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FINAL MASTER'S PORTFOLIO

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A Final Portfolio

Submitted to the English Department of Bowling Green
State University in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in the field of English
with a specialization in Literary & Textual Studies

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Dr. Erin Labbie, First Reader
Ms. Kimberly Spallinger, Second Reader

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Josue J. Salas

Analytical Narrative

Shortly before entering the MA in Literary & Textual Studies Program at Bowling Green State University, I read Jean Baudrillard's piece *Simulacra & Simulation*. At the same time, for the first time, I viewed the films of influential film director John Carpenter including *Halloween* (1978), *The Thing* (1982), and *They Live* (1988). Most of Carpenter's films are political, but *They Live* is one of Carpenter's most noticeably political films. The film's critique of topics such as consumerist culture, media propaganda, and state violence make this obvious. For my ENG 6010, Introduction to English Studies seminar paper, I examined John Carpenter's 1988 Sci-Fi, Action, Horror film, *They Live* using critical texts such as Jean Baudrillard's *The Consumer Society,* and the documentary film *The Pervert's Guide to Ideology* (2012)*,* directed by Sophie Fiennes and performed by Slavoj Žižek. Engaging with these and other critical texts, I argued that in the film, the evil alien creatures referred to as ghouls who manipulate society to consume are not the film's primary antagonist, but instead, a totalitarian system of culture, consumerism, and waste is. This is clear from the fact that humans are not the only ones being held captive by a totalitarian system of culture, consumerism, and waste in the film. For, the ghouls who are supposedly in charge of the said system seem to be captives of it as well, mindlessly consuming material goods and media alongside the humans they are supposedly manipulating to do so.

When I revisited this paper, I supplemented my argument with a further application of texts such as Jean Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulation*, Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, and Herbert Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man* to develop my argument that the true antagonist of the film is a totalitarian system of culture, consumerism, and waste. I highlighted the role of technology in this totalitarian system of control, e.g., media

technologies, mass-produced machines, and luxurious toys; as a result of revisiting this paper, my insight into topics such as culture, consumerism, and technology further developed. The revision process also made it more evident that topics such as culture, consumerism, and technology are inseparable from one another. Thus, to examine and critique one of these concepts entirely and comprehensively, one must examine and critique all of these concepts mentioned simultaneously.

During my second semester, I took the ACS 6820 course, "Philosophies of Technology," with Professor Edgar Landgraf in the World Languages and Cultures Department, where I read critical texts by theorists such as Ernst Kapp, Karl Marx, Martin Heidegger, Walter Benjamin, and Bernard Stiegler. My 6070, "Theory & Methods of Literary Criticism," seminar paper was highly influenced by the work I produced in my philosophies of technology course. For my 6070 seminar paper, I examined Mike Judge's 2006 Comedy/Sci-Fi film *Idiocracy* by applying critical texts such as Max Horkheimer & Theodor W. Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Walter Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Karl Marx's *Capital*. *Idiocracy,* and *They Live* share many of the same concerns regarding culture, consumerism, and technology. In *Idiocracy,* similar to *They Live,* the protagonist finds himself trapped in a totalitarian system of culture, consumerism, and waste. However, *Idiocracy* notably focuses on the idea that modern culture and technology are not enhancing humanity's best, but instead, the opposite. In the film, which is set in the future, 2505, modern culture and technology has rendered humanity to absurd levels of idiocy and incompetence. Using the critical texts above, I presented the idea that culture and technology are powerful tools that, when misapplied or manipulated, can lead to disastrous results.

When I revisited this paper, I supplemented my argument with Herbert Marcuse's critical text *One-Dimensional Man*, where Marcuse, like his Frankfurt colleagues (Max Horkheimer, Theodor W. Adorno, and Walter Benjamin), makes complex and comprehensive arguments regarding themes such as consumerism, culture, propaganda, technology, and totalitarianism. As a result of revisiting this paper, I found an anthropological line of thought regarding culture and technology, in which the concepts that can be found in critical texts of scholars such as Marx, Benjamin, Horkheimer, and Adorno, published centuries ago, are now more relevant than ever.

For my English 6800 course, "The Global Middle Ages" seminar paper, after reading Michel de Montaigne's essay, "Of Cannibals," I decided to write a piece that examined a variety of concepts such as Montaigne's work regarding cannibalism, native tribes' practices of cannibalism, Europe's unfrequented history of cannibalism, Western religion, and Western modern medicine. My central thesis suggests that humanity, even as cultures differ, universally practices over-consumption of critical resources. Humans, whether through the practice of native tribes eating human flesh or through the modern medical practice of patients receiving blood and organ transplants, consume not only elements within nature that they cultivate, but also, they/we approach and use other humans as commodities for consumption. Before revising my original piece, I had difficulty pinning down my central thesis; however, after examining my argument and applying further relevant literature, I was able to compose a much more coherent and comprehensive piece.

My fourth piece is a collection of works that originated from my ACS 6820 course, "Philosophies of Technology," where I collected and expanded on many of the literature and ideas that I found the most influential, meaningful, and thought-provoking. Many of the scholars, e.g., Karl Marx, Fredrich Kittler, Bernard Stiegler, and their work included in my philosophy of

technology portfolio were going to be the basis of what was supposed to be my thesis project, one where I was going to examine influential Sci-Fi film franchises, such as *Robocop* (1987), *Terminator* (1984), and *Blade Runner* (1982), to examine concepts regarding humanism, post-humanism, technology, culture, media, etc.. However, due to many complicated events, I decided to write a much more condensed piece about the *Blade Runner* films; the piece is currently a work in progress that I hope to complete in the near future to submit to a conference.

I leave the MA in Literary & Textual Studies Program at Bowling Green State University, even though it may sound cliché, as a much more mature person. Initially, when starting the program, I wanted to pursue a career as a university professor; however, after completing this program, I have concluded that what I want to do is leave academia in order to pursue new experiences, ideas, and discussions that cannot be found in academia or higher learning. I do believe that I have learned a lot during my time here at Bowling Green State University; however, I have come to realize that there are many things that one cannot learn or experience just through the practice of reading and writing scholarly work; thus, I believe it is time for me to explore the wider world, and even though it may not be in a classroom setting, continue to learn more about the topics, concepts, and issues that interest me and I am passionate about.

Josue J. Salas

Prof. Pal-Lapinski

ENG 6010

Death by Consumption: Consumerism as Evil in John Carpenter's *They Live*

In his cult classic film, *They Live* (1988), John Carpenter examines critical issues such as; the Reagan Presidency, media as propaganda, and hyper-consumerism. Using texts such as Sophie Fiennes's *A Pervert's Guide to ideology* (2012), Jean Baudrillard's *The Consumer Society*, and various related texts as my framework, I will examine John Carpenter's film *They Live's* portrayal of capital, consumption, and greed. I would like to discuss how many of the films' concerns are still relevant today, maybe now more than ever.

Film synopsis: a drifter named John Nada arrives in Los Angeles looking for work. While working a temporary construction job, he meets a fellow drifter named Frank Armitage, who introduces him to a commune of fellow drifters and homeless people. After a series of mysterious occurrences occur at a nearby church, Nada breaks into the church and finds a box of sunglasses. Shortly after, a police force attacks and terrorizes the commune. Nada escapes unharmed with the box of sunglasses, and while taking a stroll in the city, decides to put on a pair. However, this decision proves to be a crucial one, for the sunglasses reveal to him that through the use of subliminal messages, society is being brainwashed to "OBEY," "CONSUME," and "CONFORM." It is revealed to Nada that the culprits behind this evil plot are a group of aliens, referenced in the film's end credits as ghouls, who live among humanity disguised as celebrities, politicians, and yuppies. After revealing the truth to them, Nada convinces Frank and a news corporation worker named Holly to join a resistance group who are plotting to destroy a news corporation antenna that the resistance group believes is responsible

for sending out a multitude of subliminal messages. Nada and Frank go undercover and begin to realize that many people they did not suspect, including Holly, are secretly working with the ghouls, and so, in the climax of the film, Nada, before being shot down by a helicopter, destroys the antenna, and reveals to society the ghouls that are living among humanity. The film ends abruptly before the viewer sees whether this revelation causes a mass panic or not.

According to the film's director, John Carpenter, the film was mainly inspired by what Carpenter believed to be the values of Ronald Reagan, the Republican Party, and the conservative movement in the 1980s. In a YouTube video, titled "They Live in John Carpenter's Own Words" uploaded in 2016, in an interview Carpenter states:

> They Live was a movie I made towards the end of the 80's and I was reflecting on a lot of the values that I saw around me at the time, mainly inspired by Ronald Regan's conservative revolution...They Live is partially a political statement. It's partially a tract on the world that we live in today, and as a matter of fact right now it's even more true than it was then (0:00-0:37).

The film does subtly and directly reference Ronald Reagan and his presidency in various scenes. One example of this is the film's reference to homelessness during the Reagan Presidency. In the film, John Nada arrives in Los Angeles as a drifter; however, he finds food and resources living among a commune of fellow drifters and homeless people. The film presents the people living in the commune as kind family oriented people who are having a hard time making ends meet, not as criminals or beggars; thus further establishing the point that a homelessness epidemic is not the result of criminal activity and laziness, but a broken system.

Transitional sentence needed…According to Peter Dreier writing for the National Housing Institute, "Another of Reagan's enduring legacies is the steep increase in the number of

homeless people, which by the late 1980s had swollen to 600,000 on any given night – and 1.2 million over the course of a year. Many were Vietnam veterans, children and laid-off workers" (Dreier). Another even more precise reference to Ronald Reagan and his presidency can be found in one of the film's most pivotal scenes, this being the very first time Nada puts on the sunglasses, for it is revealed to him that his beliefs about "following the rules" and "believing in America" are wrong. Instead, the reality of things is dire; he lives in a society that is being manipulated to obey and consume.

Stunned by what the glasses have just revealed to him, Nada stumbles into a grocery store, and with the glasses on, watches on television, one of the ghouls disguised as a politician give a speech. In the film, the ghoul states, "The feeling is definitely there. It's a new morning in America. Fresh. Vital. The old cynicism is gone. We have faith in our leaders. We're optimistic as to what becomes of it all. It really boils down to our ability to accept. We don't need pessimism. There are no limits" (0:37:49-0:38:12). Seeing that arguably the most well-known and powerful politician at the time in the United States was President Ronald Reagan, one would not be wrong to assume that this scene in the film is a direct reference to Reagan. After hearing the ghoul's trivial speech, Nada laughs to himself and comments, "it figures it would be something like this" (0:38:12-0:38:14). So, as a viewer, one might believe that the film is solely a critique of Ronald Reagan and his presidency. However, according to one viewer, the film also serves as a critique of ideology.

In the documentary film, *A Pervert's Guide to Ideology*, scholar Slavoj Žižek when discussing his analysis of the film *They Live*, states, "...these glasses function like critique-of-ideology glasses...They allow you to see the real message beneath all the propaganda, publicity, glitz, posters and so on" (0:03:31-0:03:53). Žižek makes the point that society believes ideology

to be something that "blurs our view," however, "ideology is like glasses," "which distort our view," "and the critique of ideology is taking off said glasses." Mainly, Žižek sets forth that the film compellingly illustrates ideology's complexities through symbolism (the glasses). Furthermore, even though at first Žižek seems to set forth that the film does not accurately represent how ideology functions in society, Žižek ends his analysis by praising the film's depiction of the excruciating process that is "separating ourselves from ideology."

Zizek continues, "When you put the glasses on, you see dictatorship in democracy. It's the invisible order…which sustains your apparent freedom" (0:04:47-0:05:00). Zizek points out that a strict authoritarian order is needed to sustain our free market lifestyles. Society must not only give us the right and liberty to "shop til we drop" but must also frequently and sometimes very firmly remind us that we have the right and liberty to "shop til we drop." One cannot forget that before Nada puts on the sunglasses that reveal to him "the truth," most of the seemingly harmless billboards that he comes across basically just state "OBEY," "CONSUME," and "CONFORM," just in a much more convoluted and market-friendly manner.

Analyzing the film's famous alleyway fight scene in which Nada has to beat Frank into submission to get him to put on the glasses, Žižek asserts that we enjoy our ideology, because as the film's fight scene demonstrates, separating ourselves from our ideologies is an excruciating process. Žižek states, "And it is the weirdest scene in the film. The fight takes eight, nine minutes. It may appear irrational, because why does this guy reject so violently to put the glasses on? It is as if he is well aware that spontaneously he lives in a lie, that the glasses will make him see the truth, but that this truth can be painful" (0:07:08-0:07:34). After Žižek's insightful analysis of the film, the question becomes, what are these ideologies specifically that Carpenter

is attempting to introduce? One crucial scholar might suggest that these ideologies are the ideologies of consumption and waste.

In his text, *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures*, Jean Baudrillard comprehensively examines the concept that is consumerism in society. One crucial component he examines is the shift from production to consumption, fundamentally, the idea that in the present day, humanity no longer lives in a system of production but instead, one of consumption. Baudrillard writes, "The truth is, not that 'needs are the fruit of production,' but that the system of needs is the product of the system of production. This is quite different. By system of needs, we mean that needs are not produced one by one, in relation to the respective objects, but are produced as consumption power, as an overall propensity within the more general framework of the productive forces" (74-75). According to Baudrillard, needs are not the result of a system of production, but instead, a system of needs is a result of a system of production; thus, one consumes not because one is entangled in a system of production but because one is entangled in a system of consumption. This system of consumption is front and center in *They Live*.

Nada, because of shyness and suspicion, at first, does not immediately accept Frank's invitation to live among the commune. However, once he does, he seems to have no problem fitting in, living among everybody else in a very modest and minimalist manner. Moreover, because of this modest and minimalist view on living life, through the glasses, it needs to be revealed to Nada that he lives in a hyper-consumerist society. However, once he puts on the glasses, he and the viewer are stunned by all the images and symbols commanding him and the rest of society to "OBEY," "CONSUME," and "CONFORM." However, it does not take long for Nadia to accept this new truth; he is stuck in a system of consumption. It must be mentioned,

though, that again, just like with the billboards, before Nada put on the sunglasses, it was clear that boutique stores, cafes, and beauty salons were filled with people spending money left and right, just because this was not obvious to Nada, this does not mean that a said sinister system of consumption did not already exist.

In his piece titled "Hypermarket and Hypercommodity," Baudrillard writes, "From thirty kilometers all around, the arrows point you toward these large triage centers that are the hypermarkets, toward this hyperspace of the commodity where in many regards a whole new sociality is elaborated" (75). Baudrillard continues:

> The large cities have witnessed the birth, in about a century (1850-1950), of a generation of large, "modern" stores (many carried this name in one way or another)...The cities remained cities, whereas the new cities are satellited by the hypermarket or the shopping center, serviced by a programmed traffic network, and cease being cities to become metropolitan areas. (77)

According to Baudrillard, hypermarkets (shopping centers) act as magnets that lure people, and as a result, hypermarkets are the pillars of cities, suburbs, and towns; this is what becomes clear to Nada after he puts on the glasses, even though this reality is as clear as day even before he puts on the glasses

In "Absolute Advertising, Ground-Zero Advertising," Baudrillard uses the City of Las Vegas to demonstrate how advertising can engulf an entire city's architecture to essentially make it one big theme park that does nothing but seduce and corrupt:

> Because fascination remains. One need only look at Las Vegas, the absolute advertising city...one sees that advertising is not what brightens or decorates the walls, it is what effaces the walls, effaces the streets, the facades, and all the architecture, effaces any

support and any depth, and that it is this liquidation, this reabsorption of everything into

the surface (whatever signs circulate there) that plunges us into this stupefied, hyperreal

euphoria that we would not exchange for anything else, and that is the empty and

inescapable form of seduction. (91-92)

What Baudrillard describes above is the end goal of "Absolute" and "Ground-Zero" advertising.

Every single inch and corner of the city becomes one big billboard whose only purpose is to

remind residents and tourists to consume at a frenetic pace until they had their fill. However, as

many of us know, the number of "produced goods" that people can consume in developed and

developing nations is absurdly terrifying.

Although Baudrillard uses Las Vegas as an example of Absolute advertising and *They*

Live uses Los Angeles, one can go to almost any city in the U.S and see this concept of Absolute

advertising in practice. As he points out, this is modern architecture: one block; a stadium,

another; a gift shop, another; a restaurant, another; a gym, and so on. This is modern living. If

someone, like Nada, does not participate in this banquet of goods and desires, whether it be

because they are disinterested or do not have the funds to do so, it does not matter; either way,

they will be ostracized and outcasted. Not only do *They Live* and Baudrillard examine

consumption, but also the consequence of consumption, waste.

In *The Consumer Society*, Baudrillard not only sets forth that humanity lives in a system

of consumption but also has, and continues to live, in a system of waste that signifies waste as a

symbol of both poverty and affluence. Baudrillard writes, "We have to interpret the immense

wastage of our affluent societies this way. It is wastage which defies scarcity and,

contradictorily, signifies abundance. It is not utility, but that wastage which, in its essence, lays

down the psychological, sociological, and economic guidelines for affluence" (45). This concept

of waste is not absent from *They Live*, for, in the film, waste serves as a symbol of both poverty and wealth.

In the film, waste is everywhere, be it in areas of extreme poverty or affluence. For example, even though Nada and other members of the commune live in poverty, they are still surrounded by waste, this meaning material objects in the form of junk, old furniture, and old appliances. Thus, even though abundant, this waste is supposed to represent Nada and the commune's poverty, for even though abundant, material objects such as junk, old furniture, and old appliances are not typical symbols of wealth and affluence. However, waste such as salon treatments, cafè coffee, and luxury clothes are. After Nada puts on the sunglasses, it becomes clear to him how much propaganda in the form of consumer goods he and humanity are surrounded by. This propaganda is on magazines, cans of food, billboards, and even money. Thus, while an abundance of waste such as junk can represent poverty, an abundance of waste such as consumer goods can symbolize affluence. This point that *They Live* and Baudrillard touch upon regarding waste is a crucial one, I believe, for two reasons.

Firstly, the concept that people are characterized and constructed by the things they own is not a rare or even unique one; however, *They Live* puts this concept to good use through characters such as Nada, who carries everything literally on his back(pack), and Holly, whose yuppie clothing and lifestyle in a very subtle way foreshadow her eventual betrayal of Nada and the anti-ghoul movement. Secondly, and much more complex, both *They Live* and Baudrillard, through their examination of consumption and waste, both present the idea that in a system of consumption, no matter whether you are rich or poor, the system will force you to participate, and eventually you will either be surrounded by waste such as dirt and junk, or waste such as fine china and designer scarfs. *They Live* and Baudrillard paint a dire picture. Furthermore, this

brings me to the core of my argument; the villains of the film *They Live* are not the evil greedy ghouls or their evil greedy human associates, but an ideology of consumption, waste, and totalitarianism.

In *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Horkheimer & Adorno examine themes and concepts regarding enlightenment, mass-culture, and totalitarianism. Horkheimer & Adorno write, "Adorno & Horkheimer write, "Culture today is infecting everything with sameness. Film, radio, and magazines form a system. Each branch of culture is unanimous within itself and all are unanimous together…The decorative administrative and exhibition buildings of industry differ little between authoritarian and other countries" (94). They continue, "The heroizing of the average forms part of the cult of cheapness. The highest-paid stars resemble advertisements for unnamed merchandise. Not for nothing are they often chosen from the ranks of commercial models" (126). According to Horkheimer & Adorno, modern culture, e.g., what we see reflected on the television we see, the music we listen to, and the magazines we read, is a culture of sameness, this meaning, one big advertisement, that dictates our purchasing behavior, which in modern society essentially means our behavior overall.

Every decision we make is dictated by culture, from our alarm clocks, our breakfast of choice, what clothes we wear to work, what dinner we eat, what television shows we watch, and so on. Humans are shaped by their culture; thus, Baudrillard, Carpenter, Horkheimer, & Adorno are correct when they theorize that in modern society, material goods dictate who a person is and how they are perceived. Many modern cultural pillars and institutions' objective is to turn whatever they can, including "culture," into a commodity.

Shane Gunster writes, "As a result of the expansionary inertia of the culture industry, the conceptual distance that once separated these two terms is rapidly shrinking: more than ever

before, culture exists as a commodity" (11). In modern society, our identities are constructed by the jobs the generate our income, where we went to University, our favorite sports teams, our favorite musical artists, the gadgets we have in our house, the political campaigns we donate money to, and so on. According to Baudrillard, Carpenter, Horkheimer, & Adorno, the tighter the grip that culture has on one. Whether someone lives a life of luxury or a humbler one, they consume culture, and culture consumes them.

Horkheimer & Adorno's Frankfurt school colleague, Herbert Marcuse, in his work *One-Dimensional Man*, reiterates this point, people are characterized and constructed by the things they own. Marcuse writes, "The people recognize themselves in their commodities; they find their soul in their automobile, hi-fi set, split-level home, kitchen equipment. The very mechanism which ties the individual to his society has changed, and social control is anchored in the new needs which it has produced" (11). Like Horkheimer & Adorno, Marcuse believes modern culture to be a totalitarian system of social control. Marcuse presents that modern industry and technology are powerful tools regarding social control. Marcuse writes:

> Today this private space has been invaded and whittled down by technological reality. Mass production and mass distribution claim the entire individual, and industrial psychology has long since ceased to be confined to the factory. The manifold processes of introjection seem to be ossified in almost mechanical reactions. The result is, not adjustment but mimesis: an immediate identification of the individual with his society and, through it, with the society as a whole. (12)

As is mentioned above, while the crucial themes of culture, consumption, and waste are the primary focus of this piece, one must also be aware of the significant role that "technology" plays in this social conundrum. As Marcuse presents, in modern society, people mostly see themselves

in their mass-produced "machines," "gadgets," and "toys," such as automobiles, phones, computers, kitchen equipment, sound systems, and so on.

In his article titled "Consumer Culture and the Crisis of Identity," scholar Wang Chengbing sets forth that when the purpose of consumption is not to satisfy a physical need, its purpose is to produce social meaning. Chengbing writes:

> Jean Baudrillard has maintained: 'Consumption is an order of significations, like language, or like the kinship system in primitive society.' Goods are endowed with a type of social meaning...People try to display their status by means of the social significations of their consumption. They try to raise their status by raising their level of consumption. With value not tied directly through use, wasteful, intemperate consumption can also raise the status of a person. (Chengbing 295)

So, in the statement above, both Baudrillard and Chengbing set forth that consumption creates social meaning. To further expand on this concept Baudrillard writes:

> Here again, the 'standard package' refers not so much to the materiality of goods (tv, bathroom, car, etc.) as to the ideal of conformity...Or to put it sociologically, a particular individual is a member of a particular group because he consumes particular goods, and he consumes particular goods because he is a member of a particular group). (70)

Mainly, a person's identity is determined by what they consume. Furthermore, to reintroduce Žižek's theory of ideology, the characters of *They Live*, whose identity is regulated by a system of consumption, adhere to an ideology of consumption, and it is this ideology of consumption that is the true villain of *They Live*.

Throughout the whole film, even though the viewer is constantly reminded that it is the evil ghouls who are behind the mass brainwashing of society to "OBEY, "CONSUME," and

"CONFORM," after careful viewing, it becomes clear that the ghouls themselves are also fervent obeyers, consumers, and conformers. For, just like the humans whom they are supposedly brainwashing, the ghouls themselves also, watch propaganda-ridden television, read propaganda-ridden magazines, consume luxury goods, work to accumulate money, and so on. So, are the ghouls themselves also stuck in this system of consumption? Because they consume at a fervent pace equal to humanity? I believe yes.

Thus, I believe a system of capital, consumption, and greed to be the real villain of *They Live*. Once again, as John Carpenter stated, concerns regarding capital, consumption, and greed are concerns that are still relevant in the present day, maybe now more than ever. For, as *They Live* foretold, we today now live in a society so hyper-consumerist, that it seems immensely painful for any man, woman, or ghoul to attempt to free themselves from said society/ideology. However, should one maybe not be so pessimistic? And, instead, have faith that humanity can free themselves from this evil society/ideology? Personally, if you were to ask me, I would say no. For I believe that the billboards of today, no longer command humanity to "OBEY," "CONSUME," and "CONFORM," but instead, very calmly declare, "NO HOPE."

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<div align="center">*Idiocracy* and the End of "Culture"</div>

Mike Judge's 2006 film, *Idiocracy*, almost fifteen years after its release, has become a modern-day cult classic. The film examines a plethora of issues that are as relevant now as they were fifteen years ago. These issues include; modern American culture, consumerist culture, modern American politics, and issues regarding technology such as media and surveillance technologies. Using texts such as Max Horkheimer & Theodor W. Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Walter Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Karl Marx's *Capital*, and other various texts, I would like to discuss how the ideas that *Idiocracy* presents, align or do not align, with those of various scholars and their respective texts.

Film Synopsis: Joe Bauers, a United States soldier, and Rita, a prostitute, are chosen to participate in a U.S military experiment, Joe supposedly for his impressive record of "averageness," and Rita because the military officer in charge of the experiment was able to strike a deal with her pimp. Joe and Rita are put into separate hibernation chambers and told that they will be released in a year. After the military officer in charge of the experiment is arrested for running a prostitution ring. Joe and Rita are forgotten about and are not released from their chambers until the year 2505, Joe and Rita quickly realize that humanity is now much dumber than it was in the past and that culture is now essentially, Brawndo sports-drink advertisements, pornography, and televisions shows and movies filled with crude jokes and violence. Quickly, Joe is arrested for not having a scannable identification tattoo that everyone is required to have, however, after taking an IQ test, it is revealed that Joe is the smartest man on the planet, and so,

in exchange for a presidential pardon, Joe is assigned by the United States Government to help solve humanity's farming crisis, which Joe quickly realizes is the result of humanity watering crops with Brawndo sports-drink. At the end of the film, after solving the farming crisis, and learning that there is no time machine to take him back to the past, Joe becomes Vice-President and then President, starts a family with Rita, and urges humanity to pursue and find enthusiasm in activities such as reading and writing.

Even though the film was received to positive reviews, it did poorly at the box office. However, since then, more than a decade later, the film has become a cult classic. With many people currently describing the film, not as a comedy, but a documentary. David Fear, for Rolling Stone, writes, "'A movie that was originally a comedy, but became a documentary ': Google the title of Mike Judge's 2006 movie Idiocracy and that's the UrbanDictionary.com definition that greets you, a wiseass aside that doubles as a concise the-sky' s-already-fallen commentary" (Fear). While one must admit that the idea of audiences describing the film as a documentary is humorous; it is at the same time, frightening.

Seemingly because of modern American culture and Donald Trump's presidency, according to Judge, the film is now one that fans cite the most. Hadley Freeman, for The Guardian, writes, "But these days, it's Judge's 2006 film, Idiocracy, that fans cite the most. It tells the story of a man who wakes up from a long coma to find an America that has become ultra-selfish and defiantly anti-intellectual, one in which the people anaesthetise themselves by watching TV shows with titles such as 'Ow! My Balls!' Meanwhile, the moronic President Camacho, played by Terry Crews, prances about like a professional wrestler rather than a politician. There are now a million internet quizzes with titles such as: 'Who said it: Camacho or Trump?'" (Freeman). Thus, one can argue that the film is now more relevant than ever.

While the film's depiction of modern American consumerist culture and politics has garnered its fair share of controversy, the film also presents the idea that in the future, 2505, the reason humanity is so stupid, is because many groups of intelligent people being "reasonable" and "responsible," for one reason or another, did not have children. While many groups of unintelligent people being "unreasonable" and "irresponsible," for one reason or another, kept having children. Thus, while intelligent people continue to die off childless, family trees of unintelligent people continued to grow at an unsettling rate. One can argue that this idea that the film is presenting is one that is pro-eugenics; however, Dan Solomon, writes and quotes Judge:

> So I think it's pretty clear here that, whichever one it is, [nature or nurture], there's some combination of both. I obviously don't believe in eugenics. I think you could look at it both ways–you have this couple that's trying to be so responsible that they end up never having kids. Then there's another couple who just irresponsibly keeps having them and not raising them right. So, you know, if the other couple adopted the other kids. I'm sure they would probably be better off. (Solomon)

In this analysis, while I will not be examining this component of the film, this component regarding bioessentialism and eugenics, I believe it must be mentioned, for many of the scholar's whose texts I will cite later on in this paper, do not offer discourses regarding ideas of bioessentialism and eugenics, but rather the opposite, this meaning discourses regarding concepts of culture, politics, and technology.

Regarding what ideas the film might be presenting to its audience, Bilge Ebiri, of The Village Voice, writes:

> I don't know. I laughed. I hated myself. Then I laughed some more. And let's be fair:
> Mike Judge, like many good satirists, isn't in the business of offering solutions. But when

the humor is this savage, it does make you wonder what he's implying. Ten years

later, Idiocracy's real achievement isn't how much of it has come true, but how much it

continues to disturb. (Ebiri)

Even though Ebiri, cannot interpret what exactly it is that creator Mike Judge might be

attempting to present to audiences about society, Ebiri recognizes that the film is satire. So, the

film must be poking fun at something. Furthermore, one might argue that the film is not only

poking fun at a couple of things but a variety of things. Furthermore, Reihan Salam for Slate

writes:

To his everlasting credit, Mike Judge doesn't counsel despair. Instead, he's telling

thoughtful Americans that we can't expect other people to solve our problems for us. If

you're alarmed by the callousness and the crassness of our culture, which you certainly

should be, do something about it. Lead or follow. Getting out of the way is not an option.

Failing that, you should at least try to outbreed the people you hate most. (Salam)

Salam believes that Judge is telling audiences that if one is worried about the direction that

society seems to be heading, one must be brave and willing to take action against what one

believes to be wrong or unjust.

Regarding what inspired director Mike Judge to co-write the film with Ethan Cohen, who

is not to be confused with film director and screenwriter Ethan Coen of the Coen brothers, in an

interview with Judge for Fast Company, Dan Solomon, writes and quotes Judge:

When I had the idea for this way back, I think in 1995, it was when I was writing

the Beavis and Butthead movie, but when I really decided to try to write it it was in 2001

when I was standing in line with my daughters, who were little at the time, at the Teacups

ride at Disneyland. These two mothers with kids in strollers started yelling at each other,

and saying 'bitch,' and all kinds of expletives. They were about to fight. And I was just

looking around and just thinking, 'God, this is not the way Disney imagined it being.

Sometimes I get from people that they would see the movie and go to the parking lot, and

go, 'Oh well…' and feeling like there's sort of an anti-intellectual thing happening. I

have heard that from friends, and just anecdotally from people. (Solomon)

While the film's critique of American anti-intellectualist culture is explicit, I am personally much

more interested in the film's critique of American consumerist culture. For, in the film, after

Brawndo, a sports-drink corporation buys and seemingly takes over all government institutions,

Brawndo then becomes a monopoly that seems to conduct business in all industries such as

agriculture, media, and fashion. For, all-day on television, commercials for Brawndo owned

companies are frequently ran, and all over the city Brawndo owned company logos are either

plastered on the wall or someone's clothing. Thus, resulting in what Max Horkheimer & Theodor

W. Adorno would call a culture of sameness.

In their text, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Horkheimer & Adorno examine what they refer

to as a culture of sameness. Horkheimer & Adorno write, "Culture today is infecting everything

with sameness. Film, radio, and magazines form a system. Each branch of culture is unanimous

within itself and all are unanimous together" (94). In the film, Brawndo, through media

technologies such as film and television, produces a culture of sameness, a culture where

Brawndo products, pornography, and fart jokes capture most of society's discourse.

No culture is complete without its celebrities, which Horkheimer & Adorno state are

often chosen from the ranks of commercial models. Horkheimer & Adorno write, "The heroizing

of the average forms part of the cult of cheapness. The highest-paid stars resemble

advertisements for unnamed merchandise. Not for nothing are they often chosen from the ranks

of commercial models" (126). However, society's heroes in the film are not the heroes that Horkheimer & Adorno seem to be describing in the quote above, attractive yet dull Hollywood actors and actresses, but instead, absurd figures that only the society in the film can produce. First, there is President Dwayne Elizondo Mountain Dew Herbert Camacho, an extremely popular pro-wrestler and porn-star turned president. Then there is Hormel Chavez, star of an extremely popular television show, which is just Chavez continually getting hit in the groin. Lastly, there is Beef Supreme, a monster-truck driving and flame-thrower wielding arena battle gladiator. Furthermore, even though ridiculous, all three of these "celebrities" exemplify what the most popular forms of Brawndo sponsored entertainment are in the film; pornography, pro-wrestling, crude and violent television, and violent gladiator shows referred to as "rehabilitation." Thus, highlighting Horkheimer & Adorno's interpretation of celebrity, this not just meaning attractive celebrities, but consumerist culture's best models and spokespersons, be it a handsome Hollywood actor, or a hyper-masculine pro-wrestler.

One must ask, if Brawndo has a monopoly on almost every facet of society, this meaning media, industry, and even government, is the driving force of culture in the film, Brawndo? Furthermore, one must wonder if the film is presenting the idea that there is no difference between culture and commodity in the present-day. Scholar Shane Gunster writes, "As a result of the expansionary inertia of the culture industry, the conceptual distance that once separated these two terms is rapidly shrinking: more than ever before, culture exists as a commodity" (Gunster 11). This seems to be the case in the film, for if all of culture revolves around Brawndo and its products, there is then no difference between culture and commodity.

Furthermore, the characters in the film, live in a society of commodification that Gunster describes as inescapable. Gunster writes, "It is impossible to measure with any precision the

extent to which human cultural activities are actually commodified; we can, however, say that the systemic pressure to harmonize culture with commodity is inescapable. As quickly as new cultural styles and technologies emerge, they are courted, seized, and replicated by capital as new modes of producing marketable forms of difference" (Gunster 4). In the film, once again, all culture revolves around Brawndo, and so, whether somebody is watching television, eating at a restaurant, or attending a live event, they are in one way or another participating in a Brawndo sponsored activity. Thus, it seems that attempting to escape from a Brawndo sponsored event or activity is impossible. Another detail about commodity culture that Gunster specifies in the quote above is commodity culture's use of technology. In the film, technologies such as kiosks that serve fast food and identification tattoo scanners are present to cultivate a culture of commodity and sameness further. However, the technologies that might be the most effective in the film, and in reality, at cultivating a culture of commodity and sameness have to be those technologies that make us what Walter Benjamin would describe as absent-minded spectators, media technologies.

Walter Benjamin in his text, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," makes the argument that film, and presently television and other forms of media technology, make us, examiners and critics, but absent-minded ones. Benjamin writes, "The film makes the cult value recede into the background not only by putting the public in the position of the critic, but also by the fact that at the movies this position requires no attention. The public is an examiner, but an absent-minded one" (240-241). To better understand what exactly Benjamin is presenting in the quote above, Benjamin writes, "The masses have a right to change property relations; Fascism seeks to give them an expression while preserving property. The logical result of Fascism is the introduction of aesthetics into political life. The violation of the masses, whom Fascism, with its Fuhrer cult, forces to their knees, has its counterpart in the violation of an

apparatus which is pressed into the production of ritual values" (241). According to Benjamin, technology makes us, absent-minded examiners, and critics. However, as a result, it is much harder for the fascist to seduce us because everybody is a semi-expert now. This meaning everybody is too distracted to be seduced by the fascist.

However, while Benjamin's theories on fascism, culture, and media technology are ones that are incredibly intricate and ground-breaking, what Benjamin is describing does not seem to be the case regarding *Idiocracy*. For, in the film, through the use of media technologies, Brawndo distracts the public in order to make it easier for Brawndo to further push their products and services onto a dazed and subdued population. Television shows and films about violence, sex, and crude humor, does not seem to push humanity away from Brawndo, but instead, seems to push humanity towards Brawndo. Regarding the film's depiction of media technologies such as film and television and how they differ from Benjamin's theories on media technologies, Scholar Gaye Ilhan Demiryol presents how Adorno criticized Benjamin for not going into further detail about how the art and media technology that is film, is also a tool of capitalism. Demiryolm writes, "Adorno was discontented with Benjamin's uncritical acknowledgment of film as an art form and criticized Benjamin for not taking into account 'the negative moment' in popular art. In a letter to Benjamin, Adorno remarked that high art as well as industrially produced consumer art 'bear the stigmata of capitalism, both contain the elements of change . . . Both are torn halves of an integral freedom, to which, however, they do not add up'" (946). So, once again, in the film, it is clear how Brawndo uses media technologies such as film and television to further daze and subdue the population. However, I would like to further examine Adorno's theory of film as a capitalist tool, and *Idiocracy*'s very interesting critique of film.

Scholar Laura D'Olimpio presents how, according to Adorno, film is an artistic medium that subdues its audience. D'Olimpio writes, "Dismissed as elitist, Adorno's concern was that mass-produced and distributed artworks portrayed social norms as immutable reality. If the viewer's imagination cannot enter and engage with messages depicted through the filmic medium, then viewers cannot critique the moral and social status quo as screened; instead, they simply receive it and the depicted stereotypes are reinforced" (623). Furthermore, to better understand how film subdues its audience, I would like to examine how the artistic medium that is film, is ridiculously presented in *Idiocracy*.

In the film, after Joe is released from his hibernation chamber and begins to explore the Earth of 2505, the narrator details as Joe comes across a movie theater, that the number one movie in the country is a movie called "Ass," which is a 90-minute film about some guy's naked behind. Furthermore, while everybody in the theater laughs as the naked behind farts, Joe looks on in complete disbelief about what is being shown on screen. Thus, while the rest of society does not critique the cultural artifact that is being presented to them, Joe is the only one that can question the context of what he is being shown. Furthermore, from his reaction, it is clear that Joe finds something amiss. While Benjamin argues that the logical result of Fascism is the introduction of aesthetics into political life, just as Adorno, Gunster, and *Idiocracy* argue that presently there seems to be no difference between commodity and culture, the film also seems to present the idea that presently there seems to be no difference between aesthetics and politics.

In the film, Brawndo's culture and aesthetics are reflected in politics. Demiryol writes, "When the Enlightenment philosophers dealt with art, it was treated as 'a pedagogical tool, a means of moral persuasion.' In Marxist tradition, in particular, art became an instrument of political instruction" (939). Once again, in the film, President Camacho is a former pro-wrestler

and porn-star, and while pro-wrestling and pornography might not be considered high art, both these mediums do exemplify what is culture in the film. Brawndo's political influence in the film is evident from the way that politicians dress, speak, and even govern. President Camacho and his cabinet dress in a similar fashion, oversized jersey's, shorts, and big gold chains. After Joe realizes that the Secretary of State always ends his sentences with "Brought to you by Carl's Jr," Joe asks him, "Why do you keep saying that?" the Secretary of State responds "Cause they pay me every time I do" (0:41:05-0:41:06). Once again, when assigned to discover why crops are no longer growing, it is revealed to Joe that instead of using water to water crops, farmers have been using Brawndo. Thus, in the film, there seems to be no separation between culture and commodity; also, no separation between aesthetics and politics.

Furthermore, scholar Martin Jay writes, "Still another use draws on the perennial battle between the image and the word. Insofar as the aesthetic is identified with the seductive power of images, whose appeal to mute sensual pleasure seems to undercut rational deliberation, the aestheticization of politics in this sense means the victory of the spectacle over the public sphere" (Jay 45). In the film, the combination of aesthetics and politics is evident in what seems to be society's one-party state. There seems to be no opposition to President Camacho's presidency, and the reason for this seems to be that President Camacho's style of politics that include arena sport like introductions and political speeches filled with pro-wrestling like mannerisms and machine-gun fire are so embedded in the culture of society, that once again, there seems to be no separation between culture, aesthetics, and politics. Thus, it seems that there is no real politics in the society of *Idiocracy*; everything is culture and aesthetics. Another component of modern society that various scholars, writers, and texts touch upon, which I believe to be of equal

importance as theories regarding culture, commodity, aesthetics, and politics, is theories regarding technology.

In the film, the theme of technology is an imperative one. For, depictions of futuristic technology can be found throughout the film—for example, machines that give people scannable identification tattoos, automated kiosks that serve fast food, and a shuttle train that operates inside a gigantic Costco. Thus, one must wonder what the film is attempting to present with its depictions of technology. Is the film attempting to present the idea that a society's technology is a reflection of said society? Alternatively, is the film attempting to present the idea that technology is primary, and that everything else, capitalism, culture, aesthetics, and politics is secondary?

In his work *One-Dimensional Man*, Herbert Marcuse examines the notion that people are characterized and constructed by the material objects they own. Marcuse writes, "The people recognize themselves in their commodities; they find their soul in their automobile, hi-fi set, split-level home, kitchen equipment. The very mechanism which ties the individual to his society has changed, and social control is anchored in the new needs which it has produced" (11). Marcuse like believes modern culture to be a totalitarian system of social control. Marcuse presents that modern industry and technology are powerful tools regarding social control. Marcuse writes:

> Today this private space has been invaded and whittled down by technological reality. Mass production and mass distribution claim the entire individual, and industrial psychology has long since ceased to be confined to the factory. The manifold processes of introjection seem to be ossified in almost mechanical reactions. The result is, not adjustment but mimesis: an immediate identification of the individual with his society and, through it, with the society as a whole. (12)

As is mentioned above, while the crucial themes of culture, consumption, and waste are the primary focus of this piece, one must also be aware of the significant role that "technology" plays in this social conundrum. As Marcuse presents, in modern society, people mostly see themselves in their mass-produced "machines," "gadgets," and "toys," such as automobiles, phones, computers, kitchen equipment, sound systems, and so on.

Significant scholarly influence to Horkheimer, Adorno, & Benjamin, Karl Marx in footnote 4 of chapter 15, "Machinery and Modern Industry," of *Capital*, writes, "Technology discloses man's mode of dealing with Nature, the process of production by which he sustains his life, and thereby also lays bare the mode of formation of his social relations, and of the mental conceptions that flow from them" (Marx). In the quote above, Marx seems to be making the bold declaration that technology has primary functions that are not capitalistic, that "discloses man's mode of dealing with Nature," for example, making a fire or making stone tools. Thus, if we agree with Marx's statement above, technology is primary, and everything else is secondary, and so, could one argue that society in *Idiocracy* is in the state that it is in, primarily, as a result of technology.

One could make this argument. For example, was Elizondo Mountain Dew Herbert Camacho elected as president because he was an extremely famous pro-wrestler and porn-star, or was he elected president because of his eminence on media technologies such as television? Also, is Brawndo a powerful monopoly because they seemly own all industry and government? Or, is Brawndo a powerful monopoly because they seemly own all the means of production? In the film, the issue regarding Brawndo having a monopoly on the food and agriculture industry is not just that Brawndo owns these industries and institutions, but that because Brawndo owns all

the means of production, instead of watering crops with water, it can decide to water crops with Brawndo brand sports-drink, thus causing a food scarcity.

Another interesting depiction of technology in the film is the film's depiction of technology being used to create a surveillance state. In the film, after Joe is released from his hibernation chamber, he is arrested for not having a scannable identification tattoo that is a requirement for all citizens to have. After Joe is arrested, he is forcefully given a scannable identification tattoo, and during the process is accidentally given the name "Not Sure." After Joe breaks out of prison, it is through his tattoo that Joe is found and rearrested. In his text, *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault writes:

> Generally speaking, all the authorities exercising individual control function according to a double mode; that of binary division and branding (mad/sane; dangerous/harmless; normal/abnormal); and that of coercive assignment, of differential distribution (who he is; where he must be; how he is to be characterized; how he is to be recognized; how a constant surveillance is to be exercised over him in an individual way, etc). (Foucault 199)

Regarding the quote above, after Joe is released from his hibernation chamber, he goes to the hospital, and at the hospital, the doctor attending him begins to freak out after he realizes that Joe is what he calls "Unscannable" (0:18:47-0:18:48). This scene demonstrates that in the film if a character is not scannable, they are seen as an extreme other, thus demonstrating the effectiveness of this notion, that if someone is not scannable there is something so wrong with them so much so that it can cause fear among the general population.

In his work *One-Dimensional Man*, Herbert Marcuse examines how people are characterized and constructed by the material objects they own. Marcuse writes, "The people

recognize themselves in their commodities; they find their soul in their automobile, hi-fi set, split-level home, kitchen equipment. The very mechanism which ties the individual to his society has changed, and social control is anchored in the new needs which it has produced" (11). Like his Frankfurt colleagues Horkheimer, Adorno, & Benjamin, Marcuse also believes modern culture to be a totalitarian system of social control. He writes:

> Today this private space has been invaded and whittled down by technological reality. Mass production and mass distribution claim the entire individual, and industrial psychology has long since ceased to be confined to the factory. The manifold processes of introjection seem to be ossified in almost mechanical reactions. The result is, not adjustment but mimesis: an immediate identification of the individual with his society and, through it, with the society as a whole. (12)

As Marcuse presents, using media technology such as film, television, and, more importantly, using industry, Brawno creates a system/society of social control.

While Brawndo misuses and abuses technology for personal gain, one can argue that technology also ends up saving the day. After society switches from sports-drink to water, to water crops, at the instruction of Joe, Brawndo's stock drops to zero; and as a result of this, the company lays off all its employees, which ends up being half the population. Thus a considerable part of the population riots and protests outside the White House where Joe is staying, and because Joe cannot convince the population that crops need time to grow, he is arrested and sentenced to rehabilitation, which in the film means that Joe must participate in a gladiator battle. However, during the gladiator battle, Rita notices that a flower outside the White House has started to bloom, and so, she and Joe's lawyer Frito go to the gladiator battle, where she then tells Frito to take a television camera to a field where crops are beginning to grow. Frito does, and

after the audience at the gladiator battle sees that crops are beginning to grow, the battle is stopped, and President Camacho gives Joe a presidential pardon. Thus, it can be argued that in the film, technology is neither depicted as good or bad, but as a tool that can be used for either good or bad intentions.

Even though *Idiocracy* presents a variety of interesting ideas regarding culture, aesthetics, politics, and technology, the film is supposed to function mainly as a satire comedy, this meaning that no one should view the film expecting to see a highly detailed analysis of modern culture and politics through theories of culture, aesthetics, politics, and technology. However, it is clear that the film presents something tangible to audiences that compels them not just to dismiss the film as a silly comedy, but as a cultural artifact that uniquely presents them with a, at the very least, interesting analysis of modern American culture.

Personally, even though, as I stated above, the film is not supposed to function as a highly detailed analysis of modern culture and politics through theories of culture, aesthetics, politics, and technology, I found it extremely fascinating how the film be it consciously or unconsciously touches upon all these themes, ideas, and concepts, that not only writers and theorists such as Marx and scholars from the Frankfurt School, but many contemporary scholars, theorists, and everyday people pondered and continue to ponder. Furthermore, even though one can argue that the film maybe raises more questions than answers, it is clear that this silly film by the creator of *Beavis and Butt-Head*, *King of The Hill*, and *Office Space* is much more intricate than can appear at first glance.

Idiocracy, at first glance, may appear to be a silly or even crude film about a dystopian future; however, upon further examination, whether consciously or unconsciously, the film provides various critiques regarding issues of modern American culture, consumerist culture,

aesthetics, politics, and technology. These issues not only being issues that scholars and texts pondered decades and even centuries ago, but issues that many contemporary scholars and texts continue to ponder. Once again, the film might raise more questions than answers, these questions that the film raises are seemingly urgent ones. Furthermore, even if one might not agree with the ideas that *Idiocracy* presents, hopefully, one at the very least will agree with the fact that it is now seemingly impossible to discuss theories regarding culture, aesthetics, politics, and technology, as singular, and not connected.

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<div align="center">*Europe's Cannibals*</div>

It seems that discussions regarding cannibalism among the general public, are mostly and widely unexplored; however, when explored, cases concerning non-Western cannibalism seem to be the most presented and discussed, and because of this, one might be more familiar with the cannibalistic practices and customs of indigenous tribes from South America, the Caribbean, and Africa. However, cases concerning Western (American, European, and Oceanic) cannibalism seem to be less presented and discussed. Thus, using a variety of historical and critical texts, I would like to examine issues regarding Western cannibalism, non-Western cannibalism, European corpse medicine, modern medicine, and politics regarding Western and non-Western cannibalism to further, and make more complete, discussions regarding these issues.

In his essay, "Of Cannibals," Michel de Montaigne writes about his experience researching and interacting with the people of the Tupinambá tribe, a group native to Brazil. Montaigne writes about the Tupinambá people's customs regarding communal living, fashion, and war. Moreover, the custom that seems to have gained the most attention, the tribe's cannibalistic custom of cooking and eating their enemies, these enemies being most of the time members of rival tribes. However, Montaigne is quick to remind the reader that if they find the Tupinambá people's cannibalistic customs barbaric and inhumane, European customs such as torturing enemies can also be considered barbaric and inhumane. Montaigne also writes how he very briefly interacted with the Tupinambá people when they visited France and how they found many things about France strange, such as why adult men were taking orders from a kid (the

king), and why the people who lived in extreme poverty did not attack those who lived in extreme wealth. Montaigne ends his essay by proposing that the Tupinambá people and Europeans are not so different from one another. With his essay, Montaigne critically examines the idea that European culture is "superior" to that of the Tupinambá people, who practice cannibalism. However, even though Montaigne's essay briefly touches upon Europe's history of cannibalism, I believe more discussion regarding this issue (European cannibalism) is needed to further strengthen Montaigne's argument.

"Of Cannibals" briefly discusses the Scythians' (an ancient tribe of Southern Serbia) practice of cannibalism for nourishment, Chrysippus and Zeno's (Greek stoic philosophers) argument that one should make use of dead carcasses by feeding on them, and how European physicians would prescribe and employ various forms of cannibalism and corpse medicine for the sake of their patient's health. For many, this topic might be unexplored, for Europe's practice of cannibalism seems to be one that is not highly discussed. However, according to many scholars, it is one that is documented. I will now attempt to provide a brief history of cannibalism in Europe.

Scholar Shirley Lindenbaum writes how medicinal cannibalism, "the ingestion of human tissue, has been reported since the first century AD." Moreover, how Roman philosopher "Pliny the Elder said that drinking human blood was a cure for epilepsy" (85). To further discuss the topic of Roman cannibalism, journalist Maria Dolan writes how "Romans drank the blood of slain gladiators to absorb the vitality of strong young men" (Dolan). However, one cannot thoroughly discuss the issue of European cannibalism without also discussing the issue of mummia. Scholar Karl H Dannenfeldt writes how the mineral pissaphalt:

had long been recognized as a curative drug. In trade it usually was called mummia.

Since the appearance of this natural pissasphalt was similar to that of the bituminous

materials used by the ancient Egyptians in the mummification process, it became the

practice to substitute the materials found in the bodies of the Egyptian mummies for the

natural product. (17)

Dannenfeldt continues and writes that Arabian historian and physician Abd Allatif wrote in 1203

that dried mummy flesh could be used as a substitute for the "hardened bituminous deposits

found in the cavities of the body," moreover, that mummia as a drug had a reputation for treating

a multitude of medical conditions (17). Moreover, Dannenfeldt writes that many began to

mistake mummia (the minerals used in mummies' embalming process) for actual mummy flesh

itself (167); thus, it was not long before ingesting mummy flesh as a remedy became a practice in

Europe. Dannenfeldt continues and writes that 16th century Italian surgeon, Giovanni da Vigo:

defined mummia as 'The flesh of a dead body that is embalmed, and it is hot and dry in

the secong [grade], and therefore it has virtue to incarne wounds and to staunch blood.'

Mumia is included in his list of essential medicines, simple and compound, which a ship's

physician or a doctor living in a village without an apothecary shop should have

available. (171)

Scholar Richard Sugg writes about the Medieval period, "At this stage, the main source of

human flesh for medicine was the bodies of Egyptian mummies, whose dry, powdery flesh

would be crumbled for use against bruises or internal bleeding. 'Mummy' at this time therefore

typically meant 'some medicine', not 'a mummy'" (825). It seems even esteemed medical

experts such as da Vigo were routinely recommending and prescribing mummia or "mummy" as

a medical treatment.

Scholar Maria Cohut writes "that for several hundred years, peaking in the 16th and 17th centuries, many Europeans, including royalty, priests and scientists, routinely ingested remedies containing human bones, blood and fat as medicine for everything from headaches to epilepsy." Cohut continues, "There were few vocal opponents of the practice, even though cannibalism in the newly explored Americas was reviled as a mark of savagery. Mummies were stolen from Egyptian tombs, and skulls were taken from Irish burial sites. Gravediggers robbed and sold body parts." Cohut highlights that while cannibalistic customs in the Americas were reviled as savagery by Europeans, Europeans were stealing mummies and robbing gravesites in order to perform their cannibalistic customs.

Regarding Cohut's point above, of royalty practicing cannibalism as a form of medicine, Dannenfeldt writes that according to sixteenth-century French naturalist and traveler Pierre Belon; King Francis I, and many others in the nation of France, were routine users of artificial mummia, this, of course, being a critical detail that Montaigne, for one reason or another, does not seem to comment on in "Of Cannibals." Dannenfeldt writes:

> Europeans also received "artificial mumia" made by exposing buried dead bodies to the heat of the sun and excavating them later to be ground up into mumia. Belon pointed out that the drug was widely used in France and that King Francis I always carried with him a mixture of mumia and rhubarb to use in an emergency. Belon considered the mumia in use a valueless and even dangerous drug. (175)

If what Cohut and Dannenfeldt write is accurate, it strengthens Montaigne's argument about Western culture vs. non-Western culture. To continue this discussion of medical experts and European royalty's practice of cannibalism and corpse medicine, Dolan writes:

Thomas Willis, a 17th-century pioneer of brain science, brewed a drink for apoplexy, or

bleeding, that mingled powdered human skull and chocolate. And King Charles II of

England sipped "The King's Drops," his personal tincture, containing human skull in

alcohol...German doctors, for instance, prescribed bandages soaked in it for wounds, and

rubbing fat into the skin was considered a remedy for gout. (Dolan)

Regarding "King's Drops," Sugg writes:

At first glance, if you heard that Oliver Cromwell's physician had given a rigorously

distilled essence of human skull to Charles II, you might assume an attempted poisoning.

Matters were in fact a little more complicated. Charles, who had been trained in

chemistry by Nicasius Lefebvre during his French exile, bought the recipe for this

medicine from Cromwell's sometime physician, Dr Jonathan Goddard, (paying up to

£6000 for it) and made it himself in his private laboratory. Charles favoured the medicine

so much that it became commonly known as the King's Drops and was used by eminent

men and women some way into the 18th century (Sugg, Mummies, 64–65). (827)

Sugg's point above is an interesting one, for according to Sugg, if someone or a group of people

had the means and resources to, they could purchase human bodies and body parts for scientific

experiments. Thus, formulating and producing new forms of medicine that, once again, if one

had the means and resources to, could purchase.

Sugg further discusses how Europeans seemed to believe that corpse medicine revolved

around the idea of consuming the human body and the human soul. Moreover, that particular

bodies and souls were considered more potent than others. Sugg writes:

Much of corpse medicine was based on the idea that you could effectively swallow the

human soul. The soul at this time was closely bound up with vitality per se, and more

precisely with the blood. Hence the blood taken fresh at scaffolds for epilepsy (which at

that time was a disease of the soul) and the preferred young, healthy, red-headed male of

Croll's recipe: as well has having more vitality, his hair colour also implied better blood

and flesh. (830)

Sugg further discusses how the European practice of cannibalism and corpse medicine is not

only scientific and medicinal but also social and political. Sugg writes; how in the early 17th

century, Belgiums used the corpses of defeated Spanish soldiers for corpse medicine after a

failed invasion from the Spanish. How the English made the skulls of murdered Irish a

commodity, and how in return, the Irish made the skulls of murdered English a commodity.

Furthermore, a majority of the bodies used for corpse medicine belonged to the poor and

oppressed, and that it was the wealthy who had the most access to this type of medicine (831-

833).

Dolan goes into more detail regarding this issue and quotes Scholar Beth A. Conklin, a

cultural and medical anthropologist, who discusses the cultural and philosophical differences

between Western and non-Western cannibalistic practices. Dolan writes and quotes Conklin:

'The one thing that we know is that almost all non-Western cannibal practice is deeply

social in the sense that the relationship between the eater and the one who is eaten

matters,' says Conklin. 'In the European process, this was largely erased and made

irrelevant. Human beings were reduced to simple biological matter equivalent to any

other kind of commodity medicine.' (Dolan)

Conklin's point is an interesting one, where she describes non-Western cannibalistic practices as

more interpersonal, where the relationship between the consumer and consumed is a more

defined one when compared to Western cannibalistic practices, where the one being consumed can be diminished to just a body part or ingredient.

Dolan continues and quotes Scholar Louise Noble, who points out that in present-day, "modern forms of medicine from the body" is probably more relevant and practiced than it ever was before, moreover, because medicine is first and foremost regarded as an industry, human body parts, and even whole humans, are now regarded as commodities on a global scale. Dolan writes and quotes Noble:

> This is not to say that we have moved on from using one human body to heal another. Blood transfusions, organ transplants and skin grafts are all examples of a modern form of medicine from the body...Her book cites news reports on the theft of organs of prisoners executed in China, and, closer to home, of a body-snatching ring in New York City that stole and sold body parts from the dead to medical companies. It's a disturbing echo of the past. Says Noble, 'It's that idea that once a body is dead you can do what you want with it.' (Dolan)

I believe Dolan and Noble's point to be an interesting one, for it is common during procedures like blood transfusions and skin grafts for the patient not to know or be informed about the donor(s) on a personal level, however regarding organ transplants, the same may apply, or the patient might be informed, or seek out to know more about the donor(s). This comment further enhances Dolan and Noble's discussion regarding "modern forms of medicine from the body." Moreover, one cannot forget that cultural conflict can go either way regarding Western and non-Western cultures. For example, according to scholar George Hoffman, one can imagine that Brazilian natives, when visiting France, most likely had questions as to why the French's cathedrals in the middle of cities were surrounded by much noise and distraction, and even more

pointedly, why the did the French eat the body of their God? (209), Hoffman's point is an interesting one regarding the issue of cultural conflict, for while the notion of perceived Western superiority and the belittlement of non-Western cultures is one that many scholars are familiar with, one cannot forget that many non-Western cultures throughout history and the present have and continue to express skepticism, confusion, and even hostility towards many Western ideals, values, and traditions.

Furthermore, Hoffman points out; there have been many instances where particular Western cultures throughout history and the present have and continue to express skepticism, confusion, and even hostility towards many other particular Western culture's ideals, values, and traditions. Hoffman writes, "Thus the Roman Rite, in the hands of the Protestant polemicists came to represent a desire to perpetuate violence on the body of Christ, a bloodthirstiness that seemed to offer a privileged window onto the general Catholic temperament" (210). According to Hoffman, the act of communion, eating, and drinking the body of Christ, to some in the West, can be a precious and holy practice, while to others in the West, it can represent an act of disrespect and contempt.

Hoffman continues and presents Montaigne's very interesting notion that "the New World natives are born outside of original sin," Hoffman continues:

> a quotation that calls the natives "[m]en fresh sprung from the gods...If the New World
> natives are born outside original sin, then it is clear why they do not need a word for
> "pardon," as he notes at the close of this passage, since they do not appear to have
> experienced the Fall and thus still inhabit their paradise. Or, rather, their "fall"
> figuratively and literally comes from contact with Christians of the Old World, an event

that Montaigne portrays in "Of Coaches" through the unforgettable image of Pizarro

pulling the last of the Inca kings from his litter to the ground. (212)

Montaigne's notion is a fascinating one where he presents that New World natives as having

origins separate from or Abrahamic Europeans, thus characterizing natives as people free from

original sin, and as a result, much more pure and honest people.

This issue regarding humanity, culture, and cultural conflict is a fascinating and complex

one. As presented, both Western and non-Western cultures have histories of practicing

cannibalism; moreover, these cultures also have histories of cannibalistic ritual. Hoffman's

anecdote of Brazilian Natives being in shock at the fact that the French eat their God is a

fascinating one, one where the Natives confusion does not seem to arise from the detail that the

French practice cannibalism, but from the detail that the French, mere humans, feel themselves

worthy of being able to ingest, as Hoffman expertly points out, "their" God.

It is here where I would like to present a notion that is becoming clearer and clearer in the

literature presented, humans, no matter the race, no matter the ethnicity, no matter the

nationality, no matter the religion, and no matter the culture, retain what I would like to refer to

as universal biological truths. All humans have a biological need for nutrition (food); thus, this

biological need resulted in the human practice of consuming meat; thus, it resulted in humans

consuming human meat; thus, humans established rituals and customs linked to the practice of

cannibalism.

Moreover, while the history of Western cannibalistic practices might not be as well-

documented as the history of many non-Western culture's cannibalistic practices, the West does

have a rich and well-documented history regarding Western medical advancements,

achievements, and practices, one where it is documented that Europeans quickly learned and to a

great degree comprehended the idea, that some of the best medicine that can be applied to a human body could come from other human bodies. So, it is ironic that while the West critiques and condemns non-Western cultures for consuming human meat, the Western cultures practice the consumption of humans through methods such as blood transfusions and organ transplants.

Claude Lévi-Strauss further explores Montaigne's discussion of cannibalism by comparing the disease Kuru, which infected many indigenous people in New Guinea during the 20th century, and Creutzfeldt- Jakob disease, which infected many people all across the "Western" world during the 20th century. According to Lévi-Strauss, who admits that the science and research was not the most comprehensive at the time, the disease Kuru infected the indigenous people of New Guinea due to the indigenous people's handling and consumption of contaminated brains for ritual purposes. Moreover, Lévi-Strauss states that after Whites colonized New Guinea and put an end to the indigenous people's practice of cannibalism, cases of Kuru began to decline (84-85). However, Lévi-Strauss continues that around the same time, in places such as; France, Great Britain, New Zealand, and the United States, cases of the disease Creutzfeldt- Jakob, which many compared to Kuru, began appearing. Moreover, once again, even though the science and research was not the most comprehensive at the time, Lévi-Strauss states that many believed the disease to be the result of medical treatments involving hormone injections, where said hormones were extracted from human brains (85-86). Lévi-Strauss states that he is not attempting to make a diagnosis or scientific argument by comparing the two diseases, but that he is attempting to make an analogy regarding Western and non-Western cultures.

According to Lévi-Strauss, Montaigne's "Of Cannibals" is a text that exposes a fundamental flaw in Western thought regarding Western and non-Western culture. Lévi-Strauss writes, "Of Cannibals:"

> opens two perspectives on philosophical thought; and even today, philosophers do not seem to have made a firm choice between them. On the one hand, the philosophy of the Enlightenment subjects all historical societies to its criticism and cherishes the utopian dream of a rational society. On the other, relativism rejects any absolute criterion by which a culture could allow itself to judge different cultures. (74-75)

Whether one agrees or disagrees with either Montaigne and/or Lévi-Strauss, one must acknowledge that the arguments they present are complex ones that cannot be easily defended or debunked.

While research regarding cannibalism, be it Western or non-Western, for the most part, might be considered mostly unexplored or a work in progress, what is documented as Lévi-Strauss comments, provides an interesting narrative and analogy, one which then can be used to demonstrate, as Montaigne points out, how alike Western and non-Western cultures are to each other. In other words, the practice of humans consuming humans seems to be universal. Moreover, while some might find it depressing or even vulgar that the practice of cannibalism is a notion that unites us all of humanity together, one cannot forget that we are, first and foremost, primates.

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Josue J. Salas

ACS 6820 & GERM 6800: Philosophies of Technology

Spring 2020

Short Identifications:

1. *Enframing* (= Gestell): concept by German philosopher Martin Heidegger, mainly, technology reveals the world to us. For example, as a result of technology, to the lumberjack, trees can appear first and foremost as potential lumber.

2. Hammer: Heidegger's hammer, mainly, a hammer is ready-to-hand when one is busy using said hammer, and so, is not theorizing about it. However, said hammer becomes present-at-hand when, for example, said hammer breaks, and then one theorizes about its utility, form, and how it can shape one's identity. Differentiating between the two is important because the latter forces one to reflect on how substantial technology is in shaping human experience.

3. Hermeneutics: concerning hermeneutical phenomenology, things shape how human beings access the world. Thus, things play a substantial role in human experience.

4. Marx's theory of Alienation: human beings feel alienated from other human beings, their labor, themselves, and so on, as a result of their relationship with machinery and other forms of technology, that in a capitalist society, can make them feel like mere instruments of labor.

5. Distraction: according to Walter Benjamin, distractedness is a good thing because everyone is a semi-expert now, and so, because of this, it is much harder for the fascist to seduce us.

6. Manifesto: meant to create action, it is a techne, a writing technology.

7. *Simulacra*: Baudrillard's theory of *Simulacra;* "successive phases of the image." Last phase being an image that has no relation to reality, only itself.

8. *Bioessentialism*: the belief that human traits such as intelligence, creativity, and aggression, are genetic, and so, cannot be the result of experience, culture, or, technology.

9. *GHR*: (Googlization of health research). According to Tamar Sharon, current trend of technology corporations entering the health sector, with the promise of improving "health," through expertise and efficiency in data collecting, managing, and analyzing.

Longer Identifications:

1. According to Simmel, the human being is "the bordering creature who has no border," because the human being is a creature who, in order to connect, first, must separate. So, in order for the human being to make a bridge, first, he or she must separate the two river banks. At the same time, when the human being constructs a door to enclose him or herself from the "uninterrupted unity of the natural being," he or she at any moment can step out of "this limitation into freedom" (*Bridge and Door*).

2. According to Nietzsche, mainly, the news that the printing press mass-produces and distributes is nothing but a stimulant. The news makes us believe that we are informed, and thus, as a result, instead of taking action, the news just makes us want more news. Once again, it does not lead us to act.

3. Don Ihde hopes that in the future, a philosophy of technology will play a more prevalent role regarding ethical issues and the development of technology, for lack of a better word, in the real world. However, this hope is a bit naive because, in the real world, corporations and institutions seem to care more about things such as profit and efficiency; then they do about ethics and philosophy.

4. According to Frase, Communism is a society where, ideally, clean energy robots will carry out a majority of the labor. Thus, human beings will not be required to work, and so, will be freer to pursue other interests and activities. Rentism is a society where mass-scale automation is owned by corporations, and so, for example, humans will have to pay for software so that robots can carry out tasks such as cooking and cleaning.

5. According to Benjamin, technological reproduction destroys the "aura" of a work of art because the more copies there are, the less authentic aesthetic value the original has.

Moreover, according to Benjamin, this concept of "aura" and technology can be used for significant social and political change.

6. In the aftermath of the Olympia scandal in *The Sandman*, couples begin to routinely observe their partners perform activities in an effort to ensure that their partners are not machines. These activities include things such as singing, dancing, and even yawning, ironically, as if programmed to do so.

7. Regarding the film *Ex Machina*, the Turning test is supposed to test for a particular type of intelligence that, in a particular context, can make computer communication indistinguishable from that of human communication. However, what the Turning test does not and cannot test for, is if a computer has consciousness.

8. According to Tamar Sharon, technology corporations are using social media and algorithm technologies to make contemporary society more data-driven. An example of this is the health sector, where companies such as Google and Facebook claim to be using said technologies above to make "health" more data-driven and thus efficient.

9. According to Tamar Sharon, we need to rethink "the public good" in response to recent advances in (statistical) health technologies because the traditional idea that "public good" is incompatible with "digital capitalism" is one that is very limiting and unproductive. New forms of thinking about public good must be initiated, forms of thinking that include objectives such as; "the moral good," innovation, wealth creation, and so on.

III. Essay questions:

1. According to Heidegger, "the essence of technology is by no means anything technological" (*QCT* 1), this meaning that technology is not merely technological, but a human activity, technology is revealing; "Bringing-forth comes to pass only insofar as something concealed comes into unconcealment...The Romans translate this with *veritas*. We say 'truth' and usually understand it as the correctness of an idea" (*QCT* 5). Furthermore, according to Heidegger, *enframing* is when technology reveals, then stands reserved, and then frames things for us. Heidegger's understanding of the essence of technology is innovative because he theorized that technology was not just tools or machines that we use to achieve specific tasks, but about a form of revealing. Fundamentally, technology shapes how things are presented to us and how we relate to things. Technology shapes conscious thought. However, and even more importantly, according to Heidegger, technology also shapes how we unconsciously relate to things, others, and the world.

Heidegger's concerns about consumerism differs from more familiar 19th- and 20th-century concerns about consumerism because Heidegger's concerns about technology and consumerism are ones that have more to do with the concept of "truth" then with the concept of greed. According to Heidegger, where *enframing* dominates, one might believe that *enframing* might be the "truth," and it is the truth, but not in a required or absolute relation. For example, traditional discourse regarding consumerism focuses on concepts such as greed, marketing, consumerist culture, and so on. However, according to Heidegger, in a consumerist culture, the lumberjack will begin to adhere to a truth, yet not absolute truth, that trees are potential lumber. Resulting in an instance of *standing-reserve* (*QCT* 8), where the lumberjack stands in reserve, ready to turn trees into lumber at the direction of the furniture industry. Thus, according to

Heidegger, we must find new ways of looking for the "essence" of things. For example, instead of looking at trees in a manner that a lumberjack would, we should look at trees in a manner that a poet or artist would (*QCT* 19).

2. Marx's theories of technology are equally central to Marx's theories of capital when discussing Marx's diagnosis of capitalist societies. On footnote four, of Chapter fifteen, of *Capital*, Marx writes "Technology discloses man's mode of dealing with Nature, the process of production by which he sustains his life, and thereby also lays bare the mode of formation of his social relations, and of the mental conceptions that flow from them" (Marx). Here it seems that technology comes before capital. Technology has uses that are not capital but instead more primal operations, such as cooking and looking for shelter. For Marx, technology is something primal, the result of man's continuity in nature.

Thus, this means that technology is neither "good" or "bad," and so, when technology causes issues such as alienation, capitalism is the reason. However, Marx argues that we should be optimistic about technology and the possibility of mass-automation because, ideally, the more automation there is, the freer people will be to pursue other interests. In *The Grundrisse*, Marx writes, "The saving of labour time [is] equal to an increase of free time, i.e. time for the full development of the individual, which in turn reacts back upon the productive power of labour as itself the greatest productive power" (Marx 711). However, while I do agree with Marx that technology is primary, I do not share his optimism about technology or the abolition of capitalism. For it seems that, currently, the concepts of technology and capitalism are so intertwined that it would be complicated to abolish capitalism without a multitude of people arguing that by doing so, you are also abolishing the desire for innovation that drives

technological advancements, which as we have discussed is incorrect. For it is man's continuity in nature that first and foremost drives technological advancement, not capitalism.

    3. There is certainly a clear distinction between consciousness and communication, for things such as; radios, billboards, and instruction manuals, communicate ideas. However, we would not describe any of the objects above as having consciousness. Moreover, we must also make the critical distinction between consciousness and communication when discussing the concept of artificial intelligence, for it is evident that computers can and do communicate, however, once again, this is something different from computers having consciousness.

    Brian Christian's book *The Most Human Human* and the film *Ex Machina* both tackle the questions of what it means to be a machine? And at the same time, what it means to be human? Furthermore, both texts also frequently make mention of the Turning test, which is supposed to test for a particular type of intelligence that, in a specific context, can make computer communication indistinguishable from that of human communication. Thus, it is quite incorrect that both texts seem to ponder the question, "can computers have consciousness?", while discussing the Turning test. Regarding *Ex Machina*, one can very well argue that Ava does pass the Turning test, for at times, her communication, it can be argued, is indistinguishable from that of a human being. However, whether Ava has consciousness is a much more complex and challenging question and one that the Turning test cannot currently answer. Thus, communication can be a trait of consciousness. However, once again, communication does not constitute consciousness, for there are things that can communicate that we would not describe as having consciousness. What results from consciousness is something much more complicated I believe.

One feature that I would argue is a result of consciousness is a complex emotion that one might have difficulty expressing. For example, when one achieves something and is congratulated for it, however, one feels undeserving of the acclaim that one is receiving. I believe that the train of thought above is an example of abstract emotional thinking that machines are not capable of producing.

Presentation Sample:
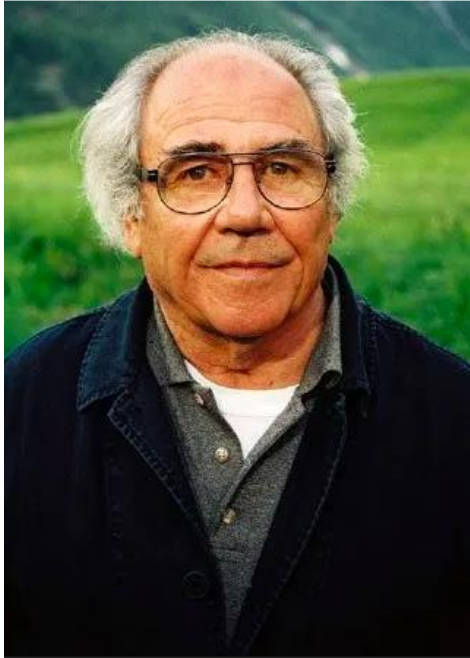
Jean Baudrillard

- Born 1929, in Reim, France – Died 2007, in Paris, France.

- French Scholar (Philosophy, Sociology, Cultural Theory, Film Studies, Semiotics).

- Studied German at the Sorbonne Université in Paris, France.

- PhD in Sociology, University of Paris X in Nanterre, France.

- Works include, *The System of Objects, Symbolic Exchange and Death, Simulacra and Simulation, America,* and *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place.*

"To dissimulate is to pretend not to have what one has.

To simulate is to feign to have what one doesn't have.

One implies a presence, the other an absence" (4).

Successive phases of the image

"it is the reflection of a profound reality;

it masks and denatures a profound reality;

it masks the absence of a profound reality;

it has no relation to any reality whatsoever; it is its own pure simulacrum" (6).

## Virtuality and différance in the age of the hyperreal

"Computers, smart phones and tablets have served as the conduit for crossing into the 'space whose curvature is no longer that of the real, nor that of truth'; moreover, they have become, a priori, the realm of simulation, successfully liquidating all referentiality through their 'artificial resurrection in the systems of signs' (Baudrillard 2004: 2)" (qtd. in Nashef 41).

Deconstructing Consumerist Signs in an Era of Information: The Post-Semiotic Philosophy of Michel Serres and Jean Baudrillard

"We are surrounded by more information than what would have surpassed our wildest imagination only a few decades ago, but none of it has any significance outside of the symbolic domain. Seduction hides this secret and compels us to continue consuming signs" (Moser 109).

BAUDRILLARD REDUX: ANTIDOTES TO INTEGRAL REALITY

"[T]here's something entertaining in the spectacle of the present world racing out of control and ultimately unhinging *itself*, incapable as it is of escaping its own logic, as though it were caught in its own trap. (Jean Baudrillard)" (qtd. in Smith, Clarke, and Doel 325).
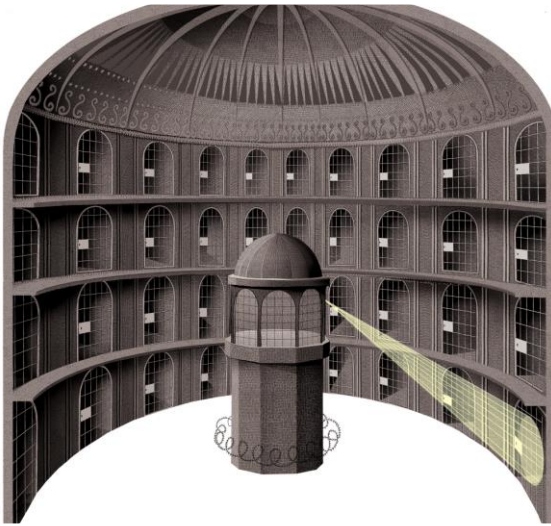
THE END OF THE PANOPTICON

THE WORK OF ART IN THE ELECTRONIC AGE
Interview with *La Sept*

"They can nourish themselves with anything, they can devour anything and, as Benjamin said of the work of art, you can never really go back to the source, you can never interrogate an event, a character, a discourse about its degree of original reality. That's what I call hyper-reality" (146).

Reflection Essay:

Karl Marx's theories are foundational in a multitude of academic fields such as philosophy, sociology, political science, history, and literary studies. Moreover, while it is evident that there is a multitude of scholarship in academia presently regarding Marx's theories of capitalism, capital, labor, and so on, it is quite surprising that scholarship regarding Marx's theories of technology is not getting the proper publicity that is warranted. On footnote four of Chapter fifteen of *Capital*, Marx writes, "Technology discloses man's mode of dealing with Nature, the process of production by which he sustains his life, and thereby also lays bare the mode of formation of his social relations, and of the mental conceptions that flow from them" (Marx). After reading this footnote, one must ponder the crucial question, "is Marx saying that technology is primary, and thus, comes before capitalism?" And if one wants to answer "yes," then this quote completely changes the dynamic of much discourse being had in and outside academia regarding Marx and Marxist theory.

As I mentioned above, currently, Marx's theories are foundational to many academic disciplines, however, can one argue that if the fundamental topic of technology is not included in current scholarship about Marx, that said scholarship lacks a fundamental understanding of Marx? I believe that if a particular work of scholarship does not want to make this crucial component of Marx, the focus of its text, this is fine, however, to ignore or not be aware of this vital component of Marx, is not academically sound. Thus, moving forward, whenever engaging with scholarship regarding Marxist theory, I will now have to pay special attention to what said scholarship considers about philosophies of technology, this meaning that when completing research regarding scholarly interests of mine such as capital, capitalism, and culture, it is now necessary that philosophies of technology be included on this list also.

For example, for my ENG 6070: Theory, Methods, and Criticism course, we were assigned to read Max Horkheimer & Theodor W. Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, and Walter Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." Moreover, I read both pieces above to better understand Horkheimer's, Adorno's, and Benjamin's theories of culture, however because of my enrollment in this course, I also read both pieces above to better understand Horkheimer's, Adorno's, and for a second time, Benjamin's theories of technology. Furthermore, Horkheimer, Adorno, and Benjamin's theories of culture and technology will be a vital component of my ENG 6070 seminar paper, which will be an analysis of the film *Idiocracy's* ideas and theories on culture, politics, and technology.

Idiocracy is a comedy film that essentially tells the story of an "average" American soldier, and a prostitute, who as a result of a military experiment gone wrong, are left inside hibernation chambers for 500 years, and so, as a result, are released from their chambers in the year 2505, and quickly realize that humanity is much dumber than it was in the past. Of course, this is reflected in the current population's culture, one example being that the president of the United States of America is now a man named Elizondo Mountain Dew Herbert Camacho, who, before being elected as president, was an extremely popular pro-wrestler and porn-star. Furthermore, while it is clear that this detail above is a critique of anti-intellectual American culture, one can argue that it is also an examination of technology. For, Is the joke of this detail supposed to be that a pro-wrestler and porn-star was elected president? Or is the point of this detail supposed to be that a pro-wrestler and porn-star was elected president because of his prominence on media technologies such as film and television? Thus, introducing the argument; is culture primary? Or is technology?

Moreover, in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Benjamin writes, "The film makes the cult value recede into the background not only by putting the public in the position of the critic, but also by the fact that at the movies this position requires no attention. The public is an examiner, but an absent-minded one" (240-241). According to Benjamin, as a result of media technologies such as film and television, everyone is a semi-expert now, this meaning an examiner and critic, however, an absent-minded one. Moreover, as a result of this, it is much harder for the fascist to seduce us because everybody is too distracted to be seduced. However, what Benjamin is describing does not seem to be the case regarding *Idiocracy*, for in the film, through the use of media technologies such as television and film, the mega-corporation Brawndo distracts the public in order to make it easier for them to push their products and services onto a disoriented population. Thus, I intend to use Horkheimer & Adorno's theories on culture and commodity, and Benjamin's theories on aesthetic and politics to better understand what the satirical-comedy film *Idiocracy* is attempting to present about modern culture, politics, and technology, and whether these ideas align with those of Horkheimer, Adorno, and Benjamin, or provide alternative theories.

Thesis Proposal

WORKING TITLE:

Primitive Machines: The Humanity of Science Fiction Films

By Josue J. Salas

INTRO / LITERATURE REVIEW:

In her article titled "Becoming More (than) Human: Affective Posthumanisms, Past and Future,"

Myra J. Seaman quotes scholar Caroline Walker Bynum and writes:

> Bynum wonders for us all, 'Are we genes, bodies, brains, minds, experiences, memories,
>
> or souls?' (2001, 165). As reflected in popular culture depictions of the posthuman, this
>
> uncertainty is responded to with the assertion that although all of these possible features
>
> of our person can be modified (except, it is maintained, 'the soul'), the experiences of the
>
> body—perceived through sensation and processed through emotion—remain the locus of
>
> individual identity. (249)

These insights, which are central to much scholarship on identity, are congruent with

contemporary versions of posthumanism. Their understanding of the premodern and the

posthuman reflect concepts that motivate my thesis, which seeks to understand how the

posthuman functions in relation to ethics and identity.

In *RoboCop* (1987), Detroit Police Officer Alex Murphy, after being brutally murdered

by a gang of violent criminals, is resurrected by Omni Consumer Products as RoboCop (a

powerful law enforcement cyborg). While RoboCop at first adheres to his programming and

excels at combating crime all over the city, he begins to have dreams and memories of his past

life as a husband and father. As a result, he has an identity crisis, as he cannot determine whether

he is man or machine. Furthermore, the film seems to provide no exact resolution to this conundrum, e.g. when RoboCop discovers that Omnicorp president Dick Jones provided funding to the gang that killed him, he cannot arrest Jones because his programming does not allow him to arrest Omnicorp executives.This does not deter him, in a state of intense anger and sorrow, from actively going against his program to exact revenge on Jones.

In *Terminator 2: Judgement Day* (1991), through the Connor family's experience, we witness humanity's struggle to survive a nuclear holocaust and mass-genocide implemented by advanced forms of military technology after said machines become self-aware. Even though the film does an excellent job of critiquing human ignorance and brutality, humanity is still framed as primacy, meaning that technology is still framed as an extension of humanity, which scholar Friedrich Kittler argues is an incorrect and outdated concept. In the article titled "Radical Post-Humanism: Friedrich Kittler and the Primacy of Technology," scholar Nicholas Gane writes about Kittler:

> His approach refuses to read technology as something socially produced (the humanistic Marxist reading) or as something that is relevant insofar as it is subjectively meaningful (the Weberian line). Rather, it analyses the very technologies that make both the social and meaning possible...This approach rests on the construction of the 'human' (which is now something that is to be explained rather than presupposed) from analysis of technologies (for example, operating systems and electronic circuitries), rather than the reverse. (38)

It seems, according to Kittler, when discussing issues regarding technology, one would be incorrect to refer to the concept of humanity in a manner that suggests it precedes technology. In other words, it is the concept of technology that has primacy.

In *Blade Runner* (1982), Nexus-6 model replicants (bioengineered humanoids initially created for slave labor) are equipped with a fail-safe device, a four-year life span to prevent replicants from revolting against humans on a massive scale. However, a replicant's short life span does in no way, shape, or form prevent blade runners from pursuing and retiring (killing) them. In the article titled "Blade Runner and the Right to Life," scholar Eli Park Sorensen examines the film's consideration of the concept that is the "right to life." In other words, the film's depiction of non-human beings (replicants) battling against humanity in an effort to secure "rights," the most significant being, the right to life.

RESEARCH PURPOSE / STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

RoboCop, *Terminator*, *Terminator 2: Judgement Day*, *Blade Runner*, and *Blade Runner 2049* are films that examine themes such as humanity's relationship to technology, the dangers of technology, what it means to be human, and so on. Moreover, while each film tells a unique narrative, one thing each film has in common, whether intentional or not, is its critique of humanity as faulty, flawed, and unsound when compared to their machine counterparts. In *RoboCop*, taking place in a dystopian, crime-ridden Detroit, common street criminals are portrayed as primitive, violent, and barbaric. However, I will address the question: "What is it that separates a common street criminal's crime from the crimes of Dick Jones?" I will argue that even though Jones is not committing the murders, he is the one funding them. This will also then be addressed by means of a critique of capitalism. With regard to "funding," where is the onus of guilt? Further, I will address the question what do blue-collar (violent) and white-collar (non-violent) crimes have in common? The answer, I will argue, is a technology that Marx believed precedes "humanity:" Capitalism. So, once again, how do the humans of *RoboCop* decide to tackle the significant problem that is crime in the city of Detroit? They decide to monetize the

problem by manufacturing a product (RoboCop) that, if found successful, will be manufactured and sold to police departments and militaries all around the world, because at the end of the day, crime does pay.

In the two *Terminator* films I have selected, the battles between the film's protagonists and the machines can make the viewer forget who the film's real villain is, for like the 101 remarks about humanity in the second film, "it is in your nature to destroy yourselves" (1:07:35-1:07:37). In the film, Dr. Miles Bennett Dyson, the researcher responsible for creating Skynet: intelligent computer systems, exemplifies human innovation and human ignorance. Dyson is aware that he is researching advanced forms of technology (the 101's microprocessor and arm), advanced forms of technology that he and Cyberdyne hope to one day manufacture and distribute, or in other words, monetize. Moreover, Dyson should not be too ignorant of the fact that if he and his employer, Cyberdyne, were to monetize this creation (Skynet) successfully, one of Cyberdyne's biggest potential customers would be the United States military. In order for this scenario and the utter ruin that can result from it to become evident to Dyson, he needs one of the actual killing machines he helps create to travel back in time and literally say it to his face. Sarah ends the film in an optimistic and hopeful tone, proclaiming if a Terminator can learn the value of human life, so can humanity. Yet, one cannot forget that the model 101 who valued human life, was programmed to protect John Conner's life. Furthermore, while this film made evident that a Terminator can be programmed to destroy or protect human life, can the same be said about humanity?

Regarding *Blade Runner* and *Blade Runner 2049*, in the first film, the most significant contrast between humans and replicants (bioengineered humanoids initially created for slave labor, who have a four-year life span) presented is not their difference in strength and athletic

ability, but their form of creation/procreation. When replications are "manufactured," at their

inception, they are adults with no prior memories. However, as Roy states at the end of the film,

this does not prevent replicants from creating memories, memories that, in some cases, they

believe to be much more extraordinary than those of humans. Moreover, the film clarifies that

these "machines" have emotions; they are capable of friendship, fear, doubt, empathy, and love.

Thus, what is the viewer supposed to make of the fact that humans are essentially hunting down

replicants because replicants are attempting to escape slavery? Moreover, is it not ironic that

Deckard retires the replicants, only to fall in love with a replicant, flee with her, and have it

implied that he might be a replicant himself? Thus, the question becomes, why is it that humans

believe themselves to be superior to replicants?

In *Blade Runner 2049*, this issue of creation/procreation is tackled head-on when it is

revealed that Rachael gave birth to a child. Thus, further complicating the question, what is it

that separates humans from replicants? K is a more advanced replicant than the ones seen in

Blade Runner, and while it seems that obedience is ingrained in his programming, he still feels

emotions such as love, fear, and doubt. Moreover, K's journey is one that is emotionally taxing.

After his Joi's death and the revelation that he is not Rachael's child, his emotional pain is

visible; however, he still decides to save Deckard and reunite him with his daughter, thus

demonstrating that his sense of compassion and empathy might be more than that of the average

human.

METHODOLOGY:

Utilizing theories by scholars such as:

- Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, who examine how a subject can become a "desiring-

   machine" through social machines, arguing that desire does not have its origin in the

unconscious but instead is produced by productive forces that are all interconnected, and thus in order to destroy a machine, be it a desiring or social one, concurrently both productive forces must be destroyed.

- Friedrich Kittler, who argues that technology is not a subject of humanity, but instead, humanity is a subject of technology, meaning that technologies such as the gramophone, film, and the typewriter constructed "the human," not the other way around; e.g., film is not a reflection of human thought, but instead, human thought is a reflection of film.

- Bernard Stiegler, who examines how the process of techne, e.g., using and creating tools, constructed the human just as much as the process of episteme, e.g., the pursuit of knowledge, and argues that humanity and technology evolved in harmony; in other words, tools created humanity while simultaneously, humanity created tools.

I intend to examine how the five films I have selected reinforce and/or critique traditional notions regarding "the human."

CHAPTER OUTLINE:

I. *A Brief History of the Philosophy of Technology*

II. *Before the Man-Machine*: Discussion of *RoboCop*, capitalism as technology, and the commodification of law-enforcement.

III. *Terminator, and the End of Humanity*: Discussion of *Terminator and Terminator 2*, "evil" technology, and the humans as a killing machine.

IV. *Blade Runner, and the Birth of the Android*: Discussion of *Blader Runner and Blade Runner 2049*, human empathy vs. empathy, and the birth of the "post-human."

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Josue J. Salas

Primitive Memories: The Humanity of the *Blade Runner* Films (Work in Progress)

Introduction: rationale for paper…distinction between human and machine/etc.

In the 1982 film, *Blade Runner*, which is set in a futuristic, orientalist 2019 Los Angeles, retired policeman/blade runner, Rick Deckard, is hired by his former police department supervisor, Harry Bryant, to track down and retire (kill) four Nexus-6 model replicants (bioengineered humanoids initially created for slave labor, who have a four-year life span, and who are now banned from Earth after having revolted in off-world colonies). In his recruitment of Deckard, Bryant shows Deckard footage of one of the replicants failing a Voight-Kampff test (a test that, through a subject's emotional response to a set of questions, can determine whether said subject is a human or replicant). The justification for recruiting Deckard is that the Nexus # replicants have become more human than machine due to memories that aid in their development of affect.

A short while later, while visiting Dr. Eldon Tyrell, the CEO of Tyrell Corporations, the corporation that manufactures replicants, Dr. Tyrell tells Deckard that he would like Deckard to administer the Voight-Kampff test on his assistant, Rachael, in order for Tyrell to confirm the test's accuracy. Deckard does, and the results of the test turn out to be that Rachael is a replicant, who does not seem to know that she is a replicant; Dr. Tyrell explains that Racheal is an experiment, a replicant who was given artificial memories. A short while later, Rachael visits Deckard to prove that she is human; Deckard tells her that her memories (implants) are those of Tyrell's niece, Racheal leaves in tears. Deckard tracks down and retires one of the replicants. However, Bryant tells Deckard that there is one more replicant he will need to retire, Racheal, because she has fled from Tyrell Corporations. Later, one of the replicants ambushes and disarms

Deckard; however, Rachael appears and saves Deckard by shooting the replicant. At Deckard's apartment, Deckard promises to Rachael that he would not track her down if she were to flee. He tries to kiss her, but when she rejects his advances and tries to leave, he forcibly pins her and kisses her until she submits. Deckard then tracks down the two remaining replicants (Roy and his girlfriend Pris), who are hiding in the apartment of J.F Sebastian, a bioengineer whom Roy and Pris manipulate into helping them. Deckard finds Pris alone and retires her. Roy then arrives at the apartment, and after seeing Pris' dead body, begins to attack Deckard. Roy easily overpowers Deckard, and while fighting on the apartment's rooftop, Deckard tries to escape by jumping from the apartment's rooftop to another, he cannot, and while dangling from the rooftop, Roy effortlessly makes the jump and helps Deckard up to safety. With his final moments of life, because his short life span is coming to an end, Roy tells Deckard that all of his memories "will be lost in time, like tears in rain." Deckard then quickly goes back to his apartment to retrieve Rachael so they can flee. As they leave, though, he sees a unicorn origami, most likely left behind by Gaff, a police officer who, throughout the film, works with Bryant and Deckard, which is supposed to imply that somehow, Gaff knows about Deckard's dreams.

At first, the film characterizes the replicants as stoic killers and conspirators; however, after their mission to expand their lifespan fails, through Roy's character, it becomes clear that Replicants are not programmable machines but living beings with emotions, desires, and personalities. Moreover, this point is further highlighted after the film proposes that its protagonist, the seemingly flawed yet all too human Deckard, might also be a replicant. So, it is clear that the film wants us to ask what makes the film's humans, humans? Moreover, what is it that makes the film's replicants, replicants? After viewing the first film, one might want to answer that the answer is simply that human beings are biologically (re)produced, while

replicants are manufactured. However, the film's sequel makes sure to address and complicate this matter further.

In the 2017 film, *Blade Runner 2049*, 30 years after the events of *Blade Runner*, a Nexus-9 replicant, K, working for the Los Angeles Police Department as a blade runner, is ordered to retire a Nexus-8 replicant, Sapper Morton. After K retires Sapper, he looks around Sapper's home/farm and finds a box of skeletal remains under a tree. Upon further inspection at a lab, K and his supervisor, Lt. Joshi, discover that the remains belong to Racheal, from the first film, and that she died while giving birth. Lt. Joshi orders K to find and retire the replicant child before its discovery leads to trouble. K visits the Wallace corporation (the corporation now in charge of manufacturing replicants) to gather more information. However, unbeknownst to K, the Wallace Corporation's CEO, Niander Wallace, and his replicant personal assistant Luv; are devising a plan to find and capture the replicant child for themselves through K's investigation. K returns to Sapper's home/farm to look for more clues, and he finds a tree with the date 6-10-21 etched on to it, which he recognizes from an artificial (implanted) childhood memory he has of him as a child hiding a wooden toy horse (the date is on the bottom of the horse) in a furnace, from a group of children chasing him. K tells his Wallace Corporation manufactured holographic girlfriend Joi about the date; Joi tells him that this could be proof that he was born and not created. According to LAPD records, twins were born on 6-10-21, identical in DNA except for sex; however, only the boy is alive. The records lead K to an orphanage; however, he finds that someone has tampered with the orphanage records. Moreover, upon further inspection, he realizes that the orphanage's furnace room is identical to the one of his artificial childhood memories. He looks for the wooden toy horse, and to his surprise, finds it. He then visits a replicant memory designer, Dr. Ana Stelline. K explains his case to her, and after

inspecting his memory, she confirms to K that his memory is not artificial but something that actually happened; this makes K infer that he is the son of Deckard and Racheal. K fails a baseline test, which determines whether replicants have gone rouge or not, but because he tells Lt. Joshi that he killed the replicant child, she gives him 48 hrs to get back on track. K puts Joi on a mobile device and tracks Deckard, who is now living in a ruined Las Vegas. Deckard explains to K that he tampered with the child's birth records and left it in the custody of a replicant freedom movement in order to protect it. Luv and some henchman then ambush Deckard's home; they kidnap Deckard, but not before destroying the mobile device the Joi was saved on, and leaving an injured K to die. K is then rescued by a replicant freedom movement whose leader, Freysa, tells K that she was there when Rachael gave birth and that the child was a girl; a disappointed K deduces that the child is Dr. Stelline, who implanted her memories in replicants whose memories she designed. Freysa orders K to kill Deckard so that Deckard cannot lead Wallace to Dr. Stelline or the freedom movement. After a meeting where Deckard tells Wallace that he will not help him with his experiments or projects, Wallace orders Luv to take Deckard off-world to be interrogated and tortured. K intercepts the shuttle trip, kills Luv, kills all the henchman onboard, and is able to save and stage Deckard's death; however, K leaves the battle mortally wounded. K takes Deckard to Dr. Stelline's office, gives him the wooden toy horse, and tells him to go inside and meet his daughter. Deckard goes inside while K lies down on the outside steps off the office, watching the snowdrop. He seems to go motionless.

In *2049*, after it is revealed that a replicant, Rachel, biologically gave birth to another being, arguments regarding human reproduction vs. replicant manufacturing as a critical difference between humans and replicants seem to fall apart. Thus, arguments regarding what separates humans from replicants seem to become more abstract. According to scholars Myra J.

Seaman and Caroline Walker Bynum, discussions regarding posthumanism, e.g., what separates humans from replicants, have concluded that sensation and experience are what produce our individual identities. Scholar Myra J. Seaman quotes scholar Caroline Walker Bynum and writes:

> Bynum wonders for us all, 'Are we genes, bodies, brains, minds, experiences, memories, or souls?' (2001, 165). As reflected in popular culture depictions of the posthuman, this uncertainty is responded to with the assertion that although all of these possible features of our person can be modified (except, it is maintained, 'the soul'), the experiences of the body—perceived through sensation and processed through emotion—remain the locus of individual identity. (249)

Moreover, while *Blade Runner* and *2049* examine discussions regarding genes, bodies, brains, and minds, it is the topics of "experience" and "memory" that the film series critically examines.

In *Blade Runner*, it is established that for many in the film's fictional world, the most significant difference between humans and replicants is that humans possess "real" (natural) memories while replicants possess "fake" (artificially implanted) memories. However, while this point of fake memories can be demonstrated through Rachel's character, who is distraught to learn that her childhood memories (and more importantly, past experiences as a child) are not "real," it is the character Roy that provides a counterargument to the point above. Roy is not interested in discussions regarding implants or artificial memories, for he is much more interested in the natural memories and experiences he possesses, the ones that he acquired living as a replicant.

In the famous "tears in the rain" monologue that Roy recites before his death in *Bladerunner*, he is essentially telling Deckard that during his short time alive, he has seen

extraordinary things that "you people," meaning humans, would not believe. In the film, Roy states:

> I've seen things you people wouldn't believe. Attack ships on fire off the shoulder of Orion. I watched C-beams glitter in the dark near the Tannhäuser Gate. All those moments will be lost in time, like tears in rain. Time to die. (1:46:23-1:47:11).

According to scholar Aaron Bady, who views that film as a Space-Western, with this monologue, Roy is attempting to tell Deckard that he is a better cowboy than him, and as a result, in a sense, more alive than he is. Bady writes:

> In any case, before Rutger Hauer adlibbed the best parts of his 'tears in the rain' speech, the most famous scene in the movie was his effort to convey to poor Deckard the enormity of the off-world adventures that 'you people' would never dare to see. In the original script, he even used the word 'frontiers'...he is finally, in his mortality, overcome by pity. Deckard will never see the northern lights; he'll never see a hawk on the wing. (Bady)

This seems to be the critical point of Roy's monologue. Even though Roy is a replicant, he believes his experiences and memories to be much more valuable than not just those of Deckard, but most, if not all, of humanity. Moreover, Roy seems to understand that these memories and experiences were attainable to him precisely because he was a replicant.

However, if one is confused by Roy's decision to spare Deckard, according to scholar Benjamin Schrader, Roy spares Deckard because he believes the concept of memory to be the piece that unites humans and replicants. Schrader writes:

> He saves Deckard as a final act of compassion, not out of sympathy, but rather because memory is a dangerous weapon. This highlights a tension between history (or lack

thereof) and memory as Batty hopes to construct a lieux de mémoire—in other words, a

symbolic heritage for replicants—through Deckard that could help future replicants.

(820)

To better understand Pierre Nora's "lieux de mémoire," Nora writes:

Memory installs remembrance within the sacred; history, always prosaic, releases it

again. Memory is blind to all but the group it binds—which is to say... there are as many

memories as there are groups, that memory is by nature multiple and yet specific;

collective, plural, and yet individual. History, on the other hand, belongs to everyone and

to no one, whence its claim to universal authority. Memory takes root in the concrete, in

spaces, gestures, images, and objects; history binds itself strictly to temporal continuities,

to progressions and to relations between things. Memory is absolute, while history can

only conceive the relative. (9)

 Furthermore, if one is still confused by why Roy believes that if he spares Deckard, Deckard

will help future replicants, according to scholar Sean Redmond, if one agrees with the theory that

Deckard is a replicant, perhaps Roy spared Deckard because while Deckard was not aware that

he was a replicant, a "converted" Roy was. Redmond writes, "Batty emerges as a converted

religious figure: persecuted, looking for redemption, who decides to save his replicant nemesis

from near certain death, rather than 'retire' him. Not only is he finally more human than Tyrell,

his maker, he is ultimately more spiritual" (82). According to Redmond, a persecuted and angry

Roy, instead of killing Deckard, who, whether a human or a replicant, killed his girlfriend and is

attempting to kill him, by sparing Deckard demonstrates what many believe to be a concept

exclusive to humanity, empathy. However, if Roy spares Deckard because he figures out that

Deckard is a replicant, this makes Roy's feelings of empathy much more complex because he is

then not forgiving someone different from him, someone who cannot understand him or his experiences; instead, he is sympathizing with someone who he is aware will find themselves in a situation similar to his, sooner or later, which is what happens in the sequel film.

Schrader continues and discusses two critical concepts, that of cyborgian autonomy and intergenerational trauma. Schrader writes:

So, what happens when cyborgs begin to form their own interests, wants, and needs? What happens when they wish to form their own communities? What happens when they no longer wish to spend their time carrying out the wants and needs of their masters/creators?...The anxieties and traumas of the past often show up in the present, which can be seen as intergenerational trauma. The transference of trauma from one generation to another was first studied after the Holocaust; however, there are much broader examples of this trauma ranging from how war veterans can pass trauma on to their children to systems of colonization. (824)

These issues regarding cyborg autonomy and intergenerational trauma is demonstrated through both Deckard and K in *Blade Runner 2049.*

In *Blade Runner 2049*, Deckard finds himself in the same position that Roy does in the first film, as a fugitive on the run; first, for escaping and providing refuge to a wanted replicant, Rachel, and second, known only to a selected few, for being the father of the only known biologically produced replicant. Thus in *2049*, Deckard and the film's protagonist, K, find themselves in a bleaker dystopia than the original film's replicants. K is a replicant, all too replicant. To those in the LAPD and society, he is nothing but a highly intelligent machine, a highly intelligent machine that many are aware possesses the ability to feel and process complex

emotions; however, if K expresses a complex emotion of any kind, his punishment can be a severe one.

In *2049*, the replicants are aware that their implanted memories, moreover, it seems, are openly encouraged to use their implants as emotional cushions (once again, Rachel being the prototype). Schrader writes:

> The film mentions that the memories that are specifically implanted into the replicants, work by providing '...some good memories to remember,' amidst all the trauma they may face as slaves. However, there is still the fear of traumatic events negatively affecting the replicants, as a new 'post-traumatic stress test' (similar to the old one in the original *Blade Runner*) was created to measure voice and facial affects in response to certain words and phrases. When Joe is no longer at 'baseline,' or within the acceptable range, he is given 24 hours to 'get his shit together,' or he will be 'retired.' (826)

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