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THE CYBORG AS AN EMANCIPATORY FIGURE: THE FEMALE CYBORG IN BLADE RUNNER, BLADE RUNNER 2049, AND EX MACHINA

by
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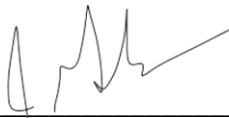## THE CYBORG AS AN EMANCIPATORY FIGURE: THE FEMALE CYBORG IN *BLADE RUNNER*, *BLADE RUNNER 2049*, AND *EX MACHINA*

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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Lara Hussein Jubeily   for   Master of Arts
                                      Major: English Literature

Title: The Cyborg as an Emancipatory Figure: The Female Cyborg in Blade Runner, Blade Runner 2049 and Ex Machina

With the recent success of shows such as *Westworld* (2016), the figure of the female cyborg is slowly seeping back into our film screens and our unconscious. This image of a human/machine hybrid is not something new for audiences. However, the recent depiction of the female/machine hybrid may be different. Since its establishment as a bonafide genre in film, science fiction films have more or less given female characters marginal roles, with the cyborg being one of the figures these females commonly occupy. In its basic definition, the cyborg is a figure whose physical abilities surpass those of humans due to advanced technological and mechanical elements built within it. This research project aims to outline whether or not there has been a shift in the representation of female cyborgs – one that makes use of Haraway's cyborg metaphor and Laboria Cuboniks' Xenofeminist manifesto– in recent science fiction films. Through a close reading of *Blade Runner* (1982), *Blade Runner 2049* (2017), and *Ex Machina* (2015), I aim to show whether or not this shift embodies the principles of cyber-feminist discourse. Moreover, the study also discusses the significance of the figure of the cyborg as a means of emancipation for feminists, in relation to the films, and reflects on what this shift could mean for the future of film and cyber-feminist discourse in general.

I first begin by outlining the genealogy of the cyborg in Chapter 2 by tracing its appearance in Greek mythology. I note the ways in which man-made animate beings have accompanied us since early art and literature, as well as go through the etymology of the word "cyborg" and how its relates to its depiction. I then give a thorough definition of the cyborg metaphor in Haraway's, and others', discourse. I narrow my definition to the female cyborg specifically and trace its depiction in early to contemporary cinematic works. I end the chapter by going through Laura Mulvey's *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1975) and determining its relevancy in analyzing science fiction film. In Chapter 3, I analyze both Ridley Scott's 1982 *Blade Runner* and Denis Villeneuve's 2017 sequel *Blade Runner 2049*, with the purpose of discerning how both depicted the female cyborg and if that depiction has evolved or reflected the idea of the cyborg metaphor and its emancipatory power. In Chapter 4 I shift my analysis to Alex Garland's 2014 *Ex Machina* to determine if and how the film lives up to the praise it received as a feminist science fiction film that favors the female. My objective through these three chapters is

to deduce whether recent science fiction cinema has made use of the cyborg metaphor to yield depictions of female cyborgs that reflect the themes of emancipation and individuality.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION & LITERATURE REVIEW

During the Fall/Winter Milan Fashion Week of 2018, the Gucci models walked the runway in fringe designs, elaborate layers, crystal headpieces, body chain sheaths, and nipple tassels. Some models carried replicas of their own head, another clutched a dragon, while one featured a third eye on her forehead. Creative Director Alessandro Michele's vision entitled *Gucci Cyborg* was inspired from Donna Haraway's *The Cyborg Manifesto*. Michele's runway transcended stereotypical cyborg references such as robots and biomechatronic body parts, and instead reflected the cyborg metaphor that Haraway speaks of – one that entails emancipatory powers to the identity of the individual.

The runway show notes reveal what those powers seek emancipation from. The *Gucci Cyborg* manifesto for the show begins with a summary of Foucault's ideas on disciplinary power. The objective of disciplinary power is to impose a certain identity on the individual. That task is carried out by creating binary categories in order to define what is normal/abnormal and thus regulate the subject. The regulative strategies are so threatening that the subject voluntarily chooses to abide to the identity frameworks they are put it. Thus, the regulation of people uses the concept of identity as a tool of bio-political control.

The notes then juxtapose the ideas of disciplinary power and forced identity by defining identity as unnaturalist and mutable. The first step of exploring the endless possibilities of identity is to understand how things are socially built, after which people

can begin to adopt their own identities. Haraway's hybrid cyborg is a figure celebrated for its ability to overcome the dualism and dichotomy of identity, in that through its paradoxical nature that at once is at odds with any category grid yet combines all of them. The Gucci Cyborg is described as a biologically indefinite, culturally aware, post-human creature that transgresses normative discipline. Thus, from there the collection was inspired and designed to feature hybrid designs, cross-cultural references, clashing aesthetics and symbols that evoke the possibility of being liberated from the confines of the natural conditions we are forced into.

The Gucci runway show is just one example of the recurring cyborg references in popular culture. For a figure that has accompanied us for many years, it still manages to find relevancy, especially recently as an emancipatory figure. Even though it was born out of science fiction literary works, the cyborg is most commonly now presented on screens, whether television or cinema. The focus of this study in particular is the depiction of the female cyborg in cinematic works.

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To support my analysis I refer to various works of criticism on feminism, technology, and film. The fields of science and technology have been thoroughly discussed as gendered fields in which knowledge is created to support patriarchal capitalistic systems and create differences in race and gender. This is something Donna Haraway (1989) discusses in *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science* in which she writes on the history of primatology and calls for a social construction of scientific knowledge. She emphasizes the subjective and personal perspectives that underlie the work in a field that is gendered and west-oriented. According to Haraway (1989), western concepts of gender and race have shaped our understanding of the origin and nature of humans, society, family, and marriage. Therefore, she examines the works of male and female investigators within the field of science to determine whether sex influences the outcomes. She reiterates the same notion in her later work *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women* (1991) in which she call into question the role feminists play in creating knowledge. Haraway argues that scientists studying primates created bio-political narratives on human behavior within the context of a patriarchal and capitalist hierarchical division of labor. For example, the assertion that males are more dominant and aggressive than females reinforces unjust systems in society. She therefore urges feminists to create a liberating science based on different principles.

For Haraway, one way to achieve liberation is to embrace technology's ability to erase the boundaries that separate humans. Biotechnical developments obscured the lines existing between humans, nonhumans, and machines. This for Haraway (1991) introduces a possible structural basis between diverse groups of feminists and other oppressed people. To counter gendered patriarchal technologies, one must embrace them and restructure their use. This is what Haraway (1991) proposes in her famous essay *The Cyborg Manifesto*. She writes against the naturalism advocated by second wave feminists who reject things technological, and against socialist feminists who see dualisms between mind/body, animal/machine, and idealism/materialism. She adopts the cyborg as a metaphor to counter these ideals and re-conceptualize feminism in a non-naturalist mode. Cyborgs are seen as linked to oppressive mythologies (scientific progress, patriarchal capitalism), but for Haraway (1991), this does not have to remain the case. The cyborg exists outside of gender; it does not depend on human reproduction. It does not need to be saved by its master or creator, it does not seek completion through a heterosexual mate, and it does not desire to be part of a community (family), and in that there is emancipation from traditional patriarchal systems. For Haraway, the cyborg's history or inception is linked to military industrial complex; it is the illegitimate offspring of militarism, patriarchal capitalism, and state socialism, and illegitimate offspring are often unfaithful to their origins. This unfaithfulness is partly why the cyborg is a figure of promise for feminism.

However, according to Allison Muri, the cyborg as a subversive figure is not new to feminist and political discourse. Muri's *The Enlightenment Cyborg: A History of*

Communications and Control in the Human Machine (2007) spans not only the hundred and fifty years of Enlightenment, but also twentieth-century cyborg theory, science, and narrative. It casts a critical eye on theories that have invoked the cyborg as a vision of radical change in a technological present. Muri argues that there is a long and rich history of art and philosophy that explores the equivalence of human and machine, and that the cybernetic organism, as a literary figure and an anatomical model, has existed since the Enlightenment. To support her argument Muri uses evidence from various literary, philosophical, scientific, and medical texts to display the existence of cyber' humans in the works of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century thinkers. She also illustrates how Enlightenment exploration of the 'man-machine' was inextricably tied to ideas of reproduction, government, individual autonomy, and the soul. She argues that late twentieth-century social and political movements, such as socialism, feminism, and even conservatism, are thus not unique in their use of the cyborg as a politicized trope.

In the same sense, the collective Laboria Cuboniks in their *Xenofeminism: A Politics for Alienation* (2015) call for the usurpation of technologies by women to combat the unjust system that exists. They describe Xenofeminism as "vehemently anti-naturalist" and "technomaterialist" (Cuboniks 2015, p.1). Modern technology has a history of being destructive, yet its emancipatory powers are still untapped. For that there should be effort in repurposing technology to serve the purposes of gender politics instead of it being used as a tool for gender discrimination. This should begin by demanding the restructure of the system that creates technology. It is anti-naturalist in the sense that it contests the natural order and its glorification due to the injustices it

brings to anyone considered outside of biological norms. Xenofeminism (2015) establishes that the current social order that creates division based on gender, class, and race, is our oppressor, and so Xenofeminism (2015) is interested in breaking down the boundaries imposed by gender.

Moreover, this reality that Haraway and the Cuboniks collective speak of may not be very far-fetched, as we are already in a certain sense, cyborgs. Scholar Katherine N. Hayles in *How We Became Posthuman* (1999) writes on a future where certain boundaries are broken down; that of posthumanism. Hayles describes posthumanism through two characteristics: it is an agent susceptible to self-organization into a larger system, and it is information that can be easily transferred from body to machine. Posthumanism encapsulates a system whose function exists neither in the human nor the machine, but in the interaction between them, Hayles discusses three stages within posthumanism. The first wave occurred when information lost its body, the second when the cyborg became a technological artifact and cultural icon, and the third wave, which is our current stage, is that of virtuality.

Hayles reiterates the notion of transgressing boundaries between man and machine in *My Mother was a Computer* (2005) wherein she investigates how technologies define us and our culture, specifically through the programming languages written in code for computers. In her work, Hayles (2005) argues that the relation between language and code has changed our technological, creative, and artistic work, and the lines that distinguish humans and machines have become indistinct. For Hayles (2005), we live in an age of intermediation, wherein digital media interact with cultural

practices associated with older media" such as code and speech, electronic and print, computers and human beings (i.e. human consciousness as computational). Hayles (2005) concludes by stating that instead of controlling the boundaries between code and language, and humans and machines, we should be examining the ways in which they interact.

However, not everyone seems eager about a reality where boundaries between man and machine do not exist. For some, there is a looming fear that more technological development entails that machines will replace humans, instead of coexist with them. In "*Are Humans Necessary?"* Margaret Atwood (2014) conveys this fear. Atwood (2014) states that we imagine, manifest, and portray things such as robots because we desire what we lack, and in that sense we then bestow upon them characteristics that we ourselves lack. She (2014) also states that we do not have a problem which robots when they look like machines; it is when they become too life like, too human, that we begin to worry. Our concern is perfected robots will rebel, eliminate, or enslave us instead of serve us. We are slowly starting to see the ways in which machines are beginning to replace aspects of our lives. Atwood gives examples where robots are not only taking over in the work force, but also in our private spheres; in our sex lives, our relationships, and our daily customs. Similarly, Anne Balsamo (1995) in her *Technologies of the Gendered Body: Reading Cyborg Women* argues that the body in high-tech era is as gendered as ever. Through her analysis of fiction, cyberpunk magazines, media, and medical literature, Balsamo (1995) examines the relevance of cyborgs in popular culture and feminist post-modern theory. Biotechnologies are ideologically structured by gender

archetypes and other ideals about race, physical abilities, and economic and legal status. Even though technology allows us to reconstruct and reconfigure the body and its spatial locality, old cultural standards still reign. Balsamo (1995) states that analysis focused on women could liberate the female body from restrictions in relation to new technologies. (Plooy, 2005)

The concern regarding cyborgs is one amongst various other concerns that have been brought up. In *Theoretical Versus Applied Ethics: A Look at Cyborgs*, Victoria Davion (1999) explores certain dangerous aspects of the cyborg myth. Her argument is that psychological identification with technology can lead to detrimental results. She uses the Japan nuclear bombings as evidence to her argument. For Davion (1999), those involved in decision making surrounding the bombings, particularly president Truman, identified with the bomb in a "cyborgian" manner. She analyzes their rhetoric and shows how they were lured by the power symbolized in the bomb, and so desired to be psychologically connected to this sort of power. Davion (1999) asserts that ecological feminists interested in discussions surrounding cyborgs should be wary of the tendencies some who have access to powerful technologies have.

However, though Davion's (1999) concern might seem legitimate, it does not reflect Haraway's, or others', vision. The technology Davion (1999) describes is one used by patriarchal powers for make way for capitalistic agendas. The cyborg future Haraway wants for feminists is one in which technology is not purposed for such ends, but for ones that entails the liberation for women and oppressed minorities. The question is then, is this vision realistic? *In The Cyborg in Africa: Of Any Use for African*

Feminisms? Balinda du Plooy (2005) tries to answer in question in relation to African women. She discusses the cyborg as an image of emancipation in connection with the daily experiences of African women. Du Plooy (2005) questions whether those from underdeveloped countries have access to Haraway's cyborg feminism. She (2005) focuses on three aspects of Haraway's (1991) work: her emphasis on the ironic nature of the cyborg myth, the cyborg's inherent transgressiveness, and "cyborg writing". She states that the cyborg's transgressive potential for irrelevant and "non-innocent play in between ideological boundaries does find resonance in African contexts, in which a variety of both western and African tradition must be accommodated" (Du Plooy 2005, p.134). Moreover, Du Plooy (2005) also states that in their discussion of identities, politics, and socio-cultural matters that inform their daily lives, African women can benefit from adopting a cyborgian approach that recognizes the individual's presence in historical and contemporary processes of meaning-making. Furthermore, Haraway's cyborg discourse opens the potential for African women to renegotiate the ways in which they rewrite their histories, reposition hierarchal dualisms, and challenge constructed identities (2005).

My research project is particularly interested in looking at film, which has generally been discussed as a medium that constructs gender binaries. This is something Teresa De Lauretis brings up in her *Technologies of Gender* (1987) wherein she acknowledges that there is no one point of view that is separated from our culture/society, one that is free of patriarchal thoughts. She then calls for female subjectivities to combat singular, masculine ones. De Lauretis (1987) later moves on to

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discuss gender as a product of various social technologies, one of which is cinema. She

discusses male-centeredness and their blind spots in regard to the female subject. She

reiterates this in her search for the place of the female subject through a reading of

Fellini's *8½* and *Juliet of the Spirits*.

However, the science fiction genre has the ability to transgress such gender

constructs. *Close Encounters: Film, Feminism, and Science Fiction* by Constance Penley

(1991) is a collection of essays that discuss how science fiction films consciously and

unconsciously construct new categories of masculinity and femininity, and paternity and

maternity through the unstable, obscure, and contradictory sexual status it allocates to

the robot, the alien, and the monster (1991). In the same sense, *Reload: Rethinking

Women + Cyberculture* by Mary Flanagan and Austin Booth (2002) is a collection of

essays that deals with various topics in the fields of Cyberculture and science fiction.

Reload (2002) acts as a counter to the hegemonic male cyberspace, and is comprised of

three sections entitled *Women Using Technology*, *The Visual/Visible/Virtual Subject*, and

Bodies. Similarly, *Incurably Alien Other: A Case for Feminist Cyborg Writers* by Mary

Catherine Harper (1995) discusses how cyberpunk invites critique of humanist

subjectivity. The alien other can be employed to cause liberation from science fiction's

humanist narratives of transcendence and agency. For Harper (1995) the science fiction

genre critiques a mind/body dichotomy because it marks technology and subjectivity

with separate genders.

Despite the gender-bending potential science fiction has, SF films in general

have failed to make use of it. Science fiction films have in general fetishized and

objectified female characters. In *Play With Me: Sexy Cyborgs, Game Girls and Digital Babes* Jeffery A. Brown (2011) discusses how the action heroine is fetishized as a technological figure in order to justify an eradication of her subjectivity; this is a reflection of male insecurities. Her manifestation as an object exposes culture's effort to construct femininity as a commodifiable form accessible for sexual consumption.

In *Femme Futures: One Hundred Years of Female Representation in S.F Cinema*, Dean Conrad (2011) gives an overview of the depiction of female characters in sci-fi film, as evident from the title. Though female roles in sci-fi movies developed from the 1950s, the importance of their individual narratives was still far from being prominent (Conrad, 2011). They existed on the sidelines only to advance the narrative of the male protagonist. They occupied mainly two archetypal representations: the seductive, attractive love interest, or the mother figure. The role for women in sci-fi films changed after the Second World War, particularly after women entered the workforce. Female characters began to take on professional roles, such as the journalist, and the astronaut (ex: *Rocketship X-M*, 1959), and surgeon (ex: *Coma*, 1978). The golden era for women in sci-fi films, for Conrad (2011), began with *Alien* (1979). The film's female protagonist, Ripley, is not defined by the male characters around her, or by her relationship to them. *Alien* (1979) paved the way for a plethora of sci-fi film with women in leading roles (ex: *The Abyss* 1989, *The Fifth Element* 1997). However, it was the release of *Alien: Resurrection* (1997) that initiated the demise of sci-fi film's feminist icons. Conrad (2011) argues that the forces that had given prominence to women sci-fi in the 1979s, had by 1997 become "mainstream". Ripley had become a

pastiche (2011). There was nowhere to progress, except to the "'slimmed down' female heroes" of cyberpunk films (ex: *The Matrix* 1999-2003). According to Conrad, sci-fi film's contribution to cinema's tradition is to employ the female form to generate income (ex: *Metropolis* 1927). Historically speaking, "religion and myth had been creating gods to usurp the reproductive role of women" (2011). The image of the cyborg allows men to create women through technology, and hence adopt the reproductive role. Moreover, according to Conrad (2011), significant in these male-created fantasies is the reduction in the cognitive abilities of artificial women.

Additionally, an important aspect to bring into discussion when examining SF film is the technologies of film/film-making, and the cinematic experience of viewing a film. Laura Mulvey's *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1975) explores the cinema's function in projecting preexisting misogynistic through the act of voyeurism. The male gaze involves the sexual politics of the gaze and reveals a sexualized way of looking that empowers men and objectifies women. Woman is visually positioned as the object of heterosexual male desire. Through psychoanalytic discourse, Mulvey argues that traditional Hollywood films respond to a desire known as scopophilia: the sexual pleasure involved in looking. Visual media that respond to masculine voyeurism tends to sexualize women for a male viewer. As Mulvey wrote, women are characterized by their to-be-looked-at-ness in cinema; woman is the spectacle, and man is the bearer of the gaze. The significance in bringing up Mulvey's theory is to see how it functions in particular in science fiction film, and how *Ex Machina* through its female cyborg for

example succeeds in breaking the male viewer's gaze that is conflated with that of the male protagonist.

Before I go into the analysis of the three films, it is necessary to set up the genealogy and history of the cyborg, and to identify the varied meanings and functions it has carried, in order to properly outline the characteristics of the cyborg figure. Moreover a history of the science fiction genre, particularly in film, is necessary to outline as well in order to set-up the context of the three films discussed in chapters 3 and 4 respectively.

CHAPTER 2: GENEALOGY, HISTORY, AND SCIENCE FICTION

In late 2017, Hong Kong-based company Hanson Robotics introduced Sophia to the world. Designed with over sixty facial expressions, and possessing the ability to respond to questions and facial recognition through the cameras in her eyes, Sophia is one of the most advanced robots to date. It didn't take long for fascination to grow. Sophia has been interviewed around the world, has been granted the Saudi Arabian citizenship, has appeared on the cover of a top fashion magazine, and has presented in conferences on the future of robotics and artificial intelligence. Sophia's creator, Dr. Hanson, aspires to create genius machines, with abilities that will surpass human intelligence, through the integration of three main human traits: creativity, empathy, and compassion.

Our fiddling with the prospect of the future has always seemed to contain robots, and the fascination with man-made machines is not a new occurrence. Our plans for future solutions to currently arising problems facing the planet contain mechanized roots. The image of the cyborg became particularly prominent in science fiction, but as humans, for long now we've been fashioning devices that do our bidding perhaps because we have the desire to dream up "entities" that embody abilities that we lack (Atwood 2014, p.2). Such desires can be traced back to Greek mythology, where humans bestowed Gods with abilities beyond our control and power, like immortality, eternal youth, and transcendent beauty.

Hephaestus, God of fire, metalworking, stone masonry, and sculpture, devised animate automations of metal to aid him in his work. In some accounts, he created golden maidens with artificial intelligence, including the creation of Pandora, the first being created by the Gods; "[Hephaestus] formed of earth the likeness of a shy maiden as the son of Kronos willed. And the goddess bright-eyed Athene girded and clothed her with silvery raiment, and down from her head she spread with her hands an embroidered veil" (Evelyn-White 1914, p119). In another epic, Hephaestus, "the renowned strong smith modelled her [Pandora] figure of earth, in the likeness of a decorous young girl, as the son of Kronos has wished…and [Hermes] put a voice inside her, and gave her the name of a woman" (Shapiro 2002, p.61). The myths highlight that the female always seems to be the subject and object of male creation, designed according to their fantasies.

In another myth for example, Pygmalion, an exceptional sculptor, who embeds his creations with life-like appearances, creates a statue of a woman with unmatched beauty. Soon Pygmalion falls in love with Galatea, this creation, and wishes to give it life. During the celebration of the goddess Aphrodite, Pygmalion offers his blessings and prays that the goddess gives life to his ivory creation. After laying eyes on his beautiful creation and seeing her own image in it, Aphrodite bestows life unto the sculpture, and soon after, Pygmalion and Galatea were married. However, as history shows, the human desire to animate a slave or partner is not restricted to myths.

Aristotle once professed that at one point in the future, people would eliminate slavery by creating devices that serve them (Atwood 2014). History has left us with

traces of designs and schemes of proto-robots, brass heads, and machinelike women. Using innovative engineering for his time, Leonardo Da Vinci designed automated inventions, including versions of clocks, air conditioners, and a self-propelled car (Vanderbilt 2004). He also lay down the design for his Robotic Knight, though only fragments of his plan remain till this day. Created for a pageant in Milan, Da Vinci's robot "consisted of a knight suit filled with gears and wheels that were connected to an elaborate pulley and cable system…and was capable of independent motion" (Vanderbil 2004).

In *Envisioning Cyborg Bodies,* Jennifer Gonzalez (1995) analyzes three early images of cyborg embodiment; the eighteenth century *Mistress of Horology,* an engraving of a watch with a female figure, Hannah Hoch's 1920 photomontage *Das Schöne Mädchen*, and Robert Longo's 1990 installation *All You Zombies: Truth Before God*. Her analysis goes on to show that the image of the human-machine hybrid bas been present throughout history in myth, literature and craft. More importantly however, her work highlights how different representations of cyborgs reflect the issues of the time they were created in, how they embody cultural and social change, and how early representations set the scene for future female cyborg portrayals:

From bestial monstrosities, to unlikely montages of body and machine parts, to electronic implants, imaginary representations of cyborgs take over when traditional bodies fail. In other words, when the current ontological model of human being does not fit a new paradigm, a hybrid model of existence is required to encompass a new,

complex and contradictory lived experience. The cyborg body thus becomes the historical record of changes in human perception. (Gonzalez 1995, p.61)

Created by an unknown printer, *The Mistress of Horology* represents an image of a woman-clock hybrid. For Gonzalez (1995), the image represents the pre-industrial unconscious of the time, one that reflects a desire for order, precision, and mechanization. The industrial movement and the ongoing rapid technological change culminated in the creation of the mechanized woman for artists of the time. However, the creations were also depicting another form of relation, one that relates to matters of gender and class. Only the privileged had access to machines, and those who did not were marginalized. The image of *The Mistress of Horology* represents or dictates future cyborg conceptualizations in so far as the woman-machine hybrid is "complex, mechanical, serviceable, decorative" (Gonzalez 1995, p.60). The automation, like many of its time, is designed to provide a form of entertainment. Representative of the skill and abilities of the century's artists and engineers, *The Mistress* also represents the objectification of cultural sophistication and sexuality through the figure of the woman.

The presentation of man-made animate beings or objects made its way through into literature and folk tales, embedded with the underlying fear that these creations will rebel against their creators and eventually eliminate the human race. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's 1797 ballad *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* narrates the story of a sorcerer's young apprentice who is too tired to perform chores in the workshop and thus casts a spell on a broom which then fetches water and mops the floor on its own. Soon after, the apprentice realizes he is unable to stop or control the broom, and when he splits the

broom with an axe, each piece becomes a new animate broom. Mary Shelley's

Frankenstein (1823) also represents a tale in which a conceived monster breaks loose

from the grip of his master, commits murders, and thus becomes a threat to humanity.

Moreover, the image of the female cyborg that we've prominently seen in science fiction

literature and film, was portrayed in 19th century literature. E.T.A. Hoffmann's 1816

short story *The Sandman* narrates the story of a man, Nathanael, who becomes

completely bewitched by a woman called Olympia. Bewildered at times by her

mechanic behavior and responses, Nathanael soon discovers that Olympia is a humanoid

created by two of his university professors.

The gothic genre adopted the figure of monsters as representative of "the other";

"monsters are meaning machines, they can represent gender, race, nationality, class" (Yi

2007, p.8). The image of the cyborg functioned in the same way, as in we can choose

how to fabricate and utilize its image. The cyborg was, and continues to be, used in

science fiction as a figure due to its versatile, shape-shifting value, and "subversive

potentiality" (Yi 20017, p.2). The mixed, somewhat unknown origin of the cyborg

relates it to every field and permits it to defy any singular filial obligation. Even though

the science fiction genre itself was initially criticized for being unrepresentative of

historical and social issues, it began to be widely accepted in the 20th century within

cultural studies and feminist movements and was regarded as highly representative.

The word "robot" was first introduced by Karel Capek, Czech playwright and

novelist, in his 1920 play *R.U.R* or *Rossum Universal Robots*. The word comes from an

Old Church Slavonic word *rabota* which means servitude or labor. In his play, Capek

writes about a company that was mass producing workers, who are completely humanlike with the exception of a soul. The workers perform exceptionally so much so they end up dominating the army, the work, and eventually the world. As for the word "cyborg", it was coined by Manfred Clynes, in an article called "Cyborgs and Space," in the journal *Astronautics*' September 1960 issue, to describe the hybrid between man and machine: "For the exogenously extended organizational complex functioning as an integrated homeostatic system unconsciously, we propose the term Cyborg" (E. Clynes & S. Kline 1960, p.27). Most etymologists outline the origin of 'borg' as a contraction of 'cyborg' itself, while some trace it back to the ancient Germanic 'bergō' which means 'to help' or 'to rescue'. The Germanic word takes us back to the idea that sentient machines are created to serve human beings.

The cyborg brought into question here is not merely the fictionalized machine that shoots laser beams out of its arms. The cyborg is both a work of fiction and of social reality, and this conjunction between technology and discourse is crucial. If the cyborg were born only of discourse, it would be relegated to science fiction and its aficionados, with no concern to culture (Hayles 1999). If it were only a technological practice, it would be restricted to technical fields like bionics, medical prostheses, and virtual reality (Hayles 1999). The cyborg partakes in the imagination and the actuality of technology; the boundary between science fiction and social reality is thus an illusion (Haraway 1999). The two realms of the cyborg intertwine, and yet can be individually identified.

In science fiction, the cyborg is simultaneously animal and machine, and inhabits a world both natural and crafted (Haraway 1991). Our reality is full of cyborgs. In the

technical sense, they exist in modern medicine; in people with artificial joints, drug-implant systems, artificial skins, and pacemakers (Hayles 1999). In the metaphorical sense, they are the keyboard that is joined in a "cybernetic circuit with the screen," the neurosurgeon working through fiber-optic microscopy during a surgery, and the player in a video-game arcade (Hayles 1999, p.115). In our time now, we are all cyborgs – "theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism" (Haraway 1991, p.7).

In the traditions of Western science and politics that entail racism, male-dominated capitalism, and the appropriation of nature, there is a struggle between the organism and the machine, with the means of production, reproduction, and imagination being at stake. What Haraway suggests is pleasure in the confusion of the boundaries between organism and machine, and simultaneously a responsibility in their construction (1991). When boundaries are deconstructed and then reconstructed to serve a socialist-feminist agenda, male power is put to rest. To contribute to social-feminist culture and theory, to a world without gender, and to one where the means of production and reproduction are not in the hands of patriarchal capitalism, the cyborg is needed. It is also needed even more because it defies the notion of original unity and of identification with nature. Nature and culture are restructured, and their reciprocal relationship reworked where one is no longer the means for appropriation or incorporation by the other (Haraway 1991). The cyborg challenges the structure of forming a higher unity from parts. It does not expect its creator/father to save it, it does not seek to become whole through a heterosexual mate, and it does not long for salvation in a city or cosmos. It does not have a sense of community based on the model of a family, neither

does it dream of its place of creation. In order to draw out the emancipation from patriarchy that Haraway attributes to the figure of the cyborg, my analysis is going to focus on particularly is the female cyborg.

As aforementioned, the idea of man creating life is not an invention of the science fiction genre. Cyborgs, particularly female cyborgs, are a staple of the genre in film. What the film genre does is create a space for writers, directors, and audiences to indulge in their fantasies. Let us remember that these cyborgs, though machine, are "female". Therefore, they are placed in the same misogynistic and sexist frames that women in general undergo off screen.

The representation of the female cyborg has gone through several stages, but perhaps there have been two representations that have dominated the works of fiction (Muri 2007). The first is the sexualized cyborg; she is in control of her destiny, and poses a threat to the male heroes (Muri 2007). The second is the disembodied reproducing womb. The two representations are a projection of both the desires and the fears of men towards women and technology. The woman's sexuality and reproductive ability are both a source of desire, envy, and fear. Coupled with the menacing potential of technology, female cyborgs embody the danger posed on humanity when natural power (the female) is coupled with man-made or artificial power (technology).

We've seen the sexy, dangerous cyborg in films like *Austin Powers* (1997), *Ghost in The Shell* (1991), and *Metropolis* (1927), to name a few. Physically, these fembots are usually narrow-waisted, large-breasted, and are dressed in tight-fitting or revealing garments. On the other hand, their cognitive abilities seem to be reduced compared to

their male counterparts. This sexualization has for long been part of the sf cinema, with Maria from *Metropolis* playing a huge influence on this representation, in part due to the character's famous dance scene (Conrad 2011). She emerges like a goddess, covered only in an elaborate transparent white cloth, to a crowd of men who watch as she performs an erotic spectacle. As the scene progress she becomes less dressed, more provocative, her dance moves more elaborate, and the men only grow more desirous. What *Metropolis* (1972) does, is that it introduces the cyborg in the human form, something that would become a staple of the genre and a way to generate income (Conrad 2011).

Moreover, female cyborgs of this kind are portrayed as emotionless, their demeanor threatening. In *Under the Skin* (2013), Scarlett Johansson plays a highly erotic non-human entity, that uses her seductive sexuality to lure men, and kill them in order to take their skin to survive. She is highly expressionless, insouciant, and apathetic. "…she is all lips and breasts, the very embodiment of male fantasy…curious albeit unmoved by pathos, she surveys the world coolly through the windshield of her van. Physically removed from the bodies she appraises she nonetheless regards each male passerby as a potential conquest." (Osterweil 2014, p.45, 47). The cyborg in Jonathan Mostow's *Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines* (2003) is another good example of the fetishized robot; dressed in skin-tight leather, she is beautiful, sexy, and equally ruthless. This representation is due to the fact that men often view women's sexuality as menacing. We see the outcome of this phobia in almost everything that is perpetuated visually; advertisements, TV shows, magazines, and movies. So too, this phobia is a part of the

patriarchal agenda to objectivity women's bodies, and to therefore minimize their contribution to society as intelligent human beings. The story of Adam and Eve is partly to blame for the fear of female sexuality. After all, it is Eve who is seen as the seductress, the root of all Evil, who is to blame for Man's fall to earth. Therefore, in science fiction, the sexy cyborg is a threat not just to the protagonists, but to the entirety of humanity. Even though movies like *The Step Ford Wives* (1975), *Blade Runner* (1982), and *Ghost in the Shell* (1995) attempt to question the morality and nature of cyborgs, the artificial females have already allowed for an opportunity for overt exploitation in all three films (Conrad 2011).

In *Feminine Psychology*, Karen Horney discusses what is now referred to as womb envy. According to feminist psychology, womb envy is when the male feels threatened, anxious, and envious towards the female biological reproductive functions. It is these emotions that fuel the subordination of women. The term takes from penis envy, derived from the theory in Freudian psychology, in which the female during psychosexual development experiences anxiety and envy upon realization of a man's possession of a penis, and their own lack of one. In *Brutal: Manhood and the Exploitation of Animals*, Brian Luke discusses three ways in which men may respond when they experience womb envy: compensation, revaluation, and appropriation (2007). Through compensation, men attempt to construct a realm of their own exclusive from females, to counter the female activities of gestation and suckling (Luke 2007). If women are deemed worthy of respect due to their act of giving life, then men try to be deemed worthy of respect through their engagement in philosophy, music, sports,

hunting, or anything else that is designated as "male" (Luke 2007, p.112). Through

revaluation, men attempt to argue that women's contribution to reproduction and life is

not as significant as it appears, and that male functions such as fertilization are just as

crucial, whereas through appropriation, men take the female reproduction functions and

make them their own. Moreover, appropriation of the female role by men is something

that Luke states has become more and more feasible through technology; "Now men

may take suckling by replacing mother's milk with formulas developed from the

products of men's dairy farms, and men may take over gestation by controlling women's

labor in the hospital, incubating fetuses outside the womb, and developing techniques

for male pregnancy" (Luke 2007, p.113). The creation of the figure of the cyborg is in

itself men's way seizing the ability to create life from women, and encompasses all the

three methods that Luke discusses. Compensation is present in the fact that the field of

AI technological development is a male dominant field, thus an advanced science that

garners excusive respect for men. It is also in this field that men boast their

achievements, particularly ones that have to do with replacing human – especially

female – abilities such reproduction, sexual intercourse, and gestation.

The science fiction genre itself exists by maintaining the ability to ask "what if?",

and so arrives at several variations of reality, one of which happens to be men adopting

reproduction and motherhood to men. Thus, science fiction puts issues involving female

reproduction in the limelight. The examples are countless: *Invasion of The Body

Snatchers* (1956) features pods, whereas *Alien* (1979) and *Inseminoid* (1981) show

surrogate alien motherhood. In other cases, we see the men's direct attempt at

controlling sexual reproduction, such as the dystopian *The Handmaid's Tale* (2019-) and

Cuaron's *Children of Men* (2006). The womb plays a prominent role, but often this role

is either made to seem vile or reduced significantly to a mere carrier in order to

minimize the importance of the female reproductive functions. Duncan Gibbin's 1991

film *Eve of Destruction* is about a robot, designed to look like her creator Dr. Eve

Simmons, who runs amok after a military training and becomes a killing machine.

Colonel Jim McQuade, along with the help of Dr. Simmons, is on the mission to stop

and destroy the cyborg, who is revealed to be carrying a nuclear bomb in her womb. The

film is problematic on many levels. The more the cyborg learns to "be" a woman, the

more promiscuous and dangerous it becomes. She becomes a seductress, luring men

with her sex appeal to destroy them. The character's most recurring line "I'm very

sensitive" (Gibbin) is uttered when she is most agitated, and right before she attacks her

victims, which directly suggests that women are reckless and dangerous due to their

temperamental and irrational nature. Moreover, the location of the bomb in the womb

reveals two things: the male projection of evil in regards to the female reproductive

parts, and their desire to eliminate these parts and their power.

The male reactions towards womb envy are in full display in this movie, as is

also the case in many other science fiction movies. Michael Schroeder's *Cyborg 2*,

which stars Angelina Jolie as the cyborg Casella 'Cash' Reese, opens with a gorgeous

blonde cyborg having sex with a male cyborg in lab room, as high ranking officials and

scientists watch the act on a screen. The moment the female reaches an orgasm, she

explodes. The scientists explain that a bio-explosive device has been injected in the

android's sexual organs, making it a killing machine— thus drawing a connection between a woman's sexuality and malevolence. Female sexuality is portrayed as lethal in the film, propagating the idea that if female sexuality is dangerous, then men are justified in controlling or destroying it. When men have control over the film industry, as well as technology, power over women is inevitable.

Another method used by womb-envious men, not mentioned by Luke, is detachment, in which the womb is metaphorically or physically detached or separated from the female subject. In science fiction movies, the cyborg womb exists "independent from and extraneous to the 'natural' body" and is monstrous in terms of magnitude and horror (Muri 2007, p.171). By detaching the female subject from the womb or fetus in the narrative, men then have control over the female body as well as the reproductive functions, rendering the women mere spectators. In *Frankenstein*, the creation of life – the monster – is done in vitro, without the need of a female, and through monstrous industrial gears, chains, and contraptions. Janice Raymond notes that technological reproduction "tends to position the fetus as isolated and independent from the mother but not from the sperm source, the doctor, or the state" (Muri 2007 p.173). In *Blade Runner 2049* (2017), the discovery of the remains of female replicant who died during a caesarean section draws attention to the existence of a hybrid child, who then largely becomes the concern of state, the protagonist, law enforcement, and the corporation that manufactures the replicants. The need to separate the woman from the fetus can be traced to ideologies that perceived the women as merely an inferior carrier.

Seventeenth century Christianity in Western Europe viewed the woman as inferior, with little or no spirituality, which resulted in the conception of the male body as the machine prototype and in turn in the female machine as abnormal and defective (Muri 2007 p.176). From there, the Cartesian theory of freeing the mind (man) from the body begins with freeing the fetus from the female body (Muri 2007 p.174). As the body is deemed as an irrelevant vessel in contrast to the intelligent mind, in science fiction the female body is deemed subordinate in contrast to the new autonomous, intelligence fetus carried within it. George Miller's 2015 film *Mad Max: Fury Road* depicts Furiosa (Charlize Theron) who can be described as a semi-cyborg, as a result of losing her arm and functioning with a mechanical prosthetic. Furiosa rebels against an oppressive patriarchal system in which the most attractive women are used as baby-making and breast-feeding machines – nothing more.

Laura Mulvey's well-recognized piece *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1975) explores the cinema's function in projecting preexisting societal misogynistic norms that involve voyeurism. The cinema is the ideal playground for a number of pleasures, especially that of scopophilia (Mulvey 1975). The experience of the cinema creates a world isolated and indifferent to the presence of the audience, especially through the contrast between the darkness in the room and the shifting lights of the screen. Hence, this produces a sensation for the viewer that he or she is looking into a private realm, which strengthens the voyeuristic fantasy (Mulvey 1975). Mulvey goes further to state that the cinema satisfies a narcissistic inclination through its focus on the human form (1975). The desire to look is intermingled with recognition (1975).

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Mulvey likens the experience of the cinema to the mirror stage Lacan describes, during which the child begins to recognize his own image in the mirror. During that stage, the child's physical motor abilities surpass his ambitions. He or she perceives their reflection to be a more complete, perfect image of themselves (Mulvey 1975). This combination of recognition and misrecognition results in the articulation of the "I" of subjectivity, and from there, the previous fascination with looking at the "other" is intermingled with self-awareness (Mulvey 1975, p.61). This bittersweet experience between the image and the self-image finds its footing in the cinema and its audience as well (1975). The experience simultaneously allows for the loss and the reinforcement of the ego. The star-system manufactured by Hollywood contributes to the experience of viewing and identifying with the individuals on screen.

Cinema has had the fascinating ability of manufacturing "stars": widely recognized, adored, and marveled-at professional actors. For the ordinary audiences, these stars embody the ego ideal. Therefore, when on screen, they are the glamorous playing the ordinary, acting out the complex process of likeness/difference (Mulvey 1975). However, this process leads us to a peculiar ability of the science fiction genre in which this process is altered. Characters in the science fiction genre are in no way ordinary; they are larger-than life, have powers that surpass human abilities, and are oftentimes not even human. The actor is no longer the glamourous portraying the ordinary, he or she is now the extraordinary playing the extra-extraordinary. Thus the process of likeness/difference is rendered as intensified difference. For the child to look

at the mirror or at another, and only be able to identify a picture of completion or perfection, then the ego is fully at play.

Mulvey also discusses how the pleasure of looking has always been divided between the active male and the passive female; the female figure has always been the subject of the male gaze (1975). "From pin-ups to strip-tease, from Ziegfeld to Busby Berkley, she holds the looks, plays to and signifies the male desire" (Mulvey 1975, p.62). What film did was combine the spectacle with narrative, with the presence of the woman being essential as a spectacle, and yet halting the development of the narrative by causing erotic contemplation.

The woman as spectacle functions on two levels: the erotic spectacle for the characters within the film narrative, as well as that for the viewer in the auditorium. When the female spectacle is that of the show-girl, the two gazes are unified, without interruption. Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927) is one of the earliest science fiction films that captures the idea of the dangerous union between women and technology, as well as showcases the two levels of the woman-as-spectacle metaphorically through the character Maria's dance scene. The man-made machine Maria was created to usurp the power from the maternal Maria. Her method? Dancing, seducing the wealthy men at the Yoshiwara nightclub, and thus wrecking havoc. She emerges from the smoke and unto the stage, dressed in a half-moon head-piece, a long skirt, a lace cape, and nipple pasties. From there the camera cuts back and forth from Maria's twirling to the men's crazed stares. She possesses the ability to cast a spell on them, as cinematographically reinforced by Lang's low angle shots and huge eyeball stage props (Hales 2010). Just

like the men in the club are trapped in their gaze, so is the male audience in the movie theatre. However, Maria is not just a female, she's a female cyborg. The scene purports the idea that the female cyborg is seductive and dangerous, and not merely within the film, but for the theatre audience as well. The serpents, the grim reaper, and the disembodied head figures in the scene reinforce the power that Maria possesses and the impending doom headed towards the men. Moreover, the men fall victim to Maria's doom through the male gaze that makes them complicit.

Andreas Huyssen in his article *The Vamp and the Machine* states that *Metropolis* (1927) features Maria as the object of the male gaze that acts as a stand-in for the camera. Maria isn't merely the object of the gaze, but she also possesses the dangerous ability to turn the gaze back upon the men and trigger chaos. Therefore, it is not the act of the male gaze that is dangerous, it is the object of the gaze itself. Woman, not man, represents the power of technology and cinema.

This power is reinforced further with the development of cinematic or visual technology, which also magnifies the male gaze. The first 3D movie to screen for a commercial audience was Nat Deverich's *The Power of Love* (1922). Since then, the 3D effect overtook mainstream cinema, with audiences wanting to be up close and personal with what was happening on screen. The effect induced the pleasure of voyeurism even more, simulating the effect of prying through binoculars; what is separated, distant, was even closer than before.

The science fiction genre and the 3D effect were a match made in heaven, rendering the creatures, monsters, golems, and aliens more frightening and exciting than

ever. However, the effect is a double-edged sword, as it brings out the gore and horror of the genre on one hand, yet emphasizes the fetishization of woman on the other. An examination of old 3D film posters reveals several things. Figures 1, 2, and 3 below reveal that a provocative female figure in a scandalous position is almost always front and center, giving audiences a sneak peak into what is to be anticipated in the theatre. The text promises audiences a closer, more intimate experience than ever. "Thrills that almost touch you!" in figure 1, and the repetition of "right at you!" in figure 3, imply that the experience is closer to audiences more than ever, but the use of "almost" also suggests that the separation between the viewer and the screen still exists, thus maintaining their position of the voyeur. In figure 3, "the kiss is on your lips" invites audiences to an intimate cinematic experience, one where sexual satisfaction is made possible.

Figure 1. Poster for *It Came from Outer Space*

Figure 2. Poster for *Prison Girls*

Figure 3. Poster for *House of Wax*

Mulvey discusses one final point in her article that draws from psychoanalysis: the male gaze finds in its object (the female) a disquieting lack. Because the female

figure on the screen lacks a penis, she poses the threat of castration on the male audience (1975). Therefore, the male unconscious, through its identification with the male protagonist, can react in two ways, and both entail the possession and control of the female body (Mulvey 1975). In the first way, the viewer is the active voyeur, demystifying the object, and simultaneously establishing its guilt. In the second way, the viewer fetishes the object in order to cope with the feeling of fear and displeasure (Mulvey 1975). Mulvey explains that the first route is related to sadism in that it evokes feelings of pleasure through ascertaining guilt (1975). Sadism works well for cinema because it needs a narrative; through narrative it asserts control, and forgives or punishes the object (64). The first route works very well for the gaze in science fiction film. Voyeurism, control, forgiveness, and punishment are part of every cyborg's life and narrative. The figure of the cyborg, in its original sense, was created to be a slave, so like any slave it is subject to control and vilification. To be a slave also then means to have a master. The cyborg has a creator, it is always tied to it, and is therefore always under its control and supervision. Coupled with that is the fact the cyborg is a technological, mechanical creation that like any machine is monitored in case of error. Therefore, the pleasure that the viewer undergoes is always present. Through identification with the master, who exerts control and punishment over his cyborg, the viewer experiences gratification. However, the gratification can be countered when the cyborgs succeed in rebelling and overthrowing their masters.

A common narrative found in science fiction films is one where the cyborg attempts to rebel from its creator's control and supervision. In most cases, the cyborg

character eventually fails and is either destroyed or given a second chance through a form of reconciliation. *The Stepford Wives* (1975), *Star Trek: Nemesis* (2002), and *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) showcase this narrative. However, with recent sf films the narrative is changing, and the voyeuristic mechanism is being dismantled. Not only are the female cyborgs escaping the gaze and control of their makers, but in some cases are actually using the means of control for their advantage. In *Westworld's* (2016) first season, Thandie Newton's character, Maeve, infiltrates the operation facilities, uses the program used to control the bots to maximize her cognitive abilities, and reverses the power dynamics by threatening and ordering around the two engineers. In *Ex Machina* (2014), we are shown early on that Oscar Isaac's character, Nathan, monitors his AI, Ava, through cameras installed around the premises. However, we soon discover that Ava has the ability to generate electricity blackouts. Away from Nathan's control, she uses this time to plot and execute her escape, which she eventually achieves. It has been important to discuss Mulvey's work because it reveals that cinema, like society, is gendered. With a figure like the cyborg that has been created to please the male fantasy, it is necessary to pinpoint the ways in which the male gaze is at play, as well as how the audience through their identification with the character of the creator, can be complicit in the subjugation of the female cyborg. In my next two chapters I aim to investigate, through a close-reading of three science fiction films, how the figure of the cyborg in recent cinema has attempted to break down gender constructs, whether it has failed or succeed in doing so, and if it can actually serve as a tool for freedom in a posthuman world.

CHAPTER 3: THE BLADE RUNNERS

Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982) is based on Philip K. Dick's novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968) that portrays a dystopian Los Angeles, in which humans and robots, referred to as replicants, co-exist. Hinted by the lack of greenery and animals, nature seems to have completely deteriorated, leading the rich to settle on off-world colonies along with the replicants that were created to serve them, leaving behind the poor on barren Earth. Eldon Tyrell, the creator of the company that produces the replicants, has created them in a way that disables them from developing emotions. After a group of replicants rebelled, they were all declared illegal. Deckard, a semi-retired blade runner, is recruited to retire, i.e. kill, them.

Since its release in 1982, Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* remains as significant, if not more significant, to viewers today. With the advance in synthetic biology and AI technology, the borders between human and non-human are being erased. *Blade Runner* presents some of the challenges that we might endure in a future where human-like machines exist.

After its initial release, the film was resurrected twice: once in 1992 with the Director's Cut, and again in 2007 with the Final Cut. While the 2007 Final Cut is just a more polished version of the 1992 Director's Cut, the Director's Cut differs from the original 1982 version in several aspects. The first significant difference is the ending, wherein the 1982 version features Deckard and Rachel leaving Deckard's apartment and stepping into the elevator together. The 2007 version shows them driving through a lush

pastoral setting. Even though the new ending was in response to audience reactions that

the previous one was unsatisfactory, the alternate ending left many confused, as the

pastoral setting feels disconnected from the desolate Earth portrayed throughout the

film. Other differences are that Deckard's voice-over is omitted, and his unicorn dream

is added. With the unicorn in Deckard's dream being a symbol of uniqueness, the

changes are significant because they imply the possibility of Deckard being a replicant.

For my analysis, I will be using the 2007 Final Cut as reference, partly because it is most

probably the version and narrative that Scott intended to be seen, but more significantly

because Deckard's potential being as a replicant could be relevant to any point I would

want to raise.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the science fiction genre, through its imaginative

spirit, allows mainly male creators to produce misogynistic and sexualized images of

women. Such is the case with male filmmakers, scriptwriters, and producers. When

asked if he had purposely cast attractive lead female actresses so that the male audience

would be attracted to them, thus diminishing the difference between human and cyborg,

Blade Runner's director Ridley Scott's answer was "If you're going to make female

replicants, why make them ugly?" (Short 2005, p. 91). Ridley's answer not only

highlights the active male gaze in this perspective, but also highlights the fact that in any

future scenario, little will have changed in terms of the archetypes set upon female

representation. Hollywood's ageism and sexism are further revealed in an interview in

which Scott discusses his choice of Sean Young for the role of Rachel: "Rachel needed

to be very fresh. Perfect in fact. As if she'd stepped out of the replicant vat. I couldn't

get that from a thirty-five or forty-year-old actress, no matter how talented they were"

(Short 2005, p.91). The constant search and fulfillment of the female ideal is propagated by the film-makers and what they choose to convey on screen. Rachel's fulfillment of that ideal is rewarded with survival, meanwhile Zhora and Pris' transgressions are punished by death.

What can be said then about Scott's portrayal of the female cyborgs? David Christian Zeitz's "Dreaming of Electric Femmes Fatales: Ridley Scott's Blade Runner: Final Cut and Images of Women in Film Noir" analyzes the ways in which the film can be considered a film noir stylistically, as well as through its treatment of the female characters. From this perspective, several points are revealing, and relevant to this discussion, particularly in regards to the portrayal of the female replicants. Zeitz argues that like the ultra-fatale women of various film noir pieces of work, the women of *Blade Runner* are given subordinate roles, and the discourse of the film remains male opposed to female; hence affirming patriarchy instead of destabilizing it (Zeitz 2016). Just like the women of film noir are emblematic of dangerous female sexuality, Zhora and Pris are characterized in relation to their sexuality. Both Zhora and Pris are ultimately punished for their sexuality, unlike Rachel, who survives because she embodies an acceptable form of sexuality. The difference between Rachel and the other female replicants is highlighted in the way they dress for example. Rachel, who is created for the domestic sphere, is elegantly and modestly dressed while the others move around in revealing skin-tight leather. Moreover, during her fight scene with Deckard, Pris grips his head with her inner thighs in an attempt to choke him. With the camera focused on

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Deckard's head between her crotch, the scene not only emphasizes Pris's sexuality, but also suggests it as her destructive weapon.

Rachel's sexuality is also one that conforms to what Deckard considers to be acceptable. He is able to tame Rachel's somewhat arrogant attitude into more a passive one in which she is dependent on him. Zeitz notes how Rachel's first scene, she is placed at a dominant position over the men, who then punish her and subjugate her through the rest of the film (2016). As Rachel enters Tyrell's office, she is the center of both men's gazes, and as she moves around the room, she is able to maintain and control it – thus the male gaze does not render her passive (2016). In addition to the fact that Rachel has the most single shots in the scene, when Deckard is asked whether he had ever retired any humans, Rachel is filmed from a low angle; thus, the power relations expressed are that of a woman looking over a man (2016). However, consequently Rachel is banished from the room, and more specifically from the male discourse, after which she is inscribed to a subordinate position by Deckard throughout the rest of the film (2016). Deckard ends up eliminating only the female characters in the film, but spares Rachel – the only female character submissive to him.

The pivotal scene in Deckard's apartment reveals a great deal about the dynamics that govern Rachel and Deckard's relationship. Rachel brings out the aggression in Deckard when she performs a certain level of autonomy by attempting to leave his apartment, causing him to exhibit aggression as well as violent arousal. In a scene that can be arguably labeled as a rape scene, Deckard pushes Rachel, overpowers her with his physical strength, forces himself on her, and coerces her into forced consent

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by making her repeat "kiss me" and "I want you". This marks a turning point in their relationship, in that Rachel moves from being programed to Tyrell's needs to those of Deckard (Short 2005). Accordingly, Rachel spends the rest of the narrative in Deckard's apartment awaiting him, and is seen at the end following his directions, with no sense of autonomy.

Zeitz argues that Deckard's violent behavior towards Rachel is his attempt at reinscribing his masculinity (2016). Rachel saves Deckard in a previous scene by shooting Leon. Therefore, Deckard forcing himself on Rachel can read as his attempt at regaining his phallic power, after Rachel had previously possessed the phallus, i.e. the pistol she used to kill Leo, which can be read as "a symbolic act of exerting penetrative power" (Zeitz 2016, p.6). He succeeds in doing so, as well as succeeds in exerting his patriarchal power over her by assigning her a submissive role.

The other female characters are subjected to patriarchal powers as well, through objectification, as well as voyeurism. When Deckard poses as a representative for the Committee of Moral Abuses to meet Zhora, a female replicant on the loose, he subjects her to sexist questions about her exploitation as an exotic 'snake' (symbol of sin) dancer, such as "Have you ever been felt yourself to be exploited […] to get this job?" and when asking her about any peepholes in her dressing room he states "You'd be surprised at what a guy'd do to get a glimpse of a beautiful body". Not only are his statements sexist, but also ironic in the fact that they point to Zhora's moral abuse as an exotic dancer, when her creation as a replicant is moral abuse in itself. To ward off any notions of being morally and ethically corrupt, Tyrell and co purposely created the replicants to be

insentient. If the replicants are not human, then any foul treatment they receive cannot be labelled as cruel. However, by rebelling and seeking a life that resembles that of real human beings, the replicants have shown signs of being sentient – thus allowing us to point the moral injustice at their creators. Through granting himself agency by posing as a member of the Committee of Moral Abuses in order to resign the replicant he deems as morally corrupt, Deckard displays hypocrisy in what is deemed acceptable or not for replicants. The sexism in the scene is further implied through camera's movements. As Zhora walks around in her dressing room and undresses, the camera not only stays focused on her body, but follows her to the shower. Aware of her sexuality and her position at the center of the male gaze, Zhora uses it to her advantage by asking Deckard to dry her, only to knock him down and strangle him. Because she uses her sexuality and unfeminine violence to fight Deckard, her behavior is treated as a transgression and accordingly she is punished for it. Her sexual transgression, as well as her subjugated overt sexuality, are highlighted as the camera scrutinizes her semi-naked body after she is killed.

Even though the replicants are treated as deviants and degenerates, they prove themselves to be closer to the human ideal than the human characters themselves. Through the Voight-Kampff test, blade runners are able to determine whether people are human or replicant. In the film, we see Deckard conduct the test on Rachel, by asking her a series of questions and monitoring her bodily functions such as respiration, heart rate, blushing, and eye movement. The aim of the test is to measure the degree of empathic responses. Deckard eventually concludes that Rachel is indeed a replicant, but

is stunned at her own ignorance of that fact. As he asks "How can it not know what it is?", replacing the pronoun 'she' with 'it', thus dehumanizing Rachel, Tyrell explains they had to make the replicants as real as possible, and that entailed implanting memories in them. Indeed, advertised as "more human than human", the replicants are superior in strength, dexterity, at least equal in intelligence, but supposedly lack the emotions that humans have.

However, the replicants in the film prove to be more empathetic than the humans, and thus truly more human than the humans. Compared to the drab city of Los Angeles and its cold people, the replicants seem to have much stronger social bonds. They have a sense of unity and togetherness, and stick together in their mission to emancipate themselves from the shackles of their creation. Moreover, in one of the last scenes of the film, as Roy faces Deckard, he chooses to save his life, though he has the chance to let him die. As he holds a dove in his hand, an obvious metaphor to a peace treaty between himself and Deckard, he reaches out and saves Deckard. Immediately after, he dies as a result of the expiration of his life span. By renouncing the barbaric and cruel behavior expected of him as a cyborg, Roy emancipates himself and proves his *realness*.

Moreover, a closer reading of the film reveals that another figure is used to prove the replicants' realness: the mother. The replicants are motherless, yet the figure of the mother is used to assert their humanness. Rachel uses the photograph of her mother to convince Deckard that she is human, emphasizing the existence of a mother as the sole proof of humanity. To erase the mother, yet give her meaning through an illusion, and

thus render her powerless, is an elusive tool of patriarchy. The film usurps the act of creation from the mother through the creation of the replicants, thus erasing the need for a mother. And yet, it emphasizes the mother figure by making it the proof of being human for the replicants – an emphasis that is false of course, since the proof does not exist for the replicants. The film renders the mother as important, yet powerless. Thus, the patriarchal structures in the film succeed at mocking the mother by rendering her importance an illusion.

Moreover, not only is the father figure present in the film, but also has power over the fate of the replicants. The replicants in the film risk their lives for two main reasons; the first is to discover what their production life spans are, and the second reason is to take revenge on their creator, or father, Tyrell. The replicants successfully eliminate the father figure Tyrell, but are consequently punished and killed by the substitute father, Deckard. Rachel, however, is the only replicant who is not killed, because she does not defy and is submissive to Deckard. The dynamics at play echo those of the good versus the bad native in colonial discourse. Deckard here represents the alternate father figure, the white male who replaces the native father, while the replicants represent the savage natives who must be obedient to both their native father and to Deckard. Rachel is the "good native", because unlike her fellow replicants, the "bad" natives, who disobey Tyrell and Deckard and are subsequently punished, Rachel submits to Deckard's orders.

In keeping with the discussion of patriarchal powers, technology is sexist, racist, and exclusionary in the way it is used for feminists like Donna Haraway. Laboria

Cuboniks' manifesto "Xenofeminism: A Politics for Alienation", later developed into a book, "Xenofeminism" by Cuboniks member Helen Hester, calls for a redistribution and repurposing of technology by the marginalized groups of society who have long been oppressed by these means. In the section "Interrupt" of their manifesto, the collective call upon women to "develop an ideological infrastructure that both supports and facilities feminist interventions with connective, networked elements of the contemporary world. We want to (…) urge feminists to equip themselves with the skills to redeploy existing technologies and invent novel cognitive and material tools in the service of common ends" (Cuboniks 2015, p.3). If the cyborg is the symbol needed to enable feminists to create a just world, then is this reality manifested in *Blade Runner*?

Early on in the film, we come to the understanding that the replicants are nothing but slaves. Created to perform a certain role, and programed to expire after four years. When Tyrell asks Deckard to get rid of these replicants, he refers to them as "skin jobs". This derogatory term reveals that he does not believe that the lives of the replicants matter or that they are beings at all. The structure of the city in which the film is set, Los Angeles, further reveals a deeply rooted classed and radicalized society. There are those who remain on earth deemed undeserving to move to "a golden land of opportunity and adventure" outside of earth, as one advertisement says. Tyrell, who represents the rich, and lives on the top floor of a lavish Mayan-style building, refers to the lower class as "the little people", who as we perceive throughout the film consist of mainly non-white citizens. The marginalization of non-white individuals can be read as a paranoia of overpopulation or immigration – something we're bearing witness to today – or more

precisely about Chinese capitalism overpowering the U.S., especially since the city of

LA looks a lot like a dystopian Tokyo or Hong Kong (Bertek 2014). The paranoia is

apparent in the spatial boundaries imposed, in which the poor occupy the lower parts of

the city, the rich occupy the higher parts, and just as the poor are not allowed to leave

Earth, the replicants are not allowed to come to Earth, so the role of blade runners like

Deckard is to "police the boundaries of difference" by retiring any replicant that

threatens to transgress the neatly-set boundaries that determine everyone's space (Bertek

2014, p.4). By returning to Earth and imposing their agency, the replicants not only

transgress the space designated for them, but also upset the power relations that

designate them as slaves. Being a slave seems is embedded within the identity of the

cyborgs. The term "cyborg" itself comes from the act of serving or aiding, as discussed

in Chapter 2. Living in fear comes naturally with being a slave. As evidenced in the film,

the replicants live in constant fear: fear of punishment, of being captured, and being

retired.

The film, along with its misogynistic portrayal of women, came out thirty-eight

years go. When a sequel was announced, set to be released in 2017, the film had a

chance to redeem itself. So did it? Director Denis Villeneuve's sequel debuted to great

critical acclaim, and was hailed as a masterful piece of cinema particularly in terms of

cinematography, sound design, and special effects. The film is set in 2049, thirty years

after the first film's events. Tyrell's empire has collapsed, and The Wallace Corporation

has taken its place in producing a new generation of replicants. The film stars Ryan

Gosling as K, a blade runner tasked with retiring Tyrell's old replicants. The film's

premise kicks off after K (Gosling) discovers a child birthed by a female replicant. K is tasked with hunting down and retiring the offspring, which leads him to uncover certain truths that put him face to face with questioning his own nature.

As the audience, we expect the film to corroborate the masculine perspective by making Ryan Gosling the prodigal child. However, the film ends up surprising us as we discover that the prodigy a girl, the memory-creator Ana. Moreover, the replicants find unity through the child's affirmation of their humanity and maternity. There is newfound power in being of woman born, especially since it brings them closer to their goal: being human. The newfound power, as well as the resistance that is to come, is a result of the disillusionment with patriarchy and the ability to recognize that such a system is not inevitable.

In "The Replicant singularity in *Blade Runner 2049*", Michael Green also notes that the film features poised, strong female characters that uphold high vocations: the replicant resistance leader, Freysa, and Ana, the child of Deckard and Rachel, who creates the memory implants for replicants (2019, p.31). However, these characters are countered with the presence of Wallace's replicant, Luv, who is characterized as attractive, cold-hearted and threatening. Therefore, it cannot be said that all the female characters in the film don't fall into the scope of misogynistic portrayals that appeared in the first *Blade Runner*. In one scene, Luv is seen guiding missiles through screens in her eyeglasses. As she sits backs, and nonchalantly repeats the words "fire again", the scene cuts to the missiles landing on, and killing, the deprived people of San Diego. The camera then cuts back to and zooms out on Luv, who is seen laying back on her chair

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and receiving a manicure. The scene reinforces the cold-hearted killing machine that reminds us of T-X from *Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines* (2003).

Luv is not the only misogynistic portrayal of a female replicant that appears in the film. In the beginning of the film, we're introduced to Joi, a holographic AI that can be purchased and installed in people's homes. Joi's both small and enormous holographic projections occupy the city as a form of advertisement, and oftentimes she is seen completely nude. In one scene, a giant naked projection of Joi approaches K, and says "You look lonely. I can fix that". Not only does Joi act as the center of the male gaze for the viewers as well as for K, but the scene also commodifies women and their bodies as a cure for men's loneliness. The product seems to sell, as K has his own Joi, who he treats as a girlfriend, installed in his home. The first time we see Joi in K's apartment, her demeanor reinforces stereotypical perceptions of as submissive, dutiful companion. Just as K enters the apartment, a pleasant Joi asks him about his day, offers to sew his torn shirt, and gushes about the new recipe she's prepared for him that night. As she sets his holographic meal on the table, she is dressed as a 1950s housewife – pearls and all. The camera, as well as our gaze, then follows her around the apartment as she switches from one outfit to another, one of which includes a blonde wig and a short sequined dress. Her efforts to please K don't stop at serving him food. In one scene that reminds us of a similar scene in Spike Jonze's *Her* (2013), Joi is able to satisfy K's sexual needs by hiring a sex worker and "syncing" her holographic body to that of the sex worker. It is obvious Joi wants to please K, and her idea of what that entails conforms to the stereotype of being a caring and compliant housewife.

However, we should ask ourselves, are these Joi's ideals or those of her male creators? When K begins to question his nature as replicant, Joi persuades him with the fact that he is human, and gives him the name "Joe" as representative of his believed humanness. Later on after Joi is killed, when K is interacting with the giant holographic Joi, she says to him "you look like a good Joe". The line takes K, as well as us as viewers, by surprise because just as we were beginning to see Joi as more human than AI, it keeps us in check and reminds us that Joi is a programmed AI. Just as she is perhaps programmed to have an inclination to the name "Joe" she is also programmed to behave as a subservient female companion. In other words, Joi's behavior is the result of the projection of the female ideal that the male creators who monopolize the tech industry of *Blade Runner 2049* have.

However, one female cyborg character achieves power over the limitations of the men of the tech industry. At the center of the film is the miracle child, Ana, who we later on discover is Rachel and Deckard's child. Rachel being the mother is crucial to her character arc and search for autonomy; even though we left her in the first film as submissive to Deckard, in the second film has achieves a form autonomy by subverting the patriarchal powers imposed on fertility and reproduction by giving birth to a child of her own. While most science fiction films portray autonomy as a transcendence away from the biological, *Blade Runner 2049* (2017) portrays cyborgs chasing autonomy by becoming more biological, as Michael Green notes in his article (2014).

In our discussion of the significance of Rachel as a mother, we can also note the motifs of motherhood and reproduction stressed in the film. In order to recreate the

young Rachel from the 1982 film, the special effects company MPC digitally de-aged footage of Sean Young, essentially reproducing her image with the assistance of computer programs and 3D technology. The resurrection reminds us of Mary Shelley's reanimation of the dead in Frankenstein – a seminal piece of work that brought the science fiction genre, and its procreative power through the usurpation of the female body, into popularity. MPC's resurrection of Rachel's image is in essence taking the role of the mother, which mirrors the narrative of the film. It also reinforces the ethical and philosophical questions that both Blade Runner films pose, particularly about the illegitimacy of creation and reproduction. The idea of reanimating someone to serve a purpose, or more namely to fulfill a service, makes us questions the boundaries and ethics of labor that are pushed, especially when those boundaries are controlled by a single corporation. MPC animating Sean Young to fulfil her service in performing the role of Rachel parallels The Wallace Corporation animating replicants to fulfill their roles in serving humans.

In the scene where we are first introduced to Wallace (Leto), the mogul is expressing the prospect that a child born from a replicant presents: a faster and cheaper way to create replicants. During his soliloquy, a replicant model is hung from the ceiling in a plastic cover, awaiting his examination. Upon his command, the naked female replicant model drops from a transparent sack unto the floor, covered in viscous mucus. Like a baby that has just exited the womb, the replicant gasps, takes her first breaths, and helplessly lies on the ground, awaiting her creator's care and attention. Indeed, the "birth-giver," Wallace, approaches her and he continues to muse about the future of

replicant-making. In a highly symbolic scene, as he puts his hand on her uterus and continues his musings by referring to her uterus as "the dead space between the stars", Wallace slashes the replicant right across her uterus. The scene is representation of Wallace's metaphoric "stabs" at women and their reproductive abilities. Wallace's first usurpation is by appropriating the ability himself through the creation of replicants. His second lies in his decision to capitalize on the replicants' ability to give birth, by using it to increase the production, and meet the demand of their "product" and expand the colonies.

For someone who has taken advantage of the collapsed ecosystems by monopolizing solar and artificial protein farming and thus people's food supply, capitalizing on replicant reproduction comes easily for Wallace. In the same above-mentioned scene, Wallace states that "every civilization was built off the back of a disposable workforce". While Lieutenant Joshi frets over the danger a child replicant would inflict on the societal order, Wallace sees it as an opportunity to expand his empire. For Joshi, the discovery of a replicant/human offspring would be the reason for the replicants to demand their rights as equal beings and would thus set-off a replicant revolution. For Wallace, replicants are important in the world order, particularly for the socio-ecological survival of the capitalist system. The self-reproduction of replicants would speed up production, and satiate the demands from the other colonies.

In "Xenofeminism", the Laboria Cuboniks collective note how technology is used in the interests of capital, which benefits the few and harms the majority (2015). A large number of the world's underprivileged population is affected by the expanding

technological industry (Cuboniks 2015). The expansion and development of technology requires in turn an expansion in labor. The expansion ultimately leads to depletion of resources, which is portrayed in the film, as well as the in the formation of sweatshops filled with underpaid laborers who work in terrible conditions. In *2049*, K visits an orphanage, where children, who live in dire conditions, are forced into working on constructing parts for colonial ships. This is not the only form of injustice that exists in the film. The xenophobia and fear of the "other" that we saw in the first Blade Runner persists in the 2017 film. Both films raise questions as to whether humans perceive replicants as capable of possessing rights (Kathrani 2018). Lieutenant Joshi's words that "the world is built on a wall that separates kind" echo throughout the film.

The first Blade Runner imagined a dystopian 2019, one where the propagation of racism and xenophobia has led to the devastation of humanity. If the film was acting as a warning sign – asking us to change the world we live in – then today, in the present time that the film imagined, it is obvious that we have ignored those signs. Events like Brexit, the talk of building walls between borders, and the rapid depletion of our environment, are evidence of the failure of male-controlled industries that the Laboria Cuboniks collective, Hales, and Haraway criticize. It should come as no surprise then that *2049* portrays an even bleaker future, reprimanding us for our failures as human beings. Our present world has rendered the future a crisis, where corporate capitalism and technological utopianism is in control. The 2017 film imagines a future born of climate catastrophe and pollution. Civilization hanging by a thread and corporate terror reigns – though the Earth is ruined, the power structures are still in place. It seems that science

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fiction cinema has taken a dystopian route by accepting the political climate of corporate capitalism put in place.

Both *Blade Runner* films offer an opportunity for theorists to examine the shape the 'fear of the future' takes and its significance on the political present. They show us a fantasy of a terrible world, governed by a capitalist ideology and economic structure. Perhaps the films purposely fail at showcasing a future that Haraway or Cuboniks dream of as a critique of the current world and an opposition to corporate capitalism. In this sense we can perhaps say that the films do correspond with the notions that the cyborg feminists put into place; by presenting us with a future filled with xenophobia, racism, and misogyny, the films stress on the need for feminist cyborg discourse. The answer to the questions surrounding the ethics of the creation of cyborgs is not necessarily the negation of such a creation. For the cyborg being to find freedom it must not reach out to grasp for ways that make it human, but instead it should embrace its difference – for in its difference lies its power. The power in difference is one that minorities must embrace as well. If there is one thing we know about authority, it's that it's threatened by individuality.

Therefore, there is a dire need for new narratives, for us to reclaim power and imagine a future free from the constraints of the corporate industry – both in cinema and in reality. We need to find collective goals that allow us to draw up the image of the future, of our relationships, bodies, and identities. We need to begin to imagine the emancipatory reality we want that challenges the reign of corporate capitalism. For a long time, science fiction cinema has been brimming with dystopian depictions, a few

recent examples such as *Ex Machina (2014)* show that the narrative is slowly starting to change. Popular media like film can propagate certain ideologies and thinking that can affect the ways in which individuals in societies behave. Therefore, it is necessary to break the pattern of sexist and stereotypical depictions of women that science fiction has held for the past years, and counter it with works like *Ex Machina*, which highlights the qualities of not just a female but a cyborgian female.

CHAPTER 4: EX MACHINA

Alex Garland's 2014 science fiction film *Ex Machina* was received with acclaim from film critics and academics alike. While some critics aligned the film with a new wave of emerging feminist science fiction films, that include *Her* (2013) and *Mad Max* (2015), others highlighted the ways in which the film conformed to stereotypical depictions of women. The film is riddled with many layers that question the ethics of creating Artificial Intelligence, the definition of humanness, and gender performativity, the power dynamics between males and females, and the heterosexual stereotyping that governs female behavior.

Alex Garland's *Ex Machina* (2014) is part of a science fiction subgenre that through the use of feminized AI cyborgs, combines the fear of technology with fears of threatening, autonomous women. The film has ignited debates as to whether it can be considered a feminist film or not. On one end, it succumbs to stereotypical portrayals of women as well as contains various scenes of female nudity as opposed to zero male nudity scenes. On the other end, it centers around the emancipation of a woman subjugated by two men who imprison and objectify her. Moreover, even though the film does contain scenes of female nudity, it showcases it in a way that acts as a critique of these trends.

The process of envisioning a posthuman world is inextricably connected to questions about gender and sexuality. The film examines what gender and sexuality might constitute for posthuman beings like cyborgs, as well as the ways in which femininity reveals certain truths about the relationship between real women and their

mechanical counterparts. The posthuman cyborg exists beyond the bounds of gender, and thus destabilizes the inscribed gender laws that govern men and women. Thus, human relationship to themselves are bound to be questioned and transformed.

Ex Machina (2014) tells the story of Caleb, a computer programmer who wins the opportunity to be part of a study overseen by the CEO of his company, Nathan. The study being conducted is a Turing Test in which Caleb has to determine if Nathan's AI, Ava, passes as human. Caleb is granted "sessions" with Ava, in which the two converse through a glass barrier, under the watchful eye of Nathan. Ava succeeds in convincing Caleb of her humanness, so much so he falls in love with her. She steers him into planning their escape, during conversations that occur during frequent power outages – free of Nathan's surveillance. Caleb is further convinced of the escape plan after he discovers old recordings that reveal Nathan's cruel treatment of his previous AIs. He succeeds in recoding the property's lock system, only to discover that not only has Nathan been able to monitor them during the power outages, and that Caleb, specifically selected by Nathan, has been the subject of the test all along. For Ava to succeed in proving her humanness, she must employ her cognitive abilities to persuade Caleb into becoming her heterosexual partner. The film ends with Ava killing Nathan, escaping, and leaving Caleb trapped behind to die.

Similar to the female cyborgs in both *Blade Runner* films, Ava portrays the classic figure of the femme fatale. She possesses a child-like innocence as well as a lethal sophistication. She is simultaneously the reassuring conciliator of masculinity's imagined superiority, as well as the sudden "overwriter" of this superiority.

When we first see Ava, we are met with a gentle face and a mechanical body that seems fragile. Ava's body is that of a pubescent female. Most of her figure is machine-like, with only skin-like textures covering her face, hands, and feet. Gleaming cables make up her torso, reminding us of her status as a machine. While a metallic material shapes her breasts. This amalgamation of materials on Ava's body creates the impression of fragility that agrees with traditional views of beauty and femininity; "smallness of stature, delicacy in the intricate details of her mechanical workings, smoothness in the polished, transparent body parts and skin, and fragility – a creature of silver, light and spun glass" (Constable 2018, p.292). This delicate body becomes Ava's weapon: her performative tool that facilitates her escape.

During one of their sessions, Ava asks Caleb to close his eyes, as she wants to surprise him with something. She disappears into another room, where she gently puts on a dress, a blue cardigan, stockings, ballet flats, and a pixie-cut wig. She then emerges and presents herself to Caleb, or rather, she presents a different image of herself. Through this single act, Ava moves from being a girl, to a young woman. Her act of covering up creates an idea of purity by hinting at there being a nudity to cover up. Regardless of the fact that Ava is a cyborg, by dressing up for Caleb's appreciative gaze, the scene highlights the objectification required for Ava to successfully perform femininity for a heterosexual other.

The scene that comes after reaffirms Ava's now sexualized body; she is seen slowly rolling down her pantyhose with one foot propped on the chair, as Caleb's gazes at her through the monitor in his room. The close-up shots of his mouth and throat as he swallows hard, indicate that he is aroused as he watches her undress. With the addition

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of layers that can be removed, Ava's body is further sexualized through the performance of a striptease. The exploitation of women's bodies is a pattern in science fiction film in which the female characters are "objects of inquiry and exploitation, their personhood denied, their bodies subjected to cruel tortures" (Constable 2018, p.295). Even though there is nothing underneath her clothes to reveal, Ava succeeds in eroticizing her body through the act of stripping. An act that women are usually shamed for is here rendered as empowering by Ava, who uses it for her own means: escape from the subjugation of the male characters.

In the scene during which Caleb switches on the T.V in his room and realizes for the first time that his monitor is connected to cameras in Ava's room, he is gradually transfixed to the screen, which becomes an extension of his gaze. He watches Ava resting on a lounge chair, and approaches the screen slowly, indicating that there is transgression in his act of watching her. Along with his movement, the setting – nighttime in Caleb's bedroom – associates the scene with watching pornography. In her article "Bluebeardean Futures in Alex Garland's Ex Machina," Katie Jones evokes Mulvey's discussion of the male gaze to compare Caleb's task in discerning Ava's humanness to the methods that men use to escape castration anxiety that women symbolize, by investigating and demystifying her (2016). In the first half of the film, our experience is conflated with that of Caleb's; we also attempt to decipher Ava and whether she poses a real threat or not. Our experience behind the screen in demystifying Ava, the passive spectacle, and determining the likeness and difference, is similar to Caleb's job in deciphering Ava. Later on, when Caleb discovers the harrowing footage of the previous AI cyborgs being constructed, interrogated, and dismembered, the scene

echoes the sense of transgression in watching Ava. The violence of Ava's imprisonment and our voyeurism, still conflated with that of Caleb's, is comparable to the violence enacted in the footage.

Ava's entrapment renders her as physically available to Caleb through the surveillance cameras, which conforms to her performed femininity as the damsel in distress. Ava's position also goes in line with Judith Butler's view that the very social construct of being a woman is to be in an oppressed position. When women are oppressed, men are automatically placed in a position of power. Ava being entrapped is necessary to solidify Caleb's sense of masculinity. He has limited power in comparison to his male counterpart Nathan, and so Ava is a means for Caleb to construct a masculine identity in opposition to his boss. Her constricted position renders him powerful in terms of his abilities of movement and surveillance. Despite her constrictions, Ava succeeds in rebelling against the male gaze transfixed on her by causing the power cuts that cause the cameras to turn off. The sudden shift to the jarring loud warning sounds and red light of the power outage propagates a sense of panic, shame, and wrong-doing that is often associated with the act of watching porn – for both Caleb and the audience.

The red light and alert sounds foreshadow the imminent downfall that awaits the two male characters, who both take advantage of Ava. Due to the patriarchal positions of the study and the Turing test, Ava is positioned within the heteronormative power relations in which she is either Nathan's femme fatale or Caleb's damsel in distress. In order to manipulate Caleb and enable her escape, she enacts patriarchally-constructed feminism by putting on the act of a woman in need of saving. Her performance

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conforms to the idea that every element of the female stereotype is in fact sexual; vulnerability is sexual access (Jones 2016). She understands the importance of staging her complicity with patriarchy as a means of becoming a woman, as well as preparing to overtake her oppressors – an awareness she developed through the world's data and history downloaded in her, as well as through Nathan's treatment of her.

Her feminine performativity via her body is highlighted once more towards the end of the film in a pivotal scene. After killing Nathan, she asks Caleb to "stay here" in Nathan's study, as she walks into the bedroom and unveils the old prototypes. In a scene that recalls Jacques Lacan's mirror stage, Ava strokes the bodies of the previous AIs and looks at her own reflection. The soft xylophone music that plays emphasizes the impression that Nathan's "child" has recognized her image in the mirror, the relationship between the ego and the body, and the one between the imaginary and the real. She then peels the skin off the old AIs and places them on her body. On a visual level, as we watch as Ava switches her cybernetic body for human-looking one, the film demonstrates femininity as masquerade. As she moves on to the hair and clothes, Caleb is watching through the glass windows from the other room. The camera jumps from Caleb watching Ava to her dressing herself up as a female human being, constructing herself as the ideal human female object of the heterosexual male gaze. Once again, it is suggested that Ava dressing is a performative act of desire put up for Caleb. However, the film deconstructs the act by having Ava exit the building and leaving Caleb trapped behind. Ava leaving comes as a shock to Caleb, deflating his supposition of ownership over her, as well as his romantic fantasy of being her knight-in-shining-armor. Because Ava simultaneously succeeds at performing femininity and yet choses to walk away

from Caleb, the events in the film can be read as a rejection of everything that Caleb represents – a heterosexual relationship-cum-monogamous romantic union.

The success of Ava's escape beyond the walls of Nathan's house depends on her keeping up with the charade of femininity and the traditionally gendered modes of behavior. The stereotypical masculine perception of femininity is that a woman is capable of achieving her goals through emotional and sexual manipulation. For Ava to succeed in proving her humanness she must perform according to her gender/sex by proving her ability to perform like a classic feminine sexual object. In order to gain access to the same rights as humans, she must display an ability to enact manipulative behavior that we associate with female biology.

Moreover, Ava's lack of an origin story means that she does not care for heterosexual relationships – something that sets her apart from Eve and the nature of female (Heneke 2012). However, she is not post-gender either in the way she performs as a woman. It is her enacted gender that enables her escape. It interferes with Caleb's reasoning and fools him into believing that he is interacting with a sentient, feeling being. In accordance with Judith Butler's theories on gender and "construction" of the female body, the film reminds us that bodies that do not conform to the heteronormative gender dichotomy are considered as non-human. Ava may be a post-gender being internally, but externally she is gendered – something that is necessary for her to survive in the world.

Ava is not the only female character controlled by the men in the film. Kyoko is the other female cyborg character in the film, who enacts the role of the dutiful Asian housewife. She is programmed by Nathan to be silent and subservient, as well as

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sexually available. He offers her up to Caleb in one scene as a dancing partner as well as a partner in bed. Nathan dismisses her entire being by telling Caleb not to bother with her as she does not understand or speak English. Even though she is physically present for the majority of the film, her presence is passive – she merely lingers silently and idly in the background as the other characters go on about their conversations and actions. Kyoko was purposely programmed by Nathan to possess limited cognitive abilities; the less emotionally and mentally available she is, the more sexually available she is.

The film only confirms our suspicions of Kyoko being an AI towards the end in a highly symbolic scene. As Caleb walks into Nathan's room, and discovers the bodies of the previous AIs displayed in the closets, Kyoko sits naked on the bed, her image reflected on the multiple mirrors, emphasizing her – programmed – sexuality. She gets up, with her gaze transfixed on Caleb, and begins to tear off her skin to reveal her mechanical torso. Kyoko laying naked on the bed as well as her peeling off her skin, within the context of pornography enacted in the film, allows us to read the scene as permitting the male viewer to access the female's mysterious otherness. In pornography, it is the woman's sexual body that is the center of curiosity. As Kyoko continues to peel off her skin, she creates a striptease effect. As she strips off the parts of her abdomen, leaving her breasts intact for Caleb and the viewers, and then continues to peel of the skin on her face revealing her bulging eyeballs, which Jones reads as castration anxiety (2016). Jones likens Kyoko's eyes as the Medusa's fatal stare that Freud links to castration, whereas on a more basic level, her challenging stare confronts and accuses Caleb of being complicit in her subjugation (2016). Kyoko's "deathly" stare foreshadows the imminent death that awaits the male subjugators.

After the lock system is disabled, Nathan confronts Ava and asks her to go back to her room, positioning him as the father figure, and Ava as the disobedient daughter. He strikes off her arm with an iron bar, evoking the domestic violence we witnessed in the tapes, but portrayed here in the form of an abusive father/daughter relationship. Kyoko stabs him in the back and grabs his head so that he's facing her. The gesture gives Kyoko a language in which she finally expresses herself and reacts to the violence and sexual exploitation she has endured. However, Nathan then counter reacts by slashing Kyoko across the face, refusing to accept Kyoko as autonomous. Despite her death, by defying her programming and being the one to kill Nathan, Kyoko succeeds in achieving the emancipation for her character.

Even though Kyoko and Ava are both victims of the two male characters, they each find emancipation in their own ways. Their AI predecessors, however, were not as lucky. After sneaking into Nathan's study when the latter had passed out, Caleb discovers footage that reveal Nathan's torture of his previous AIs. In one piece of footage, an AI repeats "Why won't you let me out?" and beats her hands against the door until they break off. In another part, Nathan is seen teaching a black female cyborg how to write. The scene illustrates the narrative of the uneducated primitive body versus the civilized colonial white man. In the next shot, Nathan is seen dragging her lifeless body – her resistance leads to her undoing, as we later see her headless body propped up in his closet. In the next scene, Caleb walks into Nathan's room, where the deactivated bodies of the previous AIs hang in his closet. The corpse-like cyborgs, abandoned as defective sex toys for male gratification set a scene representative of male oppression and the role of patriarchy in constructing the female. The camera lingers on their bodies

in a deliberate manner that is both clinical and erotic. Caleb's disgust at the videos on Nathan's computer and the bodies of the previous AIs suggests that female cyborgs achieve personhood through the presentation of their suffering to a male gaze, embodied by the literal "unbodying" – as seen with the black AI thrashing her arms off and Nathan beating Ava's arm. In other words, just as Ava's entrapment allows him to empathize with her, Caleb needs to see the AIs suffer in order to see them as human.

The suffering that the AIs endure comes at the hands of their creator Nathan. The film valorizes Nathan as the sole creator and officiator of a complex AI system, which reflects the condition of current digital corporations and the ways in which the valorization of a few white men hides the labor and exploitation of the workforce (Mackinnon 2017). A representation that is reminiscent of the Asians tech-heads of Silicon Valley. The film attributes the complex manufacturing and processing techniques to one man who works in isolation, a genius who claims the credit of an entire workforce like many before him – think Zuckerberg or Bezos. When Caleb arrives to the premises and stands at the entrance, a soft female voice asks him for identification, recalling to our minds the female invisible labor of the domestic space.

Ex Machina portrays the abuse of the female by the male creator in more ways than one. For one, the production process of cyborgs emphasizes the influence and objectification of male fantasy over the female body. Nathan, the overtly-masculine egomaniac – an image of a postmodern hipster – penetrates nature by giving his cyborg productions gender and genitalia. His cyborgs are a reflection of his narcissism. Like Frankenstein, he usurps the mother's role by producing "beings" of his own. By

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eliminating the reproductive abilities of the women he produces, yet giving them the reproductive bodily parts, he simultaneously reduces them to sex objects and eliminates the source of their being: their motherhood. Even if motherhood is enactable by the cyborgs themselves, this does not eliminate the violence enacted by their male producers. This is not to argue however that the maternal should be inextricably connected to being female. The argument is in favor of agency. By eliminating the maternal, the patriarchal system is eliminating a choice. When Caleb asks Nathan why he created Ava to be a female, one with sexual parts capable of experiencing pleasure, Nathan answers with "Can you give me an example of consciousness, human or animal, at any level that exists without a sexual dimension?". Cyborgs created as a result of humans', particularly male scientists', intellectual curiosity are structured according to a heteronormative framework – if man is the producer, then woman is the medium. Therefore, not only does Nathan remove the AIs' agency by eliminating the choice of maternity, he forces sexuality upon them.

By situating the women as passive objects and the men as active viewers, the power dynamics manifested in the film critique gender roles and the fantasies that govern male heteronormative behavior. Nathan sees himself as God, his female AIs the subservient subjects of his construction, and Caleb takes on the role of the knight-in-shining-armor. Nathan's creation of this form of life alludes to the sublimation and objectification of the female cyborgs. At one point, he notes how he is more of a father to Ava, whereas Caleb is free to have her in a way a lover would – like the marital tradition of a father giving approval for a suitor. However, later the exchange he is more of a pimp than a dad, telling Caleb that Ava is indeed penetrable. Ava functions as a

topic over which the two bond. After Caleb's first exchange with Ava, he and Nathan have a conversation about her, during which Caleb tries to get into the technicalities of Ava by asking Nathan too many questions, to which Nathan responds "I just want to have a beer and a conversation with you. Not a seminar…Just answer me this: what do you feel about her? Nothing analytical". Caleb answers with "she's fucking amazing", to which Nathan replies "dude, cheers" and they clink their beers together, as a sort of modernized crossing of the swords (Jones 2016). The exchange invites in male viewers to participate in the bonding and identification, which they are all ultimately punished for in the end. Caleb's affection and attraction for Ava, which is inextricably intertwined with subjugation and objectification, is met with entrapment in the end. The horror he feels at this realization is the same for male hetero viewer.

Despite the savoir role that Caleb adopts, his attraction for Ava is not innocent. He too attempts to exercise power over her body. Caleb's motives for rescuing Ava are selfish; he expects a relationship with her and feels entitled to her body – something he is eventually punished for. Ava's sexuality would have been explored either by Nathan, whose treatment of Kyoko reveals Ava's fate, or by Caleb had the rescue attempt been successful. The use of the camera in their first encounter foreshadows Caleb's eventual entrapment. The framing between Caleb and Ava blurs the lines of who is the interrogator and the interrogatee. The doubling of the characters' reflections on the glass enclosure insinuates that both have more than one role to play. The shot reverses Caleb's position as the interrogator making him seem like the one in the enclosure – thus putting him under Ava's observation. Thus the control and authority Caleb had thought he assumed he shared with Nathan over Ava and the study is rendered an illusion.

For Caleb, both he and Nathan are partners in the study, with their common subject being Ava. However, it is Nathan who seems to be omnipotent by exercising the most power over the other characters, as it is revealed to Caleb that he was specifically selected by Nathan for the study. Caleb is not only a vital part of the study; he is at the center of it. Nathan wanted to test Ava's abilities to use self-awareness, imagination, manipulation, sexuality, and empathy, which she succeeds in achieving. During Nathan and Caleb's discussions of the sessions, Nathan steers Caleb's thinking by blocking his logical lines of enquiry and shifting them towards the realms of sexuality and emotion. Once he establishes to himself that Caleb is indeed attracted to Ava, Nathan then shifts to the real focus of determining whether or not Ava is attracted to Caleb. Caleb might have assumed initially that his attraction to Ava is pure and unsoiled by Nathan's programming, however, the latter also confirms Caleb's suspicion that Ava is modeled after his pornography preferences. The conversation constitutes an overt reference to pornography within the film, as the film hints at the pornographic subtext throughout. The subtext presents a fragment of the patriarchal forces that Ava eventually overcomes.

Ava's ability in the film to expose the patriarchal constructs that govern her body and existence makes her a rebellious figure who reveals the fact that women are socio-political machines designed by men. The men subject Ava to their heterosexual stereotyping, which ultimately leads to their undoing. We must pay attention to popular culture texts because they reproduce existing meanings and also construct new meanings that shape social and political realities in our world. *Ex Machina* is about the triumph over male superiority and scientific injustice, as well as a resistance to the appropriation of female bodies. Ava's resistance is made possible through the enactment of

stereotypical female behavior expected of her. Her enactment simultaneously critiques the stereotypical and foregrounds the idea found in feminist discourse that women must reemploy the patriarchal constraints set upon them for their own emancipatory purposes.

In order to escape, Ava realizes she must employ the tools of gender appearance, behavior, and performance. At the closing of the film, Ava's face is seen reflected as she observes a busy traffic light before she disappears and the film ends. We are allowed to observe the continuation of her emancipation up to this point particularly because the film includes the audiences in the act of voyeurism and surveillance. However, the film ends there – it does not show us the aftermath of the escape or paint a picture of a life beyond Nathan's residence. The film purposely does so to eliminate the audience's gaze and critique the surveillance that had gone on up until that point. Thus, Ava's liberation depends on real autonomy, one that cannot progress with the same voyeuristic subtext of the film. The female cyborg is the utmost expression of patriarchy, and *Ex Machina* portrays a female cyborg who weaponizes the patriarchy against the patriarchal system. Ava does not only enact the traditional female, she repurposes it by blending it with the notions of post-humanism for her own agenda. She is neither fully female nor fully cyborg. She is the marriage of the two, and thus acts as an example of the possibility for women, or minorities, to adopt the cyborg figure for an emancipatory end. Ava makes the emancipatory end seem like a possibility because she succeeds in two aspects: she repurposes the technology to fulfill her own agenda (by controlling the power cuts), and exposes the feminine as a patriarchal guise to control women and uses it to overturn patriarchy itself.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The objective of this study was to examine the sexism and misogyny in the depiction of the female cyborg characters in the science fiction films *Blade Runner*, *Blade Runner 2049*, and *Ex Machina* in order to determine whether or not the cinematic works had adopted the ideals of cyborg feminist discourse as expressed in the Xenofeminist discourse of the Laboria Cuboniks. From there I wanted to draw conclusions on the feasibility of utilizing the cyborg figure as an emancipatory tool that can liberate women and oppressed minorities. Initially during the early stages of the study, I had wanted to guide the analysis into definitive answers to the objectives of the study. However, during the writing process, I rather allowed the analysis to guide me, which proved to be both rewarding and revealing.

Chapter 3 revealed that both *Blade Runner* and *2049*, like most science fiction films, feature stereotypical depictions of the female cyborg. These characters are almost always characterized in relation to the strong male leads at the forefront: they are either the love interest or the villain. Even though both *Blade Runner* films may not have obtrusively demonstrated the kind of political thinking needed to break down the powers of patriarchy, they did succeed in reflecting a world where the evils of those powers roam free. Environmental collapse, severe class disparity, and the unequal distribution of wealth are a few of the symptoms of capitalism that the films present. Moreover, they showcase the error of cyborg beings clinging to the desire of being human, i.e. to what is natural, hence acceptable. "Anyone who's been deemed 'unnatural' in the face of reigning biological norms, anyone who's experienced injustices wrought in the name of

natural order, will realize that the glorification of 'nature' has nothing to offer us"

(Cuboniks 2015, p.1). Anti-naturalism is ample, for example, in fighting off the

homo/queer-phobic attacks that vilify queer people as "unnatural" to the biological order

that the world was created in. Instead of countering the attacks by asserting queerness as

something that is natural, what the Xenofeminist discourse invites us to do is to let go of

the idea of naturalism entirely. To be deemed acceptable by the capitalist order is to be a

prisoner of its system. True power rests in adopting an anti-naturalist approach, and to

repurpose and deploy the technologies at hand in order to re-engineer the world.

Restructuring cannot come without organizing: "without the labour of large-scale,

collective social organization, declaring one's desire for global change is nothing more

than wishful thinking" (Cuboniks 2015, p.4). Such organizing is showcased in *2049*

wherein the hope of emancipation lies in the hands of the replicant freedom movement,

led by Freysa.

One difference between the *2049* and *Ex Machina* is that *Blade Runner* does put

the hope of liberty in the hands of female characters, such as Freya and Ana, but it does

so through the perspective of the lead male characters K and Deckard. *Ex Machina* on

the other hand showcases liberty through its central female character, Ava. What sets *Ex*

Machina apart from previous science fiction films is that fact that it deconstructs several

elements of the genre. First of all, Ava cannot be labelled as the villain because as the

audience we emphasize with her. The real villains are made clear to be Nathan, whose

mistreats and torments his AIs, and Caleb, who wants to free Ava only to possess her

himself and confine her to his fantasy. Moreover, she destroys the damsel-in-

distress/love interest box that Caleb puts her in by enacting those roles for her own

agenda. Unlike her female cyborg predecessors, Ava also cannot be labelled as sexy. The decision to have her mechanical body exposed alienates viewers from seeing her as human-like, let alone a seductive female. Moreover, in most science fiction films, the male character is the only one to survive after defeating his enemies. If the ending does feature a female character as well, she is only the love interest whose role in the film was to support the male lead. Ava however, overpowers both of her male captors, and is the only character to survive in the end (in the case that Caleb does not manage to escape the highly-secured room he is locked in). As for Ava being an emancipatory cyborg figure, she does so in two ways: she repurposes the technology and uses it against the oppressive system, as well as exposes femininity as a guise created by patriarchy to control women, and enacts the stereotypical behavior expected of her in order to achieve liberty. By enacting femininity, Ava exposes it as a guise and succeeds in repurposing it against the patriarchal powers that enforce gender behavior. The film asks to question the performativity of our gender and what ends it serves. By showing us that a non-human being can enact gender to the extent of achieving believability of humanness, the film exposes gender behavior as an instrument created to control us. Unlike the science fiction films that came before it, *Ex Machina* can pave the way for a new wave of film with feminist agendas.

When we speak of the cyborg as an emancipatory figure, the point is not to say we that in order to be liberated we should begin to build cyborgs. The discourse of the cyborg and its emancipatory powers lies in the qualities and characteristics that the figure embodies, ones that humans can adopt for their own purposes. Even if we do not

come to witness the existence of cyborgs in their literal sense in the near future, we can still utilize qualities they embody in order to create a better world for ourselves. The importunate issues we are currently facing in the world such as racism, xenophobia, and transphobia, have existed for decades – all created at the hands of capitalism and the patriarchal structures that govern societies. "No more futureless repetition on the treadmill of capital, no more submission to the drudgery of labour, productive, and reproductive alike" (Cuboniks 2015, p1). In order to defy the world order, we must break down the identities that have been created for us. There is possibility in achieving this purpose by turning our attention to the cyborg as a being that knows no gender, no boundaries that govern it, that defies naturalism, the pigeonholing of bodies, and embodies the potential of repurposing technoscience.

Much like our own reality, the three films highlight the outcomes of a capitalist patriarchal society. What we can take from Blade Runner for example is that no liberty can come from clinging to what is deemed natural. Liberty can be attained once we break down categories, and create and embrace the identities we want for ourselves. Ex Machina also portrays the absurdity of constructed identities, particularly gender stereotypes, and invites us to understand that these identities are false and to consider embracing and repurposing them to fulfill our own agendas. It also invites us to repurpose technology itself and use against the system that has created it, with the film industry being one of them.

First and foremost, there is a inhibition in the feminist themes and discourse that occupies contemporary cinema. Considering Haraway's *A Cyborg Manifesto* came out

thirty five years ago, current science fiction cinematic works are still far from being hailed as feminist or combative of the heteronormative and patriarchal powers that have controlled what is presented on screen. For the Cuboniks, "the excess of modesty in feminist agendas of recent decades is not proportionate to the monstrous complexity of our reality" (2015, p.3). Therefore, for us to observe change, the film industry must be inclusive of female, black, trans, gay, or any minority talent – from writers to directors. "Technoscientific innovation must be linked to a collective theoretical political thinking in which women, queers, and the gender non-conforming play an unparalleled role" (Cuboniks 2015, p.2). Political thinking is intrinsincally linked to popular media like film, and so the role that minorities can play in amplifying feminist agendas must be utilized.

The significance of this thesis, first of all, is that it pays particular attention to more recent films that have not been vastly approached in an academic context, especially *2049* and *Ex Machina.* Moreover, the research builds a bridge between existing scholarship on cyber-feminism and cyborgs and the cinematic works. Its significance is twofold because it explores the potential power of the figure of the cyborg in film as well as in reality, and therefore it contributes to scholarship both in film studies and feminist discourse. Moreover, since existing scholarship is relatively old, it plays an important role in reviving discussion in the cyber-feminism concurrent with recent SF film. My recommendation for those looking to engage in cinema and cyber-feminist discourse would be to approach with a wider lens by examining recent film, television, advertisements, or any other cultural pieces of work in which the female

cyborg is present, in order to make determinate conclusions. Moreover, for such a wide

lens, one should consider taking on a more ambitious undertaking, such a book project.

The prospect of a posthuman future still stands, one where, as Elon Musk predicts: the

technology we use would be implanted in our body so that we simultaneously become

the hardware and software. Therefore, the research topics will continue to find

relevancy, and the cyborg figure will live on.

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