media and intermedia, along with the repositioning of some futuristic and surreal experiments, where the interweaving of the two media cause disrupted perception.

In this context, Woycicki could well have analysed concepts justifying "intentional" or "organic" hybridity (Bakhtinian concepts), as well as transgression, surprise and disruption to justify a more emancipatory and participatory political perception for the spectator.

Post-cinematic theatre and performance has, however, two great virtues. The first, mentioned above, is that it provides a good analysis of the works under study. The second is that this analysis shows clearly, albeit unintentionally, that the core uniting these two

media is the relationship of two concepts intrinsic to each of the media: *mise-en-scène*, in theatre and *mise-en-cadre*, in film.
In a note, *mise-en-cadre* is defined as, "the cinematic counterpart of the mise-en-scène. It means all that is included in the frame of a shot" (P. 253, note 7).

The mixture of the two framing modes in the same space enables new dimensions of performativity and de-framing, time, space, scale, concurrency, etc. to be created. As an example, here is his analysis of Station House *Opera's Roadmetal Sweetbread* "through an interplay of film and live action, the virtual characters from film materialise on stage and become part of the *mise-en-scène* action. Through this intermedial playfulness and by re-enacting the transition between *mise-en-scène* and the *mise-en-cadre* in a back and forth mechanical manner, the scene negotiates a space for jouissance of spectating movements lost in the process of setting them to a fílmic frame. These movements do not necessarily conform to an aesthetic framework, but potentially disrupt it". (P. 88).

In another discussion, he argues that: "these elements break the framed notion of a *mise-en-cadre* by introducing the unpredictability and potentiality of the *mise-en-scène* action (P.99). This intersection between the scene and frame ultimately presents the spectator with a *mise-en-abime*, showing physical and mediated presence, light and shadow, reality and dream, the ghostly, the multiple possibilities beyond a linear narrative, among other hybrid dimensions that only the spectator, as a singularly perceptive entity, can reflect.

Translated by Mick Greer.

MUSIC, PERFORMANCE, AND THE REALITIES OF FILM: SHARED CONCERT EXPERIENCES IN SCREEN FICTION

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Ben Winters. New York and London: Routledge, 2014. 276 pp. ISBN 978-0-415-82453-8.

Film and reality share a long history. Cinema was initially conceived and introduced as a medium of capturing and showing actual world's reality, which is primarily placed and experienced outside film. Thus, concerning the analysis of cinema, most film theorists have been examining movies according to the opposing conceptions of cinematic and extra-cinematic reality. On the other hand, film and music share a long history too. As most film music scholars agree, there have never been purely "silent films", in the sense that even in the first years of cinema, before the "talking pictures", every movie screening almost always featured live music performance in combination with the visual apparatus. But this is only one side of the coin, because film as an audiovisual means of representation not only reflects or replicates the actual world but it also generates new spheres of reality.

In his outstanding study *Bruits: Essai sur l' économie politique de la musique*,[1] French economist and writer Jacques Attali symbolically refers to music's primeval (and prophetic) relation with the real world. According to him, there are four stages of the cultural history of music: the "sacrifice", the "representation", the "repetition" and the "composing". On the contrary, considering that moving pictures is a construction of the western modernity, cinema did not linearly follow the above steps but, in fact, has blended together all these levels of communication, thus creating impressions of pseudo-multimodal experiences based upon the fusion of visual and optical senses. Film as a contemporary technological art operates, transforms and intermixes several types of realities: the ritualistic lived performance, the theatrical drama and the staged show via both the recorded mimesis and the systematic reproduction of the audiovisual culture. And, vice-versa, this changing set of realities has altered the nature of actually-lived human reception and perception all through the 20th and the 21st centuries.

This so often discussed – but not thoroughly examined – relation between film, music and reality is the subject matter of Ben Winters' book *Music, Performance, and the Realities of Film: Shared Concert Experiences in Screen Fiction*, which is the ninth tome of the "Routledge Research in Music" series. The book is an extended study of various filmic representations of western art music performances and their cinematic experience by the audience. Winters focuses on a specific dimension of western art music, the practice of performance, comparatively experienced either as live music performance or as inscribed music performance through film. This is quite interesting in view of the fact that concert has become a widespread performative process since the classical period of western art music and the main area for interaction between classical music and the public; furthermore, it has also been criticized for becoming a listening and viewing experience that lacks contextuality, follows the eclectic cultural needs of the elite, stays beyond the everyday and exists in separation from the real world and the social life. Challenging these preconceptions all the way through his book, Winters does not only try to make a distinction between filmic and everyday reality. He also intents to provide interconnections of both cinematic and actual-world situations that are shared by the audience and, at the same time, put to the question their intersubjective experiences.

Most of us can bring to mind the (widely portrayed and almost predictable) image of a cartoon conductor tapping his baton on the music stand to interrupt the sound of the symphonic orchestra tuning up and prepare the beginning of the first piece of a concert. Without any doubt, this symbolic gesture in addition to its audible sign have become an audiovisual mark – a "cue", in the terminology of film (music) practice – that, as Winters points out (p. 2), "is ingrained in Hollywood's portrayal of the orchestral concert but absent from the real world of professional performance". How many of us have ever thought that this could be just a false stereotypical conception, a cliché, constantly reproduced to serve the narrative of a specific filmic reality? And this is only one scene among countless that might be cited from personal experience. The book reflexively articulates as many as possible of these instances to highlight the mutual encounter between real viewers and onscreen cinema spectators.

Music, Performance, and the Realities of Film is neither about music documentaries (since it deals only with fiction films) nor about musicals and operatic film performances, themes that have been studied separately (since Winters prefers not to cite other music genres and concentrates on instrumental art music, thus identifying with the particular

style of classical Hollywood film scores). The author combines major theoretical, methodological and epistemological questions that appraise the substance of music in accordance to the overall filmic ontology, giving his own interpretations juxtaposed with other scholars' earlier references. The book relies heavily on a comprehensive inspection of a vast number of scenes from movies, which formulate a vivid and strongly argued essay. It is worthy of note that, except the detailed description of concert instances in mainstream narrative cinema, quite a lot of these examples illustrate animation films as well as movies that thematize western classical music.

The first part of the book ("The Real versus the Reel") consists of two discrete chapters that involve the main axes of Winters' focal point: scenes from movies during which "real" musicians (such as conductors, performers and composers) appear and filmic representations where actors play the role of "reel" musicians, according to narrative construction. Then, the second part ("Film and Life: The Mirror of Film") follows. This is a more musicological section, anchored in Carolyn Abbate's concepts of "drastic" and "gnostic" musicology[2] as well as Christopher Small's term "musicking",[3] hence concentrating not only on the hermeneutic aspect of music but mainly on its performative and embodied qualities. This part of the book extensively presents the visualization of the focal performance agents: the musicians and the members of the audience. It also looks upon the narrative models that seem to be common between the classical Hollywood fiction cinema and the concert hall repertoire. The last part of the book ("Film's Musical Identity") contains two chapters, which further address an ontological approach towards the musical subsistence of the film, i.e. how music performances can affect the "film's body" – in terms of Vivian Sobchack's existential and semiotic phenomenology.[4] Winters shows no hesitation in making some critical suggestions on Claudia Gorbman's well-worn theoretical paradigm of "diegetic versus non-diegetic" film music[5] and stressing the difficulties that often arise from such a bipolar methodology. Instead, he pursues an intermediate channel, a liminal pathway, which underlines and embodies music's magical power within cinematic discourse.

Ben Winters, currently appointed as a Lecturer in Music at The Open University, UK and author of *Erich Wolfgang Korngold's The Adventures of Robin Hood: A Film Score Guide*,[6] is also a regular performer of western art music, both a conductor and a violinist; for that reason, he certainly has plenty of personal experience regarding the orchestral practices in concerts as well as the scientific study of western art music history, philosophy and

aesthetics. In conclusion, his book offers an insightful approach to contemporary film music studies by examining the correlations between music and image, fiction and reality, cinema and everyday life, as been perceived by the spectators of onscreen classical concert performances. It is, therefore, an essential addition to the academic literature of the recently established field of film musicology.

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[1] Jacques Attali, *Bruits: Essai sur l' économie politique de la musique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1977).

[2] Carolyn Abbate, "Music: Drastic or Gnostic?", *Critical Inquiry* 30/3 (2004): 505-36.

[3] Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1998).

[4] Vivian Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992).

[5] Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987).

[6] Ben Winters, *Erich Wolfgang Korngold's The Adventures of Robin Hood: A Film Score Guide* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2007).