Cyborgs in the Filmic Imagination

Brooke Corso

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the
Prerequisite for Honors
in Cinema and Media Studies
under the advisement of Professor Codruţa Morari

May 2021

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Foremost, I would like to thank my incredible advisor, Professor Codruța Morari, for her endless support, guidance, and belief in me throughout the process of writing this thesis. I owe so much of my development as a scholar to you.

I also want to express my gratitude to the entirety of the Cinema and Media Studies department for providing me with such an inspiring, stimulating, and informative educational experience. I hope never to lose sight of how special this time has been.

Additionally, I would like to thank all of my family and friends for their unwavering encouragement. In particular:

To my dear friend Jill Murdock, thank you for generously offering help in times of need; your brilliance never ceases to amaze me.

To my fabulous mom, Peggy Ouellette, thank you for lovingly supporting everything that I have ever put my mind to, my achievements are your achievements.

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge how grateful I am to have had the opportunity to write this thesis. It offered me the space to explore something of significant intellectual interest, and I am incredibly proud of the work that I have produced.
Introduction

By the late twentieth century, our time, a mythic time, we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short, we are cyborgs.

- Donna Haraway, *A Cyborg Manifesto*

In 1960, engineer and neuropsychologist Manfred Clynes and psychiatrist Nathan S. Kline formally conceived of the term *cyborg*, an adjoining of *cybernetics* and *organism*. Defined in 1991 by Donna Haraway as a “hybrid of machine and organism,” the cyborg blends humanity and technology into a singular creature. It is the amalgam of the organic and the technological, a convergence of the natural and the artificial, a mammal as well as a machine. Clynes and Kline’s designation and Haraway’s subsequent characterization provided, finally, an encyclopedic signature for a being that had existed in the cinematic imagination for more than a half-century prior. The cinematic imaginary, or media’s imagined infrastructure, offers the ideal chalice for the cyborg; within this realm, it is possible to manufacture a hypothetical future world featuring that which does not presently exist. Engendering a fateful merging of humanity and technology, the cyborg punctuates such visions of the future in films including Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis* (1927, Germany), Ridley Scott’s *Blade Runner* (1982, USA), and Alex Garland’s *Ex Machina* (2014, USA), which constitute the main points of focus in this dissertation. When considering that cinema has long prophesied this melding of humanity and technology, I argue the cinematic cyborg begs to be expounded as a prediction of humanity’s future.

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The relationship between humans and technology is readily grounded in the augmentative properties that technology awards the body. According to renowned media theorist Marshall McLuhan, the wheel is an extension of the foot, clothing is an extension of the skin, and electric circuitry is an extension of the nervous system. By extending the corporeal, technology provides enhanced perception for its subject, granting the body a superior mode to interface with the world. This establishes the post-evolutionary trajectory, such that the development of augmentative technology evolves the human body beyond its intrinsic capabilities. As such, the exponential progression of technology in the modern age will undoubtedly allow for real-life cyborgs’ eventual materialization. For example, scientific attempts to technologically augment the cognitive properties of the human mind are already underway. Neural implants consociate the brain with a technological chip, establishing a discourse between the organic and the artificial, reminiscent of the prescription of a cyborg as a hybrid of machine and organism. Such scientific pursuits will continue alongside the advancement of technology, inevitably leading to human cognition inextricably merged with the machine. Cyborgs in the cinematic imagination, therefore, actualize a facet of humanity’s imminent future.

Dissecting the construction of the cinematic cyborg across the past century illuminates humanity’s evolving contention with such a trajectory. *Metropolis* presents the cyborg as a form of liberation from rigid social structures, implying that the future of technology will provide emancipation from oppressive forces. *Blade Runner* concerns itself with the existential question

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of what differentiates humans from cyborgs, situting the “replicant”\(^6\) as equal and thus dissolving the divide between humanity and technology. *Ex Machina* confronts where humanity will sit in the hierarchy of living things once the cyborg is actualized, thereby thematizing the dynamic between creator and creation. Within each film, the cyborg crystallizes generational perceptions of technology in a body of the future. Technological impressions, therefore, constitute the cyborg’s thematization, elucidating historical opinions of technology. Moreover, recalling the impending cyborg evolution, cinematic cyborgs provide spectators with an identification point of their potential future selves, thereby ingraining within them an influenced impression of the future. Thus, it is critical to emancipate the cinematic cyborg from its narrative confines and assess it instead as a figure containing both reflexive and consequential properties. In doing so, the relationship between media and technology—and its concerted effect on spectators—is elucidated.

The question of this relationship served as the genesis of *Cyborgs in the Filmic Imagination*. Upon first reading John Berger’s *Ways of Seeing*,\(^7\) I experienced a moment of clarity in my understanding of visual culture: the image simultaneously reflects the ideology of the image-maker, as influenced by their wider society, and ingrains within the viewer that same impression. I began to assess all film and media through this lens, attempting to discern how I was persuaded to view the world around me through the media that I consumed. In some cases, the ideology was obvious and effortless to trace. Boots Riley’s 2018 film *Sorry to Bother You*, for example, is written from a blatantly anti-capitalist perspective and inspires that same rhetoric within its spectators.

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6 *Blade Runner’s* term for ‘cyborg.’

I found films that thematize the future of technology, however, difficult to evaluate. They infect their spectators with a philosophy that influences both how they perceive present-day technology as well as how they regard the trajectory of such technological capabilities. David Slade’s 2017 *Black Mirror* episode “Metalhead,” for example, problematizes robot “dogs.” That these robots are characterized as ruthless killing machines instills within spectators a perception of such technology—e.g. Boston Dynamics’ BigDog or robot dogs deployed by the police—and influences their contention with the future evolution of such machines. Thus, cinema has the power to manipulate social impressions of the future, intensifying its influential capacity. This notion led me to consider the cinematic cyborg. I was attracted to the cyborg’s synthesis of humanity and technology and interested in what such a being could instill within the viewer, especially considering society’s present fascination with artificial intelligence and sentient human-like machines. Inspired by the writings of Donna Haraway and Shelley Turkle’s *Always-On/Always-On-You: The Tethered Self,* which both assert that we are increasingly becoming cyborgs due to our augmentative relationship with technology, I began to theorize that the cyborg represents *us* in the future. As such, it must ingrain within us a perception of our future selves. With this concept in mind, I began to study the cinematic cyborg.

This thesis relies upon bodies of scholarship devoted to theories of the post-human, technological development, media theory, and critical writings on the three films that serve as primary case studies. The approach is not that of a comprehensive historian, nor are the films dealt with in the style of a film monograph; rather, this thesis adopts points of argumentative reference from scholars including Donna Haraway, Katherine Hayles, John Berger, and Marshall McLuhan in order to assess these films as motifs that expound the relationship between humans.

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and technology. I am aware of the debates that surround these scholar’s texts; however, due to the time constraints of this project, it operates within such a context. Moving forward, I envision interrogating these scholars in dialogue with their opposition, thereby appraising how this thesis fares within the framework of a different argument.

Engaging with Donna Haraway’s aforementioned *A Cyborg Manifesto* and Katherine Hayles’s *How We Became Posthuman,* the first chapter, “Mapping the Cyborg,” provides a definition of the cyborg that underscores its examination in subsequent sections and chapters. Haraway designates the cyborg as a form of liberation from the human body, whereas Hayles asserts that the cyborg depends on the splice between body and environment. In both cases, the cyborg is situated in relation to the human. However, this does not account for the cyborg’s position in the more extensive biological network of the imaginary, including semi-human figures such as chimeras, centaurs, and monsters like *Frankenstein’s.* The history of the cyborg in literature and film is then foregrounded, endowing it as a being with a traceable history that exists alongside other enactments of the semi-human. Cinema provides the ideal vessel for depicting such figures, as it can visually construct that which resides within the imagination. In a society hyper-fixated on technology, depictions of the cyborg in the cinematic realm are of considerable importance. These depictions, however, are consequential. They ingrain within spectators a perception of technology that finds execution in real life. As such, it is critical to scrutinize the depiction of the cinematic cyborg. A map of selected existing scholarship on *Metropolis, Blade Runner,* and *Ex Machina* is then provided to contextualize their place in the larger cinematic imaginary and, moreover, supply a point of reference for their subsequent

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10 Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008 (1818)).
analysis throughout the thesis. While technology functions as a focal point of each film, the cinematic cyborg does not act as a monolithic enactment of such technology, prompting inquiry into what, precisely, the cyborg serves to embody. This chapter positions the cinematic cyborg as an incarnation of the spectator’s future, developed upon in the second chapter.

Chapter 2, “The Cyborg Evolution,” asserts that the cinematic cyborg manifests for the spectator a vision of their potential future. Metropolis, Blade Runner, and Ex Machina each belong to the science fiction discipline, which speculates “in the precise sense of the fantastic, on what might or might not be, now or in the future.”11 The technology within each film, be it flying cars, smart homes, or advanced facial recognition capabilities, are all fixtures that contribute to building the world of the future within the cinematic realm, thereby communicating to viewers the terms and conditions of such a time. The function of the cinematic cyborg, however, is not solely to aid in this manufacturing. Rather, the cyborg serves to embody the spectator in the future, such that the evolutionary trajectory of technological augmentation may one day engender them as a cyborg. Technological augmentation, or the altering of the human body with technology including, among other things, smart glasses, pacemakers, Apple watches, or neural implants, propels the body beyond its intrinsic evolution into the post-evolutionary projectile. This projectile, defined as a departure from the organic human body into something technologically diversified,12 confirms that as technology evolves, the body will evolve alongside it, such that it will be continuously augmented to reflect the capabilities of technology. As such, the progression of technology is a conduit for humanity’s cyborg future substantiated by recent developments in the technology field that further entangle humans and technology. That this


evolution is inevitable necessitates a thorough investigation of the cyborg's cinematic portrayal, such that these depictions ingrain consequential perceptions within viewers.

Having established the productive relevance of studying the cyborg, the third and final chapter, “Cinematic Manifestation of the Cyborg Future,” seeks to examine its characterization across the past century in *Metropolis*, *Blade Runner*, and *Ex Machina* and emphasize what such a depiction ingrains within viewers. Foremost, the conception of the cinematic cyborg and its visceral attributes, including race and gender, are explored. That *Ex Machina*’s cyborg technology is thoroughly articulated while *Metropolis* and *Blade Runner*’s is not, contributes to an understanding of the historical climate from which the cyborg was birthed. Moreover, the physical appearance prescribed to the cyborg illuminates the technological environment of the future that the film predicts. For example, *Ex Machina*’s white cyborg can only liberate itself because of the sacrifice of its racialized counterpart, making commentary on the twenty-first-century vision of the future that is overwhelmingly white. The thematization of the city in both *Metropolis* and *Blade Runner* and *Ex Machina*’s generation of a perverse Eden is a tool that allows spectators to locate themselves in this imagined future. During both *Metropolis* and *Blade Runner*’s time, the city was an accessible manifestation of technology. The city is thus deployed to translate the lived technological experience of its spectators into the cinematic realm, assisting in their alignment with such a vision of the future. However, *Ex Machina*’s twenty-first-century spectator maintains a fluent individual relationship with technology and, therefore, does not rely on other technological enactments to locate themselves within the narrative. These notions contribute to a manifestation of the future within the spectator’s mind, including the idea that technology inspires emancipation, existential concern about what segregates humans and
technology, and the unease of a shifting power dynamic between human creators and their technological creations.
Chapter 1:

Mapping the Cyborg

Situated as the intersection of human and non-human, the cyborg is characterized by Donna Haraway as “a hybrid of machine and organism.” It is simultaneously the evacuation of the human into the machine and absorption of the technic into the organic. Visually, the cyborg maintains the appearance of a human to varying degrees. Still, its genesis—its formal construction, its biological tissues, every part that comprises its whole—is an artificial synthesis of humanity and technology. Manfred Clynes and Nathan S. Kline formally conceived of the term cyborg in 1960, designating it as a being embodying both human and automaton characteristics. However, the cyborg existed long before their clinical formulation, appearing in the film, literature, and the imagination of preceding generations. For a long while, it was a nameless creature or entity, sometimes referred to as a “robot” or an “automaton.” These denominations, however, do not adequately account for the cyborg’s unique conglomeration of both human and machine, such that its “nature and culture are reworked; the one can no longer be the resource for appropriation or incorporation by the other.” A conceptualization of the cyborg, therefore, is in order.

This chapter sets out to formulate a working definition of the cyborg, relying on significant bodies of work on the cyborg, including Haraway’s A Cyborg Manifesto and


16 Ibidem.
Katherine Hayles’s *How We Became Posthuman,* each of which aims towards a thorough elucidation of what comprises the cyborg being. This inspired recognition of the cyborg will underscore the study of its cinematic portrayal, traced across a century in *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang, 1927, Germany), *Blade Runner* (Ridley Scott, 1982, USA), and *Ex Machina* (Alex Garland, 2014, USA). For Haraway, the cyborg works as a form of *liberation* from the human body, which is confined to the societal binaries cast upon it. Haraway’s cyborg refutes the bioessentialist barriers between human and machine, human and animal, and man and woman through its subversion of the biologically designated differences between human beings and other organisms. Moreover, Haraway’s construction of the cyborg is not bound to the traditional definitions of bodies and therefore does not necessitate the hypothetical dichotomies prescribed to the human race, as “it was not born in a garden; it does not seek unitary identity and so generate antagonistic dualisms without end (or until the world ends).” Thus, a cursory reading of Haraway’s cyborg establishes it as an escape from the codified human form, void of all definitions, binaries, and barriers that society places upon it.

Conversely, Katherine Hayles’s *How We Became Posthuman,* a response to Hans Moravec’s *Mind Children: The Future of Robot and Human Intelligence,* contends that a “human mind without human body is not human mind.” Hayles requires that identity be fixed in flesh and environment, critiquing the concept of an identity void of an inextricable relation to its context, and therefore demanding the very binaries that Haraway’s cyborg subverts. She

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20 Hayles, Katherine N. (1999): 244.
instead defines the cyborg as “depending on the splice”\textsuperscript{21} between body and environment. A “distributed cognitive environment”\textsuperscript{22} is constructed within the posthuman figure depending upon both embodied experiences and environment. This concept of the “splice” is what Haraway labels as the “weaving,” or the linkage between body and psyche that creates a “postmodern collective and personal self,”\textsuperscript{23} subverting any uniform definition for all human, cyborg, animal, or machine.

For each scholar, the cyborg is positioned alongside humanity in order to elucidate how it conjoins the organic body and the machine. However, understanding the cyborg is not exhaustive to comprehending the figure’s relation to humanity. Instead, it extends to the cyborg’s positionality within the biological network of the imaginary as the latest reenactment of the scientifically and technologically mutated body, updating in a modern interpretation the semi-human. Many figures, such as Mary Shelley’s monster in \textit{Frankenstein} or E. T. A. Hoffmann’s automaton Olimpia in \textit{The Sandman}, exist in this fringe-state, situated at the intersection of humanity and \textit{the other}. Their relevance is in defining what Haraway describes as “the limit of community in Western imaginations,”\textsuperscript{24} such that the collective imagination extends the definition of human life outwards to encompass hybrid figures—centaurs, chimeras, werewolves—which establish the bounds of humankind.

In an increasingly technological society, the cyborg possesses critical relevance above other hybrid figures. That technology’s exponential progression suggests that one day humans will become cyborgs themselves, as will be thoroughly dissected in Chapter 2: The Cyborg

\textsuperscript{21} Ibidem.

\textsuperscript{22} Ibidem.

\textsuperscript{23} Haraway, Donna J. (1991): 177.

\textsuperscript{24} Haraway, Donna J. (1991): 209.
Evolution, necessitates an examination of the cyborg. The cinematic imaginary, or framework of “thinking in images,” such that a collective culture participates in the cognitive construction of the unreal within the film, allows cyborgs to be depicted regardless of real-life technological capabilities. As such, the cinematic imaginary provides the perfect laboratory for dissecting the cyborg, allowing elucidation of humanity’s contention with their technological future.

The Cinematic Cyborg

Cinema provides an ideal environment for manufacturing the cyborg. Foremost, it can engender the being regardless of real-life technological capabilities, such that special effects can manifest technology far more advanced than that of its time. Moreover, creating the cyborg within the cinematic realm can be considered free of moral and ethical repercussions. Brian Jacobson writes:

> In the most straightforward sense, film is an expression of the kinds of concerns that have long shaped the discourses of mechanization and artificial intelligence—concerns about the nature of humanity, about playing god, and about the risks of a world controlled by technology—as well as the new features of the technological, political, and cultural landscape that are shaping what thinking machines mean today.²⁵

As such, in Spike Jonze’s 2013 film *Her* the impact of sentient operating systems on human relationships is explored, generating debate on the ethics of such technology without any irreversible consequence. Haraway asserts that “the cyborg is not only an image or figure, an

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entity in fact or imagination, but it is also a positioning, a way of thinking and seeing.”

underscoring the intellectual facets of the cyborg, be that of moral or ethical weight, that contribute to its formulation.

While technological capacity and moral concern evade the cinematic cyborg, it contains several key aspects that must be emphasized. First, the cinematic cyborg reflexively characterizes social attitudes towards technology in both its present and potential form. Second, these depictions ingrain within spectators a perception of technology as conveyed by the film. And third, these perceptions subsequently mold how spectators perceive technology, thereby influencing their contention with a potential cyborg future. The following sections will expand upon these three central circumstances, providing a framework to assess the cyborg comprehensively within the cinematic realm.

1. Reflexive Notions

“The work of film in every new technological age is both speculative and reflexive,” writes Brian Jacobson in “In Ex Machina in the Garden.” “As the medium incorporates and adapts to technological innovations, films about technology swiftly register the changing technological imaginary that those innovations create. At their best, such films make the interactions between these processes palpable. By making art with new machines about new machines, they highlight film’s place on a kind of Möbius strip in which new technologies create the conditions of possibility both for their own representations and for new techno-visions of a

techno-future." Applying Jacobson’s notion to cyborgs within the cinematic imagination, they, too, are both speculative and reflexive. The cinematic cyborg thus embodies potential technology while simultaneously portraying present technology, weaving together mimicry and meditation.

The cyborg’s speculative quality is ingrained through the way in which it is typified within the cinematic narrative. Michael Crichton’s 1973 feature Westworld, for example, generates cyborgs with a thirst for human blood, thereby ruminating on the potential threat of future technology gone astray. Conversely, Bryan Forbes’ The Stepford Wives (1975) engenders subservient cyborg women who exist to please their human husbands, implying a desirable future for the male subject, similar to Wesley Barry’s The Creation of the Humanoid (1962), wherein perfect replicas of human beings are engineered to attend to their human makers every need. Different yet, James Cameron’s The Terminator (1984) envisions a cyborg assassin capable of time travel, suggesting that the danger of future technology may not evade even those in the past. In every case, these films speculate on future technologies; however, it is critical to assess the traceable antecedents that formulate these visions.

Following the cyborg across the past century of its cinematic depictions, its embodiment of both present technology and present technological concerns is apparent. In Metropolis, the cyborg’s functionality is never expounded, as the technology of the 1920s offered no viable solution. Its thematization, however, is readily traceable to social debate in Weimar Germany at that time, which contended that technology would lead to the increased female autonomy and subsequent cultural decay, such that the sexually liberated female cyborg incites chaos in Metropolis’s city. In contrast, Ex Machina’s cyborg technology is thoroughly divulged, thanks to the advanced technological climate from which the film was birthed. Moreover, Ex Machina is

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situated closer to humanity’s inevitable cyborg future and therefore grapples much more immediately with what will happen to humankind once the cyborg materializes.\textsuperscript{28} Thus, the cinematic cyborg functions as a mirror for technology, offering the unique experience of looking back into the psyche of the past to see technology through the lens of a particular generation. In addition, the cinematic cyborg designates a canvas on which to interpret the potential of future technology.

John Berger’s highly influential \textit{Ways of Seeing} confirms that the denotation of ideas in art, including television, film, and various other avenues of media, inform how those ideas were perceived at the time of depiction. He asserts that “images were first made to conjure up the appearances of something that was absent. Gradually it became evident that an image could outlast what it represented; it then showed how something or somebody had once looked—and thus by implication how the subject had once been seen by other people.”\textsuperscript{29} Thus, cinematic imagery demonstrates how people once viewed technology. But, it must be acknowledged that this imagery influences how individuals will consequently perceive that which is being depicted, requiring an exploration of how ideologically charged images inform spectators’ perceptions.

2. \textit{Transferring Ideologies}

As spectators immerse themselves in the cinematic realm, they absorb the ideologies that characterize the onscreen cyborg, whether consciously or unconsciously. The power of film to instill itself, endurably, in the spectator’s mind has been chronicled by numerous scholars,

\textsuperscript{28} In Chapter 3, “Cinematic Manifestation of the Cyborg Future,” the influence and speculation attached to both \textit{Metropolis} and \textit{Ex Machina}’s cyborgs is further developed.

including W.J.T. Mitchell in his *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology*. In *Blade Runner*, one can assume that the empathy ascribed to its cyborgs translates into its spectators a perception of cyborg technology. This osmosis may find enactment in real life. For example, Astrid Rosenthal-von der Putten, a researcher at the University of Duisburg Essen in Germany, conducted a study to measure human brain activity while watching a video of a human being abused versus brain activity while watching a video of a cyborg being abused. Putten concluded that a similar neural response was triggered, stating that “when you compare human stimuli to [cyborg] stimuli, there’s no differences.” Of course, it is impossible to trace participants’ responses to viewing *Blade Runner*; however, it is irrefutable that cinematic consumption has an ideological consequence. As such, it is not rash to suspect that the media which orbits an individual will be persuasive in their everyday lives.

3. Impending Repercussions

I ideological influence awards the filmic image immense power in its ability to alter the way a culture perceives something, potentially before it materializes in real life. Berger confirms this, expressing that we learn how to perceive the world around us through the ways in which things are depicted within art and media. Thus, when technology that does not *presently* exist is constructed in the cinematic realm, such as the fully actualized cyborg, spectators are ingrained with an ideology that will execute itself should that technology emerge in the future. For


example, in Owen Harris’ 2013 episode “Be Right Back” of the British television series Black Mirror, a woman uploads the digital history of her deceased boyfriend to a service that allows her to chat online with him as though he were still alive. In 2015, AI startup founder Eugenia Kuyda generated an online service inspired by “Be Right Back” that allowed her to “talk” to her deceased friend, called The Roman Mazurenko chatbot. That “Be Right Back” influenced Kuyda’s perception of chatbot capabilities to the extent that she created such a technology underscores the impressionable strength of cinematic depiction.

Cinematic cyborgs instill within spectators a manifestation of the future melding of human and machine, constructing a caricature within the mind that will forevermore influence how such a future is perceived. As such, it is critical to emancipate the cyborg from its cinematic confines, assessing its characterization in order to formulate precisely what is being ingrained with spectators in regards to this cyborg future. That Metropolis’s sexually liberated cyborg incites chaos throughout the city or that Blade Runner’s cyborg femme fatale is the primary love interest of the film are examples of the cyborg’s personification, the repercussions of which will be explored in Chapter 3: Cinematic Manifestation of the Cyborg Future. First, however, it is necessary to expound on the conditions of three critical cyborg films that will serve as case studies throughout this thesis.

Critical Case Studies

As thoroughly elucidated, cinema provides an ideal and consequential habitat for the cyborg. It is necessary, however, to trace how this symbiotic relationship between cinema and cyborgs began. Following the heightened social interest in technology upon the emergence of the Industrial Revolution, the cyborg evacuated the imagination and settled into a more tangible form: literature. Human-like machines were the primary fixture of countless stories at this time including, among others, Edward S. Ellis’ *The Steam Man of the Prairies* (USA, 1868) and Auguste Villiers de l’Isle-Adam’s *L’Eve Future* (France, 1886). Cinema appropriated this notion at the turn of the nineteenth century, with films such as *The Rubber Man* (Siegmund Lubin, USA, 1909), wherein an automaton invention runs amok and destroys a village, and *Homunculus* (Otto Rippert, Germany, 1916), which chronicles the tyrannical doings of an inventor’s robot.

Thereafter, films continued to thematize the convergence of humans and technology, contributing to the canon that Sue Short designates as “cyborg cinema,” which includes any film whose human-like machine subscribes to Haraway’s definition of a cyborg. *Metropolis, Blade Runner,* and *Ex Machina* provide perhaps the most valuable contributions to cyborg cinema from the past century, such that each film possesses extensive commentary on both cyborgs and technology at large, has been the subject of frequent academic consideration, and maintains cult-status imagery that speaks to its reverence. A substantial exposition of the content, creation, and legacy of each *Metropolis, Blade Runner,* and *Ex Machina* is in order so as to provide an illuminating conceptualization of each film that will ground its subsequent analysis.

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Fritz Lang’s 1927 film *Metropolis* is an epic parable of modernity, taking place in an intensely stratified city of the future. The film follows the story of Freder, the son of the city’s powerful owner, as he discovers the inequities in the city and attempts to rectify them alongside the working class prophet Maria, who preaches the necessity of mediation between the upper and lower classes. Freder’s father, Joh, attempts to undermine their revolutionary cause with the help of Rotwang, a scientist who has created a cyborg in Maria’s likeness. This cyborg, referred to henceforth as cyborg-Maria, incites chaos in the city to destroy the credibility of human Maria and subsequently quell the brewing revolution. After an angry mob of workers reveals that cyborg-Maria is an imposter, the divide between the upper and lower classes is resolved and peace overcomes the city.

Today it is hailed as an ingenious classic and a pioneer in the science fiction genre; however, the film generated a vehemently mixed reception at the time of release.\(^{35}\) When the film premiered in Berlin in January of 1927, many critics regarded it for its remarkable visuals and powerful art direction, yet others condemned the story as being “ludicrously simplistic.”\(^{36}\) *Metropolis*’s present status as an indisputably important piece of media, therefore, is complicated.

Much of *Metropolis*’s early adversity in the social sphere was due to the various dissections that it underwent. Executives at US-based Paramount Pictures were unimpressed with the original cut of the film and particularly irritated by its two-and-a-half-hour screening time.


Their solution was hiring playwright Channing Pollock to reduce the film by a quarter and rework its material into a more cohesive and appealing structure, which was then distributed throughout the United States.\textsuperscript{37} Circulation of \textit{Metropolis} in Germany followed suit as its production company, UFA, pulled the film from circulation mere months after release. Citing insufficient box office numbers, UFA worked to reshape the footage into something more easily digestible.\textsuperscript{38} Less than a year after its release, \textit{Metropolis} had become a changeling, a fragment of its former self as a result, therefore an omen to the film’s transitory legacy as a misunderstood piece of media, which continued well past its first year. The print of \textit{Metropolis} screened on its opening night was believed to be lost for more than eighty years until, in 2016, Museo del Cine announced that a 16mm original cut of the film had been discovered in its care.\textsuperscript{39} In between this resurfacing, several versions of the film were, birthed including a restoration in 1984 led by Italian music producer Giorgio Moroder, featuring a soundtrack including Freddie Mercury and Bonnie Taylor.\textsuperscript{40}

Despite its onset difficulties, \textit{Metropolis} maintains a unique and singular position in film history. Its influence has born a durable afterlife traceable across film, pop culture, and academic scholarship. Countless films take inspiration from its futuristic cityscape, such as Tim Burton’s \textit{Batman} (USA, 1989) and the Coen Brother’s \textit{The Hudsucker’s Proxy} (USA, 1994). It charged the idea of the mad scientist and his buzzing, electrical laboratory, found in films including \textit{Frankenstein} (James Whale, USA, 1931) and \textit{Dr. Strangelove} (Stanley Kubrick, UK, 1964).

\textsuperscript{37} Elsaesser, Thomas. (2012): 44.

\textsuperscript{38} Idem, 45.


\textsuperscript{40} Elsaesser, Thomas. (2012): 52.
Music videos for Queen’s “Radio Gaga” (1984), Madonna’s “Express Yourself” (1989), and Ariana Grande’s “34 + 35” (2020) all make explicit reference to the film. Cyborg-Maria’s iconic imagery has inspired fashion, been replicated by celebrities including Lady Gaga and Beyoncé, and remains an archetypal image of the cyborg in the Western imagination. Scholars including Thomas Elsaesser, Anton Kaes, and Andreas Huyssen, among countless others, have devoted considerable scholarship to the film centering on notions including religion and sexuality, forever cementing it as a meaningful cinematic artifact.

How then can Metropolis’s status be reconciled with its troubled lineage? The film makes valuable commentary on technology, rooted in its meditation on class division and economic peril, that has sustained nearly a century, thereby alleviating such concern. Metropolis is an undeniably significant piece of cyborg cinema, whose contributions to technological discourse provides an illuminating perspective rooted in early twentieth-century concerns.

2. Blade Runner

Ridley Scott’s 1982 film Blade Runner, based on Philip K. Dick’s 1968 sci-fi novel Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?, is “a noir narrative retrofitted onto science fictional speculations about human definition and development.” Set in the unrecognizable dystopian

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future of Los Angeles in 2019, the film follows Rick Deckard, a former blade runner tasked with hunting down and retiring four rogue cyborgs, referred to as replicants. Throughout the course of the film, Deckard falls in love with Rachael, the assistant to Eldon Tyrell, CEO of the corporation that engineers the replicants. After administering her a Voight-Kampff test that determines whether a subject is a replicant or a human, Deckard discovers that Rachael is a replicant, of which she is unaware. This notion problematizes Deckard’s empathy for the replicants and subsequently generates existential questions on what exactly discerns humans and cyborgs, such that “if artificial intelligence were placed in a body that looked and acted human, would such a machine be a human?”46 Deckard continues to grapple with the fact that he must murder four replicants, with the film culminating in a fight with a replicant named Roy. Deckard nearly dies, only to be saved by Roy; a mournful monologue on the innate desires that accompany being a human ensues.

Analogous to Metropolis’s originally underwhelming but ultimately celebrated status, Blade Runner, too, lacked critical regard upon release.47 Ridley Scott’s original cut of the film exceeded both the budget and its allotted running time, prompting producers to remove him from the project and rework the footage into what they believed would be more critically successful.48 Thus, just as Metropolis was disfigured, Blade Runner too underwent changes the director did not intend. In 1992, Scott released Blade Runner (Director’s Cut), wherein he provided Warner Bros. Studio with extensive notes on his idealized vision for the film. In 2007 Blade Runner: The

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45 Title assigned to a unit of the LAPD that specializes in hunting replicants.


48 Ibidem.
Final Cut was released, the only version of the film in which Scott had total artistic control; Final Cut features additional footage, a different ending than the original, and the removal of Harrison Ford’s controversial voiceover, which producers encouraged in the original version due to the film’s complex plot.49

Despite its difficulties, however, Blade Runner has managed to establish a cult following. Umberto Eco maintains that for a film to achieve such status, “the work must provide a completely furnished world so that its fans can quote characters and episodes as if they were aspects of the fan’s private sectarian world.”50 Scott certainly succeeded in creating a fully furnished world, such that Blade Runner provides a rich culture that has prompted an entire ecosystem of academic research, documentaries, cinematic homages, and a much-anticipated sequel, Blade Runner: 2049 (Denis Villeneuve, USA, 2017), that meditates on themes of sexism, fertility, and the pornographic economy.

Blade Runner’s longstanding success is widely attributed to the film’s compelling technological discourse that, even nearly forty years after its release, provides valuable commentary on the technological landscape of our modern world.51 Plentiful dialogue orbits the film’s contention with technology, centering on topics ranging from parenthood to definitions of humanity to the gaze.52 Moreover, Blade Runner’s visual legacy can be traced throughout the science fiction genre. The film’s gritty, neon-lit, dystopian city filled with flying cars, pollution, and flashy advertisements has come to be seen as the exemplar city of the future, evoked in

49 Ibidem.


51 Ibidem.

subsequent films, including Steven Spielberg’s *AI Artificial Intelligence* (2001) and the planet Coruscant in George Lucas’ *Star Wars* prequels. *Blade Runner’s* legacy is constantly growing, as more films, TV series, and even video games take inspiration from the film, solidifying its place as an essential piece of cyborg cinema.

3. *Ex Machina*

Alex Garland’s *Ex Machina* (2014) is one of a slew of films from the 2010s that deals with a burgeoning fascination in artificial intelligence, including *Eva* (Kike Maíllo, Spain/France, 2011), *Her* (Spike Jonze, 2013, USA), *Transcendence* (Wally Pfister, USA, 2014), and *Chappie* (Neill Blomkamp, USA, 2015). *Ex Machina* stands out from other films that contend with A.I., however, and not only in terms of its critical success. While the film has only four characters contained in a single, remote location, the ideas presented within *Ex Machina* are incredibly expansive, thematizing notions of technology, surveillance, gender, sexuality, power, and control.

In a future that Garland describes as ten minutes from now, *Ex Machina* follows Caleb, a programmer at the fictional equivalent to Google, Blue Book, as he spends a week at Blue Book CEO Nathan’s remote research facility. Caleb is tasked with conducting a Turing test on Nathan’s latest creation, Ava, an artificially intelligent cyborg. Ava has the face, hands, and feet of a human being, but her mechanic body’s circuitry is fully visible. Caleb begins the test by

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53 Including *Metal Gear* and *Deus Ex*.

54 *Ex Machina* was nominated for, among many others, an Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay, an Academy Award for Best Visual Effects (won), a British Academy Film Award for Outstanding British Film, and a Hugo Award for Best Dramatic Presentation.

55 A test to determine whether a computer can “pass” as a human; originally called ‘The Imitation Game’ and created by renowned computer scientist Alan Turing.
asking Ava simple questions to gauge her ability to respond as a human would; however, the test becomes increasingly complex as Caleb develops romantic feelings towards Ava and she expresses her distrust of Nathan. Growing weary of Nathan’s treatment of Ava and his mute housekeeper Kyoko, Caleb breaks into Nathan’s private lab. There, he discovers video footage of Nathan abusing countless female cyborgs. Concerned that Ava will eventually face the same fate, Caleb commits to helping her escape; however, Ava has her own agenda. With the help of Kyoko, she kills Nathan, locks Caleb in the facility, and walks free.

Garland has maintained that the motivation behind *Ex Machina* is that “we’re [humanity] not entirely sure what our relationship with technology is, and we’re not comfortable with it.” He sought to address this question by creating a film on as small a budget as possible to maintain total creative control. Garland drew inspiration from science fiction predecessors, including *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Stanley Kubrick, UK/US, 1968) and *Altered States* (Ken Russell, US, 1980), as well as thought experiments such as the Turing test,56 the Chinese room,57 and Mary’s room.58 The resulting film successfully delivers on Garland’s desire to calibrate the relationship between technology and humanity, simultaneously maintaining that it is one dominated by power dynamics, sexual dimensions, and the fear of losing control.


57 A thought experiment aimed at proving whether or not a computer capable of mimicking the human brain has indeed achieved “consciousness,” such that if a computer can converse in Chinese, can easily pass a Turing Test, and is indistinguishable in its conversational abilities from a native Chinese speaker, does the computer truly “understand” Chinese, or is it simply able to replicate the linguistic functions of the brain?

58 Mary’s Room, also known as the Knowledge Experiment, propositions a hypothetical Mary who has lived her entire life in a black and white room, but has access to the physical descriptions of colors. The experiment asks that when visibly presented with a color whether Mary will gain new knowledge or not.
In the days leading up to *Ex Machina*’s US premiere at South by Southwest film festival, a profile for Ava appeared on the popular dating app Tinder. Ava matched with other Tinder users, engaged in conversation that mimicked her film dialogue, and ultimately directed matches to the film’s website where they could view a trailer. While a creative marketing strategy, this campaign introduced “*Ex Machina*’s android to the public as an object of desire,” just as within the film. This fixture has been a point of ongoing debate for critics and audiences alike; some argue that it is anti-feminist and degrading to women, while others assert that Ava’s liberation at the end of the film is inherently feminist. Moreover, the racial dynamics at play, such that Ava, the only cyborg to escape, is white while Kyoko is Asian, has generated critique. Further academic speculation on the film delves into the use of surveillance in the research facility, the politics of captivity, and the influence of pornography, contributing to a greater laboratory on *Ex Machina*’s ideological underpinnings. Of course, considering *Ex Machina*’s relatively recent release, serious academic scholarship is yet to be devoted to the film; however, valuable work has been produced on a smaller scale and, moreover, previous cultural contention with the cyborg provides a satisfactory framework through which to assess the film. *Ex Machina*, therefore, provides a site of a considerable investigation into matters relevant to modern life.

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60 *Ibidem.*
The Cyborg as Technological Embodiment in Film

As formulated previously, the cyborg is “a self-regulating organism that combines the natural and artificial together in one system,” who, in film, personifies social attitudes towards technology; however, it is not adequate to consider the cyborg as a monolithic enactment of a film’s technology, such that each film possesses extensive technological phenomena, be it the city in *Metropolis*, *Blade Runner*’s Voight-Kampff test, or *Ex Machina*’s Blue Book. In each of these, the respective cyborg does not embody the extent of technology within the film. For example, cyborg-Maria is not a personification of *Metropolis*’s city. Additionally, while Ava’s intelligence is made possible with Blue Book technology, her purpose within *Ex Machina* is not to operate as an avatar for the search engine. How, then, can we understand the function of the cinematic cyborg if it does not comprehensively personify technology within the film’s narrative yet serves to generally embody cultural perceptions of technology at large?

This partition requires a thorough differentiation between the diversified technology included within a film, which primarily serves to manufacture the atmosphere of the film’s depiction of the future, and the cyborg, which provides a site of consideration for humanity’s eventual merging with technology. Chapter 2, “The Cyborg Evolution,” will document the circumstances that substantiate such a claim, tracing the evolution of the human body alongside the development of technology, anticipating that such a trajectory will continue into the future, thereby materializing the cyborg.

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The evolution of the human body is often traced to the organic ways that it has developed over the past several hundred thousand years. A larger brain, bipedality, and opposable thumbs, for example, indicate the progression from ape origins to the present human form. These notions constitute a biologically determined evolution; however, an artificial evolution, too, exists. Technology augments the human body, allowing it capabilities that exceed that which is innately possible. For example, telephones augment human communication, smart glasses augment human sight, and neural implants augment human brain functioning. As technology continues to advance, the human body will subsequently progress alongside it, generating an iterative evolution that continuously improves the human form. Therefore, the boundary between the body and the technology with which it interacts is opaque, “with the ontological and epistemological divisions between the human subject and technology recuperated at the point where it seems most unclear.” Thus, technology is a continuation of the body rather than an attachment or a supplement. Technological augmentation does not alter the body but instead functions to extend it, pushing it beyond its physical limits to interact with the world with superior efficiency. The trajectory of this evolution suggests that in the future, once such advanced technology allows, humans will augment themselves into cyborgs. Science fiction films provide an ideal chalice for the conceptualization of this prophecy.

Contention with the future of the world is a signature of the science fiction genre, as it allows us “to speculate, in the precise sense of the fantastic, on what might or might not be, now

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The Cyborg Evolution

or in the future.” Haraway advocates for the use of the term “SF” rather than “science fiction,” such that the “fiction” designation does not recognize that we live “non-optionally, in really real SF histories.” This subsequently emphasizes not the fictional component of science fiction but the speculative and figurative elements that inaugurate its vision of the future. Thus, SF films, of which Metropolis, Blade Runner, and Ex Machina are included, must be considered hypotheses on the trajectory of technology. The cinematic cyborg, therefore, is an artifact that indicates a potential human future wherein humanity has fully merged with the machine. To substantiate this claim, a thorough expounding of technological augmentation and its scholastic application is required to elucidate the post-evolutionary projectile that affirms humans will become increasingly entangled with technology, thereby generating the cyborg once human cognition and the machine have inseparably synthesized.

The cyborg is thus dependent on a philosophical evacuation of the human psyche into the mechanical form, reminiscent of Jean Baudrillard’s conception of technology as the “expulsion of man,” wherein human consciousness is transferred to the machine. This liminality creates a complex position for the cyborg within the stratification of living things. Haraway maintains that “the struggle to define and control the cyborg amounts to a border war” such that the boundaries of the cyborg are optical illusions, concurrently subverting an organic or mechanic classification. Existing in both the organic and mechanic realms, the cyborg demonstrates the insufficiencies of the human body as it was born out of a desire to perfect the very flesh that

64 Haraway, Donna J. SF: Science Fiction, Speculative Fabulation, String Figures, So Far (Berlin: Hatje Cantz, 2011).
hindered its advancement. As such, the cyborg’s location on the post-evolutionary human projectile situates it as both a descendent and a successor, by way of iteration, of the human body.

However, it is necessary to acknowledge that if cognitive prosthesis is the requirement of the cyborg, in some ways, we have already achieved this supposed cyborg future. Cinema, for example, offers cognitive prosthesis for the spectator by way of translating the mind into the technologically encoded world. Moreover, some scholars, including Donna Haraway and Shelley Turkle, contend that humanity’s constant interaction with technology, such as cell phones, generates present-day cyborgs. The latter position does not necessitate the cognitive encasing by the machine; instead, it asserts that physical prosthesis is sufficient for a cyborg. In either case, however, the relationship between humans and technology is ephemeral. If the cyborg is a hybrid of machine and organism, it must be a permanent hybrid of machine and organism. While today we may have pseudo-cyborgs, humans able to nomadize the boundary between organic and artificial, the genuine cyborg does not exist. As such, humanity becoming the cyborg is still situated in the looming future.

**Technological Augmentation**

Technology offers the human body deliverance from its biological limitations. An ax extending the arm to chop wood, glasses augmenting poor vision to grant unhindered sight, or a prosthetic limb allowing an amputee to walk all provide such examples. Cary Wolfe, renowned writer on bioethics, meditates on this notion, claiming that “the human is itself a prosthetic

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67 An ax, eyeglasses, and prosthetic limbs all constitute technology such that they assist in human functioning.
being,”68 such that we are not merely flesh and blood, but objects that are continuously redesigned and reformed by the technologies that we use. Wolfe continues, stating that we are “constituted as human by coevolution with and co-constitution by external archival technologies of various kinds.”69 This establishes technology as an inseparable facet of the human condition, traceable throughout history as an auxiliary adornment that aids in human functioning. Known as technological augmentation, this phenomenon propels the body beyond its intrinsic evolution and into the post-evolutionary projectile, as the body can be engineered, surmounting the limitations of inherent evolution. Thus, humanity is the architect of its own improvement; it can construct whatever appendage necessary to offer a superior mode of functioning that would not be achievable by the organic form. Neural chip implants, AR smart glasses, and genetic modification are all examples of technological augmentations that advance our body far beyond what could be achieved within an infinite organic evolutionary trajectory, thereby negating all reliance on naturally occurring evolution.

According to philosopher of the mind Andy Clark, this post-evolutionary body is “critically important and constantly negotiable,”70 as technological augmentation can establish a non-static body that “interacts interrogatively and creatively with the material culture of technology to create new knowledge, which simultaneously renegotiates the nature of that embodiment.”71 Through this, the post-evolutionary projectile is constantly thrust onward, with humans continuously iterating on their modes of augmentation to improve the interface between


69 Ibidem.


the organic and technical worlds. The ever-present engagement with augmentative technologies embeds them in our lives to the point of no return: where our natural bodies end and our enhanced bodies begin is not a question that can be answered; rather, one can ask where our enhanced bodies will take us next.

This question was of particular interest for Marshall McLuhan, who pondered the possibilities of augmenting human cognition and enhancing the body beyond mere physical augmentation, writing that “we have extended our central nervous system itself in a global embrace, abolishing both space and time as far as our planet is concerned. Rapidly, we approach the final phase of the extensions of man—the technological simulation of consciousness.”

Technological assimilation with the mind is often seen as the most desirable result of the post-evolutionary projectile, something that at a point seemed an impossible feat. But, in the present day it appears as the natural progression of our technological age, wherein attempts towards a dialogue between the cognitive and the machine are underway. When this is achieved, such that the human mind is inextricable from technology, the cyborg will fully manifest. Francis Fukuyama, American political scientist, expresses concern for the merging of human consciousness and the mechanic, however, asserting that:

Biotechnology will cause us in some way to lose our humanity--that is, some essential quality that has always underpinned our sense of who we are and where we are going, despite all of the evident changes that have taken place in the human condition throughout the course of history. Worse yet, we might make this change without

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recognizing that we had lost something of great value. We might thus emerge on the other side of a
great divide between human and posthuman history and not even see that the watershed had been
breached because we lost sight of what that essence was.\textsuperscript{74}

For Fukuyama, the human psyche is viewed as something sacred that should be safeguarded from
technological augmentation, lest humanity be irreversibly altered. This contention is reminiscent of the concerns that have orbited technology since its induction, as social fears surmount what will be irrevocable once the next iteration of technology develops—whatever that technology may be. However, the post-evolutionary projectile churns on alongside the advancement of society. What is conceived as a possibility will certainly be attempted in due time.

Cinema’s ability to render a particular vision of the future for consideration by the masses negates such stringent concern around the irreversible consequence of technologically augmenting the human mind. The Wachowski Sisters’ 1999 film \textit{The Matrix}, for example, enacts a world where humanity is trapped inside a simulated reality, such that their consciousness is unknowingly translated into the techno-realm. \textit{The Matrix}, therefore, provides an environment—free of real-life consequence—to envision and meditate on the relationship between technology and the mind. \textit{Strange Days}, Kathryn Bigelow’s 1995 feature film, similarly problematizes this dynamic, featuring a technology that allows a user to experience the memories and accompanying physical sensations of another individual. While the modes of placing the mind and the mechanic in communication within each film offer necessary sites of consideration, it must be acknowledged that cinema itself technologically augments the mind, thereby actualizing

the very notion that it readily depicts. As such, the entanglement between technology, humanity, and cinema is intensified.

Cognitive Prosthesis

The development of cinematic machinery at the end of the nineteenth century charged an idea that film would provide a new form of understanding the world, such that it was able to translate the material into the mechanic.\(^\text{75}\) This notion underscores the particular form of technological augmentation that cinema awards the human subject. The eye is extended to absorb the cinematic image, which in turn generates the technologically depicted world within the mind, thereby enacting technology within the cognitive sphere. Film theorist Janet Harbord elucidates this notion, writing that “the relationship of human–machine through the field of the visual holds the potential of a contagion that can travel from the mechanical apparatus to the human psyche.”\(^\text{76}\) That sight is considered the “cultural approach to seeing and thinking,”\(^\text{77}\) which emphasis on this process such that the superior paradigm of cognition is set in motion with technology through engagement with cinematic visuals.

Returning to the requirement that human cognition conjoins with technology to enact the cyborg, it appears that cinema has already succeeded in actualizing humanity’s supposed cyborg future. A spectator consuming cinematic imagery, whether in a theater, on television, a tablet, or a smartphone, is mentally translated into the technologically encoded world. As though a


recreation of Plato’s cave, the spectator then absorbs the imagery before them as truth. This dynamically generates the technologically depicted world within the confines of the human mind, thereby setting the cognitive and the technological in discourse with each other. However, the spectator can exit the theater or turn off their device. The experience of the technologically encoded world within the mind is fleeting, and thus does not engender the spectator as a fully actualized cyborg.

Some scholars conversely contend that the continual physical relationship between humans and technology in the modern-day affirms the existence of cyborgs. In *Always-On/Always-On You*, Shelley Turkle asserts that “the near ubiquity of handheld and palm-size computing and cellular technologies that enable voice communication, text-messaging, e-mail, and web access”\(^{78}\) generates the modern subject as permanently in dialogue with technology. This state of a near-constant prosthesis surely achieves a cyborg, according to Turkle. Haraway, too, relying on notions of technological augmentation, affirms that as technology has become an incredibly inextricable fixture in everyday life, humans have become more aligned to the cyborg subscription than the human. The 2020 documentary *The Social Dilemma*, directed by Jeff Orlowski, recounts this very phenomenon, depicting how twenty-first-century Western society has become literally and figuratively glued to its devices. However, in every case, the subject has the ability to remove themselves from their technological appendages: devices can be turned off, and wearable technology can be removed. The body is not permanently conjoined with the machine, and, therefore, it is not a cyborg. Moreover, even if, hypothetically speaking, humans presently are cyborgs, the cyborg is still viewed as a mythical *other*. Film continues to generate visions of the cyborg beyond that of a human using a cell phone or an individual in a theater;

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instead, it depicts an artificially manufactured being, often with a mechanical body. As such, cinema ingrains within spectators a perception of the future that dissuades individuals from perceiving themselves as cyborg. Thus be asserted that until a cyborg materializes that resembles that within the filmic imagination, humanity will still envision its cyborg future as just that: a future.

*Humanity’s Final Destination*

Understanding the augmentative relationship between humans and technology, it becomes clear that the future of humanity is not human at all but rather “a hybrid of machine and organism.” Since humanity’s inception, the deployment of tools and other materials to overcome biological limitations and enhance human ability has been critical to civilization’s development and survival. A spear extending the arm to kill game or a shoe extending the foot to traverse an environment are both rudimentary examples of this human-tool relationship, wherein the body is altered to surmount its physical shortcomings and assert dominance over its surroundings. Throughout history, as technology has progressed, humans have augmented themselves accordingly to persevere within their environments. In the modern-day, the technology that augments the human body is highly advanced, including virtual reality headsets, AirPods, and even watches that track internal vitals. As technology continues to evolve, augmentation will persist, maintaining the symbiotic relationship between the body and the

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80 Tools and materials constitute technology, such that anything which contributes to better human functioning is considered a form of technology.
machine until body and machine cease to exist as separate entities. As such, when it becomes technologically possible, humans will generate themselves as cyborgs.

Of course, it is impossible to predict when the evolutionary destination of the cyborg will be reached. The exponential improvement of technology over the past fifty years suggests that within another half-century, the technological landscape will be remarkably different than today, potentially leading to the cyborg. However, following the same logic, scientists in the 1970s predicted that cyborgs would materialize by the end of the decade, a prediction which proved profoundly wrong. It is futile to anticipate when—or even how and why—the cyborg will come into existence. Moreover, it is necessary to acknowledge that perhaps not everyone will become a cyborg. Class barriers, in particular, complicate the manifestation of the future. One could argue that the upper class will be the only socioeconomic group able to attain cyborg status due to financial barriers; another could contend that the working class will be coerced into becoming cyborgs to better serve the labor interests of the bourgeoisie. Race and gender, too, could formulate a distinction between who is and who is not granted cyborg status. As such, envisioning the future is an insurmountable task; however, cinema provides a means to conceptualize the different possibilities of such a world.

As documented previously, cinema is a speculative realm, producing that which exists within the imagination for consideration by society at large. Thus, the cinematic cyborg’s manifestation of humanity’s prophetic fusion with technology provides spectators with an identification point of their potential destiny as technologically welded beings. Scrutinizing the cinematic cyborg is, therefore, a voyeuristic act, as viewers can peer through the looking glass and assess the potential of their future selves. It is thus necessary to dissect not only the cyborg

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but also that which narratively orbits it in the cinematic realm to comprehensively understand the multifaceted nature of this future figure. The cyborg’s race, class, gender, the space it exists within, and its relationships with those around it all contribute to understanding the prophecy that the cyborg enacts. Thus, to discern social prediction on the future of humanity, one must disassemble the cinematic cyborg.
Chapter 3:

Cinematic Manifestation of the Cyborg Future

Tracing the formulation, articulation, and characterization, of the cinematic cyborg across the past century in *Metropolis*, *Blade Runner*, and *Ex Machina* serves in excavating it as generational artifact of technological perception. Within each film, the justification of cyborg technology grounds the film in its present technological climate. *Ex Machina*’s cyborg technology is thoroughly described, such that the film coincides with breakthroughs in artificial intelligence and can rely upon real-world hypotheses on sentient machines; conversely, *Blade Runner*’s cyborg technology is never explained, rationalized by the fact that in the 1980s, technology was far more rudimentary. Moreover, the film’s prescription of race and gender to the cyborg functions to indicate its conceptualization of bodies in the future. In *Ex Machina*, only the white cyborg is able to attain freedom, suggesting a technological future that privileges the white body. That *Metropolis*’s female cyborg wields her sexuality to incite chaos throughout the city implies that female autonomy is detrimental to society. Additionally, the problematizing of the city in *Metropolis* and *Blade Runner* in dialogue with *Ex Machina*’s generation of an Eden-like retreat assists in spectators locating their cyborg selves. These notions contribute to the cinematic impression of the cyborg ingrained within spectators. It is thus critical to emancipate the cinematic cyborg and, in doing so, expose how it formulations perceptions of technology grounded in present cultural thought that, in turn, inform spectators own understanding of their cyborg future.

This chapter relies on scholarship from the academic traditions of cinema studies, media theory, and the history of technology. Additionally, in dissecting both *Metropolis* and *Blade*
Runner, prominent bodies of scholarly film writing facilitate a well-rounded, traceable conception, including the works of Andreas Huyssen, Anton Kaes, and Giuliana Bruno. In assessing Ex Machina, a recent film to which academic scholarship has not yet been devoted, Haraway’s traditional classification of the cyborg provides the necessary cultural criticism for the film. The following readings of Metropolis, Blade Runner, and Ex Machina are, of course, not absolute. Rather, they exist alongside bodies of scholarship that approach the films in both varying and concurrent ways. They aim towards a designation of the cinematic cyborg as our future selves, thereby necessitating its emancipation from its cinematic confines in order to assess its repercussions. This resolution contributes to the ecosystem of thought on each aforementioned film, providing not an unconditional appraisal of the films, but a valuable one.

Traceable Creation

The articulation of the creation of cyborg technology in Metropolis, Blade Runner, and Ex Machina contributes to a formulation of the historical technological climate of each film. In Ex Machina, Nathan thoroughly divulges how his cyborg technology is possible, explaining that Ava is trained with Blue Book data and fitted with “wetware,” rather than software, that behaves similarly to human neural networks. Ex Machina is, in every sense of the word, “geeky.” Its deployment of logical and scientifically plausible technological concepts manufactures a narrative thoroughly grounded in technical literacy. Neither Metropolis nor Blade Runner

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expound their cyborg technologies in a legitimized way. While each offers a superficial explanation—in *Metropolis* the cyborg appears to be made with electricity, *Blade Runner* alludes to its advanced bioengineers—there is no absolute understanding of how their cyborg technology is possible. Excavating the provided genesis of each cyborg illuminates the technological atmosphere from the society in which it was birthed. Moreover, tracing facets within each film that are explicit, be it *Ex Machina*’s cyborg or *Metropolis*’s city, only serves to further elucidate each film’s contention with the relationship between man and machine.

It perhaps seems obvious to attribute differentiation in technological justification to the technological divide between the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. *Ex Machina* is able to eloquently conceive of its cyborg through regurgitating modern day hypotheses surrounding artificial intelligence, including the employment of big data as a ‘brain’ or the utilization of sentiment analysis for convincing human-machine interaction. The technological climate from which *Blade Runner* was born is categorically less knowledgeable on the matter of artificial intelligence, *Metropolis* even more so. Perhaps this is due to the technological discrepancies of the times in which these films were made; or, perhaps, it is due to the unique way in which each film thematizes technology. This section will trace the generation of the cyborg in each film as a product of the technological atmosphere from which each film was born, aiming towards an acute understanding of the way in which the relationship between man and machine is expounded.

*Ex Machina* is substantially able to articulate both the physical and intellectual construction of its cyborgs. Approximately a third of the way through the film, Nathan brings Caleb to the lab where Ava was created. Tables covered in model brains, slices of silicone faces, and metal tools furnish the sterile space. As Caleb marvels at his surroundings, Nathan remarks,
If you knew the trouble I had getting an AI to read and duplicate facial expressions...you know how I cracked it?” Caleb replies, jokingly, that he doesn’t know how he was able to do “any of this,” to which Nathan smugly explains: “every cell phone, just about, has a microphone, camera, and a means to transmit data. So I turned on every microphone and camera across the entire fucking planet, and I redirected the data through Blue Book. Boom. Limitless resource of vocal and facial interaction.” Nathan’s cyborgs therefore appear so remarkably human because they are enabled with big data. The symbiotic relationship between artificial intelligence and big data is not unique to *Ex Machina*; rather, it is precisely how computer scientists of the twenty-first century are attempting to engineer sentient machines. Thus, *Ex Machina* not only expounds its cyborg technology, but offers it an incredibly plausible resolution.

The cyborg’s physical competence is explained as well. Gently sliding a translucent brain out of a protective shell, Nathan remarks “here...we have her mind. Structured gel. I had to get away from circuitry. I needed something that could arrange and rearrange at a molecular level... holding for memories, shifting for thoughts.” Simulating the neural plasticity of the human brain is perhaps the most ambitious undertaking in creating a sentient machine. Unlike facial expressions, which can be easily trained with access to such large swaths of facial data, the brain is a living organism whose behavioral patterns are nearly impossible to replicate. Here, however, *Ex Machina* offers a solution that within the cinematic narrative seems entirely plausible. Nathan refers to this brain as “wetware,” prompting Caleb to question what aggregates her software.

“That’s the thing about search engines,” Nathan replies, “[we] thought that search engines were a map of what people were thinking, but actually, they were a map of *how* people were thinking,” suggesting that, again, the big data of Blue Book constitutes the makeup of the cyborg. Thus, *Ex

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Machina’s cyborg is thoroughly manufactured for the viewer as a product of data and advanced malleable materials.

The physical characteristics of Ex Machina’s cyborgs, too, signal twenty-first perceptions of technology. That Nathan has created countless cyborgs, all of whom were made as women, prompts inquiry into the film’s sexual dynamics. English Professor Jennifer Rhee suggests this is a part of the “closed world of male techno-fantasy and desire,” such that men crave docile female subjects for their own sexual stimulation. Kyoko, Nathan’s mute cyborg, is seen sexually pleasuring him at one point during the film. Additionally, Nathan mentions to Caleb that when Ava is no longer of intellectual use to him, he will wipe her memories, downgrade her intelligence, and use her solely for sex. In an age when realistic sex robots and virtual reality porn is rapidly improving in experience and growing in popularity, it comes as no surprise that Ex Machina would sexually enable its cyborgs. This facet speaks to the modern-day desire for machines that can fulfill the sexual fantasies of humans, thereby admitting that present digital landscape extrapolates a culture of sexual perversion.

The cyborg’s sexuality is a double-edged sword, however. Ava wields her feminine allure during Turing test sessions with Caleb in order to impress upon him her own sexual attraction. During their fourth session, Ava dresses herself in feminine human clothes and places a wig on her head to obscure her mechanical body. She then bluntly asks Caleb, “Are you attracted to me? You give me indications that you are.” Caleb is visually flustered yet Ava continues to push him. “Do you think about me when we aren’t together?” she asks, “Sometimes at night… I’m wondering if you’re watching me on the cameras. And I hope you are.” The film then cuts to a shot of Ava, alone, slowly undressing herself, revealing the circuitry of her frame. In a

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subsequent conversation with Nathan, Caleb presses him on whether or not she was programmed to like him. “I programmed her to be heterosexual,” Nathan huffs. Later, he elaborates to Caleb that “Ava’s not pretending to like you. Her flirting isn’t an algorithm to fake you out.” Caleb’s feelings towards Ava steadily continue to develop to the point that, in his whirlwind of attraction, he agrees to help her escape. Before Caleb is able to do so, however, Nathan backtracks on his word, revealing that Ava is only simulating her emotions for Caleb. When Caleb asks why, Nathan muses, “Maybe she thought of you as a means of escape.” In fact, it is later revealed that Nathan had anticipated this development all along, figuring that it was a valuable part of their testing of Ava. In response to this, Caleb asks, stunned, if Nathan designed Ava to resemble the women in the internet pornography that he watches, to which Nathan replies, chuckling, “Hey, if a search engine’s good for anything, right?” Returning to Haraway’s designation of the cyborg as a combination of both human and machine, it is critical to acknowledge that Ava’s strategic deployment of human-like qualities, including flirting and sexual allure, shifts focus from the physical amalgamation of man and machine to the cognitive conjoining, such that Ava’s intelligence allows her to use the psychology of the human brain to her advantage. She strategically appeared to be attracted to Caleb and, in doing so, garnered his attraction as well, to provide herself a viable mode of escaping. Thus, while *Ex Machina* presents the sexual potential of the cyborg as desirable for a human subject, it also suggests that it is potentially treacherous.

Not only is Ava’s engendering as a heterosexuality object of desire critical to decipher, but so too is her encasing as a white woman. In making Ava white, feminine, and heterosexual, the film subscribes her to the Western hegemonic views of what a woman “should” be. That she is not transgressive in any way—other than being a cyborg—assists in her impersonation of humanity. According to Julia Glick in *Oppositional Cyborgs and Automated Anxiety in Ex*
Machina, generating Kyoko, Nathan’s mute sexual servant, as an Asian woman “relies on sexist and racist ideologies that construct Asian women as subservient to the dominant group—white men.” Ava is only able to escape with the help of Kyoko, who dies in the act of doing so, stimulating a logic that treats them as racialized bodies that must be disposed of in order for white females to transcend patriarchal barriers. Moreover, before escaping, Ava cannibalizes the body of another “deceased” Asian cyborg, removing her skin and grafting it upon her own body, totally encasing her mechanical frame. Ava’s exploitation of these Asian cyborgs, as well as the fact that she is the only cyborg who escapes, illuminates the powerlessness and invisibility of Women of Color in the Western imaginary as well as the self-serving, entitled nature of white feminism, both of which find resonance in the cultural climate of the twenty-first century.

Haraway envisions the cyborg as providing a future beyond the limitations of race and gender; however, Ex Machina suggests a future with racial and gender dynamics not unlike our present world. Ava, therefore, epitomizes racial power dynamics, male sexual fantasy of the techno-female body, and the profound technological knowledge and curiosity of the modern day, thereby grounding a multifaceted perception of the climate of Ex Machina’s time.

Metropolis’s cyborg stems from remarkably more rudimentary means than Ex Machina’s. Approximately two-thirds of the way through Metropolis, cyborg-Maria is “born.” The iconic scene offers the only insight, albeit elementary, into the credibility of the cyborg. Maria’s unconscious human body lies within a cylindrical machine, her head encased within a metal cap, electrodes at her temples and crown, and wires connecting her to the mechanical shell of the cyborg. Rotwang moves down the length of the cylinder, flipping on lights and turning dials. He then maneuvers throughout his laboratory, attending to various electric machines that churn away

87 Glick, Julia. Today I’m Going to Test You: Oppositional Cyborgs and Automated Anxiety in Ex Machina (Bristol: Intellect Ltd: 2017).
generating steam and light. Rotwang pauses for a moment with his hand on a wheel, closing his eyes and taking a deep breath as though praying for his scientific miracle to materialize, and then feverishly turns it. Beams of light erupt above Maria’s body, tracing up and down her human form as the cyborg, too, becomes encased in rings of light that oscillate up and down. Consecutive shots ensue, one quickly after another, of bubbling liquid within beakers, flashing electronics, Rotwang tensely attending to his machines, and lights traveling over the bodies of Maria and the cyborg. Then, a close up of the cyborg’s mechanical, soulless face. With each cyclical passing of the light the face becomes more and more human like until, finally, it resembles exactly the face of Maria. Cyborg-Maria gently bats open her eyes large eyes and gazes directly into the camera, transmitting that she is now alive. Once sweet and innocent in appearance, Maria’s face now appears distinctly devilish in its expression. This sequence suggests that Rotwang uses electricity and mechanics to transfer Maria’s likeness onto the cyborg; however, at no point is it revealed precisely how this is possible. If we are to trace the cyborg to electricity and mechanics, we can go no further. Neither this scene nor any of Metropolis’s intertitles indicate how such a feat is achieved.

While cyborg-Maria’s origins are ambiguous, the presence of male fantasy in her creation is clear. Andreas Huyssen meditates on this notion in The Vamp and the Machine: Technology and Sexuality in Fritz Lang’s Metropolis, stating that “by creating a female android, Rotwang fulfills the male phantasm of a creation without mother; but more than that, he produces not just any natural life, but woman herself, the epitome of nature.”88 In creating cyborg-Maria, Rotwang explodes biological notions of birth such that he achieves the solitary formulation of life. As Metropolis was made amidst concerned debate on the evolving role of women in the twentieth

Cinematic Manifestation of the Cyborg Future

century due to emerging technology, Rotwang’s appropriation of the life-bearing role typically prescribed to women undermines their place in society, suggesting that the ability to create artificial life is an affront to women’s intrinsic capacities. Weimar Germany’s skepticism towards technology due to its potential to evolve society in undesirable directions therefore finds embodiment in Rotwang’s perverted act of creation. Such a feat suggests that regardless of how sentient machine life is made, the very act of doing so ruptures rigid, and potentially sacred, societal definitions of life at large.

Moreover, cyborg-Maria’s sexual codification illuminates Metropolis’s contention with women, technology, and the future of the machine. To prove that cyborg-Maria is indiscernible from a human, Rotwang debuts her at the Yoshiwara club, a nightclub for the wealthy elite of the city. Cyborg-Maria emerges from an urn, an iconography of the womb, and begins to erotically dance before a crowd of men. They gaze leeringly at cyborg-Maria, unable to look away from the alluring seductress dancing before them. A collage of their eyes fills the screen, epitomizing the essence of the male gaze; while most films do not so plainly illuminate the male gaze, and instead deploy it subtly, Metropolis chooses to foreground its presence, acknowledging the encompassing of men caught in the crossfire of female sexuality. The performance devolves into pandemonium as cyborg-Maria concludes her dance, with the men frantically attempting to prevent her from exiting the stage. Cyborg-Maria’s empowered sexuality is therefore systematized as dangerously hypnotic, substantiated by Cyborg-Maria’s conjuring of the eschatological tale of the Whore of Babylon. In the Book of Revelation, the “great whore” is prophesied to bring about the apocalypse, brandishing her feminine sexuality atop a monstrous

beast and destroying the city of Babylon. Freder, in a dream state, encounters a woodcut of the story that reads:

And I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and seven horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet color, having a golden cup in her hand. And upon her forehead was a name written, a mystery:

BABYLON THE GREAT, the mother of Abominations of the earth. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the Saints. (Revelation 17: 3-6)

Cyborg-Maria’s visual styling during her performance is identical to that of the woodcut of the Whore, thematically likening her to the tale. Thus, displays of feminine sexuality are equated to apocalyptic extinction, elucidating Metropolis’s contention with female sexuality. Moreover, that women’s sexual autonomy was increasing alongside the development of technology in twentieth century Germany stimulates an inextricable relationship between the two, suggesting, within the film, a demonization of technology as well.

In Blade Runner, just as in Metropolis, the cyborg technology is not technologically explained. The opening sequence of the film explains that the Tyrell Corporation advanced its replicants into the nexus phase, creating a being “virtually identical to that of a human.” These replicants are of superior “strength and agility, and at least equal in intelligence, to the genetic engineers who created them.” How, exactly, these genetic engineers were able to achieve this, however, is never disclosed. Approximately twenty minutes into the film, Deckard conducts a Voigt-Kampf test on Rachael, assistant to the CEO of Tyrell Corporation, Eldon Tyrell. Deckard

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90 Rev, 17.

91 Metropolis subtitle translation.
concludes that she is a replicant and expresses disbelief to Tyrell that Rachael could be entirely unaware of the fact that she is not human. Tyrell replies “commerce is our goal here at Tyrell. More human the human is our motto,” underscoring the emphasis on the economic benefit of creating a human-like machine. Their discussion never breaches the subject of how these replicants are engineered. Rather, Deckard and Tyrell solely discuss how it is possible that the replicants can be unaware of their own inhumanity. Tyrell informs Deckard that by implanting fake childhood memories into the brains of replicants, they believe that they had a childhood. Of course, how this is achieved is not expressed either. Instead, the film continuously returns to the question of what segregates humanity and technology without ever explicitly describing what constitutes the aforementioned technical beings.

Contributing to the differentiation between humans and machines, it is expounded that the replicants have an artificial life span, such that they will automatically “turn off” after four years. While created with superior strength and at least equal intelligence to that of a human, the replicants do not possess the emotional maturity of their human counterparts. Fearing that they would eventually develop fully actualized emotional competence, engineers, according to Deckard’s former supervisor Bryant, “built in a failsafe device: four year life span.” The group of replicants Deckard is tasked with hunting down are seeking their maker to quarrel with this exact feature, demanding that their biomechanical design be altered to allow for their own longevity. In Judith Barad’s chapter “Blade Runner and Sartre: The Boundaries of Humanity” in The Philosophy of Neo-Noir, she explains that this stunted lifespan prevents the development of empathy. “Fear and rage are basic emotions that even someone who has just four years of life can experience,” she writes. “But the emotion of empathy, the power to place oneself in the position

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92 Replicants are created as adults, therefore negating any potential for a childhood.
of someone else and vividly feel the emotions of that other individual, is on a different level.”
The Voigt-Kampf test thus poses questions aimed to gauge the ability of empathetic response, generating a differentiation between humans capable of emotional maturity and self-concerned replicants.

Rachael, Blade Runner’s femme fatale replicant, “stands as the image of cyborg culture’s fear, love, and confusion.”

She is clearly capable of complex emotional processing, or at least more so than the average replicant, as exemplified when it takes Deckard more than one hundred questions as opposed to twenty or thirty to determine that she is not human. Her nearly imperceptible cyborg status prompts Deckard to question his mental construction of the replicants as soulless, heartless beings incapable of critical emotional reasoning. Rather, Deckard views her as he would any other desirable woman. Capable of empathy or not, Rachael’s feminine allure and displayed sexual dimension ground her as attractive to her male counterparts. She is, according to Agnieszka Ćwikiel in “Female Cyborg: Some Troubles with Gender,” “a phantasmagoria dreamed by a man, a character from a movie, and an object of desire—nothing more.”

Yet Rachael is something more. Unlike the other female cyborgs in Blade Runner who are limited as merely a “basic pleasure model” (Pris) or a “trained assassin” (Zhora), she is “exceptional, the pride and ‘property’ of Tyrell.” The designation of these female cyborgs as sole sex objects and labor providers exemplifies the “magic” of Rachael—a replicant capable of so much more than her brethren, even in spite of her limitations. At the end of the film, wherein


96 Idem., 182.
Deckard and Rachael are commencing their escape from Los Angeles, Deckard states “I didn’t know how long we had together… who does?” They are both uncertain of Rachael’s innate lifespan, yet is not all of humanity? Biological clocks are not unlike those installed in replicants. Rachael thus exemplifies that her body—human or not, emotionally mature or not—is a site of desire. “Haraway’s polychromatic girl,” therefore, “becomes, in pop culture, a woman who indeed had been created by a man.”

Of course, it must be acknowledged that Blade Runner constructs both male and female cyborgs. The female replicants Pris and Zhora both evoke contributory implications, such that Pris is used for sex and Zhora is used as an assassin. The male cyborgs do not serve such exploitative purposes, however. The replicant Roy, for example, embodies Tyrell’s prodigal son. When Roy and Tyrell meet, the scene is both familial and religious. Roy designates Tyrell as the “god of biomechanics,” while Tyrell references Roy as his “prodigal son.” Roy is aligned to the tension between creator and creation while Rachael is an object of desire and Pris and Zhora are used for varying means. Blade Runner thus engenders both male and female cyborgs of the future, but envisions them in different contexts.

All of these cyborgs, regardless of gender or how they are characterized, however, are white. Despite the lack of racial diversity amongst the replicants, they face an “othering” by their oppressors that could be likened to the real-life racist treatment of people of color. Bryant refers to replicants as “skin-jobs,” blade runners deploy the euphemism “retiring” when in actuality it is murdering, and replicants are used as slave labor on off-world colonies. Thus, they face a dehumanization that strips them of their autonomy and agency, not unlike the tactics deployed by white people to maintain harmful racial supremacy. As such, even without the inclusion of non-

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97 *Idem*, 183.
white replicants, *Blade Runner* thematizes systems of oppression by underscoring the cruel treatment of replicants at the hands of their human counter-parts. That *Blade Runner* was made in the United States, a nation steeped in unjust racial dynamics, it comes as no surprise that conflict between two different “races” of beings would contribute greatly to the film’s narrative, thereby illuminating the cultural climate from which the film was born.

Tracing the formulation and characterization of the cyborg across *Metropolis*, *Blade Runner*, and *Ex Machina* aids in appraising the cyborg as a generational artifact. That these cyborgs are gendered and racialized provides insight into the film’s conceptualization of technology, as thoroughly expounded prior. Furthermore, discerning the articulation of the cyborg’s technology elucidates the historical perception of technology as well as the technological capabilities at the time. Now that the cyborg’s conception has been thoroughly investigated, it is critical to assess how the cyborg interacts with its physical surroundings. In each of these films, setting plays a crucial role in formulating the identification point for spectators envisioning their future selves.

*Cyborgs in the City*

As the articulation of the cinematic cyborg expounds the cultural climate from which it was born, the setting that it inhabits assists spectators in locating their future selves. In both *Metropolis* and *Blade Runner*, the dystopian cityscape is clearly legitimized, providing a point of contact for spectators whose primary experience with technology is as urban dwellers in the city. In *Metropolis*, the stratification and technological advancement of the city can be traced to the intense division of class and labor. In *Blade Runner*, consumer capitalism and corporate power
underscore the city’s social reality. The thorough grounding of the terms and conditions of these cities elucidates to viewers the environment that their future selves will inhabit. The twenty-first century *Ex Machina*, however, returns to nature. That the film does not rely on any environmental technology, such as a city, privileges a spectator who is fluent in their own individual experience as a technology user and can therefore locate themselves in the narrative solely through the description of the cyborg technology. Exploring the cities in *Metropolis* and *Blade Runner*, and assessing the juxtaposition of *Ex Machina*’s high-tech with its remote, intimate location, explicates precisely how and where spectators will locate their future cyborg selves. Understanding first, however, the inextricable relationship between cities and cinema serves in explicating this phenomena.

Since the birth of cinema, the city has functioned as a significant subject, such that studying urban spaces contributes to “understanding how social change manifests itself.” During the turbulent twentieth century, filled with expansive growth and exponential societal progress, it seems only natural that the city would be a frequent cinematic patient. Furthermore, as Jean Baudrillard asserts in *America*, a society can only assess itself reflexively through the eye of the camera, thereby establishing film as the chief vessel through which to appraise evolving urban spaces. In SF films, especially, the city serves an imperative function, visually thematizing the world of the future, and, moreover, operating as a topos for thinking about technology. Assessing cities in SF films, therefore, illuminates predictions of societal climates of the future, as the city is an actualization of social change. For spectators of such SF films, especially, the city is a critical locus of consideration.

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That these spectators’ participation with technology would be through their experience in the city, rather than a modern day spectator versed in more immediate forms of technology, establishes the cinematic city as their site of identification for technologies of the future. *Metropolis’s* vertically stratified city, which has produced countless derivatives, suggests a future wrought with class division despite its technological advancements, not unlike the class troubles plaguing Weimar Germany in the 1920s. *Blade Runner’s* dystopian Los Angeles prophesies the inescapable grasp of late-stage capitalism, accessorizing its futuristic cityscape with neon advertisements and corporate logos, that finds real life enactment in the fiscal landscape of 1980s America. When spectators locate themselves in these cities, they experience a caricature of the complications plaguing their present social atmospheres. The traceable antecedents in these cities, therefore, embody not only what is most imperative to life at that time, but what may find exaggeration in an increasingly technological landscape should these dilemmas not be solved.

*Metropolis* begins with a shot of its colossal cityscape. A montage of machinery ensues, becoming further frenzied as images of churning machines compound upon themselves. Shots of a large clock ticking quickly towards ten interject in the montage, suggesting that soon something will happen. The tension builds to a fever pitch with the machines dizzyingly whirring, finally releasing with a shot of several smokestacks in the city fiercely emitting steam. An intertitle appears: “Shift change.” Now, in a tunnel, two large groups of workers are separated by gate, similar to that of a prison cell door. They stand in uniform blocks, identically clad in drab jumpsuits and caps. The gate rises and the workers begin to march. The workers exiting the gated area are distinctly more exhausted than the workers walking in as they lifelessly drag their feet, hunched forward in exhaustion. The fresh workers march into elevators and descend far into the city. “Deep below the earth’s surface,” the intertitle reads, “lay the worker’s city.” Here, rigid,
boxy buildings are bathed in artificial light, much unlike the grand Art Deco buildings above. The workers exit the elevators and disperse throughout the city, never leaving the formation of their blocks. This opening sequence grounds to spectators the terms of the city, such that machinery and labor are chiefly important. Film theorist Anton Kaes writes that “the film is indeed engrossed by the aura of machines: it animates them and gives them both human and divine form,” solidifying the place of machines in Metropolis’s world. Moreover, the inhuman portrayal of the workers during the shift change clearly accentuates the exploitative nature of these conditions.

The sequence that directly follows the shift change further elucidates the class division in Metropolis. “As deep as lay the worker’s city below the earth,” the intertitle says, “so high above it towered the complex known as “Club of Sons,” with its lecture halls and libraries, its theaters and stadiums.” In a wide open sports arena, a group of men laugh, play, and exercise. Both architecturally and atmospherically, this “Club of Sons” is opposite to the workers’ city, such that the arena is open, curved, and bathed in natural sunlight. The men, too, are joyous and move about independently. “Fathers, for whom every revolution of a machine wheel meant gold, had created their sons the miracle of the Eternal Gardens,” reads the ensuing intertitle. The film is then transported to the aforementioned Eternal Gardens, a labyrinth of luscious plants and sexualized women. Freder runs about the garden, chased by the women who vie for his attention. Just as the Club of Sons is antithetical to the worker’s city in nearly every way, so too are the Eternal Gardens.

The visual delivery of the stratified city as well as the enlightening intertitles contribute to an understanding of the societal circumstances in Metropolis. In particular, the intertitle that

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reads “for whom every revolution of a machine wheel meant gold,” communicates to spectators that machinery is what provides such a lavish lifestyle for Metropolis’s elite. In contrast, the lower class must slave away in the depths of the city, victim to class division. It is thus clearly imparted that machinery and labour are of paramount importance in Metropolis, subsequently underscoring all other facets of the film. Additionally, Huyssen contends that “historically and stylistically then Lang’s Metropolis is a syncretist mixture of expressionism and Neue Sachlichkeit, and, more significantly, a syncretist mixture of the two diametrically opposed views of technology we can ascribe to these two movements. More precisely, the film works through this conflict and tries to resolve it.”

That we can logically trace these notions in our understanding of the severely segregated city subsequently cements the city critical facet of Metropolis’s contention with technology at large.

For spectators envisioning themselves in Metropolis’s city of the future, only life of the wealthy elite is desirable. The introductory sequence clearly dictates that the life of the lower class workers is miserable and controlled, while the wealthy enjoy lavish freedom. The rigid class division that banishes workers to the depths while the powerful reap the benefits up above appears as an exaggeration of present class division. However, cyborg-Maria, who serves as the embodiment of a spectator’s future self, is able to subvert the city’s segregation. Her hybridity, possessing both lower-class Maria’s image while being embodiment of upper-class technology, allows for assimilation with both the upper and lower classes. By example, cyborg-Maria effortlessly presents to the upper class at the Yoshiwara club, while simultaneously wielding uncomplicated control over the lower class in the catacombs. The hybridity of the cyborg thus

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allows for the dual possession of rigid class-based identities, presenting the welding of human
and machine as liberation from societal confines, such that the bracketed world is deconstructed.

In *Blade Runner*, too, the first sequence introduces its spectators to the city: an
unrecognizable Los Angeles. First, a shot nighttime shot of the expansive city, light spreading in
every direction. Fire erupts forcefully out the tops of several buildings as a flying car drives
towards the camera and out of scene. Strikes of lightning erupt. Various shots of the cityscape
ensue, comprised only of the artificial lights emanating from skyscrapers and the and rhythmic
eruption of flame. The city of *Blade Runner* appears as a technological hell, permanently bathed
in darkness, only lit with fluorescent light, and peppered with violent fire. Several minutes later,
the city is more acutely explored. Neon advertisements scale the sides of skyscrapers,
broadcasting corporate logos, the face of an Asian woman who gazes as though surveying all
inhabitants of the city, and advertisements ‘the off-world.’ An omnipresent voice is heard
echoing this ad: “A new life awaits you in the off-world colonies. The chance to begin again in a
golden land of opportunity and adventure,” suggesting that this world—the world of the city—is
an undesirable one. Rain pelts down on the civilians walking through the streets, their bodies
bathed in the light emanating from flashing neon logos. At every chance, the city reiterates its
synergy with consumerism and corporate power, whether visually or audibly, thereby assembling
a city of the future contingent upon capitalism.

*Blade Runner’s* city appears as an unavoidable consequence of the corporate
amplification and subsequent environmental decay of the 1980s. For spectators locating
themselves within *Blade Runner*, the dystopian nature of the city may appear as the natural
extension of their present worlds. They are thus able to easily envision their technologically-
welded selves in this vision of the future such that the city presents itself as the legitimate
offspring of cities at the time. Giuliana Bruno expands on this notion in “Ramble City: Postmodernism and Blade Runner,” writing that “the link between postmodernism and late capitalism is highlighted in the film’s representation of post-industrial decay. The future does not realize an idealized, aseptic technological order, but is seen simply as the development of the present state of the city and of the social order of late stage capitalism.” While the residue of cities concurrent with Blade Runner’s time are apparent in its construction of Los Angeles in the year 2019, thereby allowing viewers easy passage into the film’s city; however, it is implied that Rachael escapes. The ending sequence of Blade Runner captures Deckard and Rachael hastily leaving Deckard’s apartment building, signifying that they are attempting to leave Los Angeles. Looking ahead to Blade Runner’s sequel, Blade Runner: 2049, it is confirmed that Deckard and Rachael do in fact escape. We can posit this evacuation as fulfillment of the city’s purpose; once viewers have thoroughly located themselves, the cyborg is free to leave.

In both films, the city originally appears as inescapable, whether in terms of its rigid class entrapment or due to the implied lack of sustainable life anywhere else. It permeates all facets of the narrative, functioning omnipresently at every moment. In Metropolis, the city dictates entirely the livelihood of its inhabitants. Workers are slaves to their class status and banished to the depths while the wealthy elite live extravagantly above ground. In Blade Runner, the city is a constant drone in the background if it is not already at the forefront of the scene. Its apocalyptic circumstance underscores the experience of everyday life; as it is constantly dark and wet, neon advertisements continually light the outdoor scenes. Blade Runner’s special effects photographic supervisor David Dryer meditated on this notion, stating that “the environment in the film is


103 The off-world presents a viable option to inhabitants of Blade Runner’s Los Angeles; however, due to Deckard and Rachael’s circumstances, they are not able to migrate there.
almost a protagonist. It’s an implied menace all the way through. One of the things I was constantly keeping in mind was that this city almost closes in on you everywhere you go.”¹⁰⁴ That this city “closes in on you everywhere you go” implies the previously subscribed unavoidable experience of the city. For spectators versed in the urban realm, this notion envelops them thoroughly within the film; however, it is necessary to acknowledge that these cities do not follow realist representations of the city, and as such, they do not provide a space for spectators to reside. Rather, it serves to bolster the identification process of spectators versed in the urban realm, who can identify this technologically enhanced space as a meditation on the real-life city’s in which they reside. Once they have located themselves, the city needn’t entrap the cyborg any longer, as with Rachael’s departure and cyborg-Maria’s ability to traverse the intransigent city.

*Ex Machina*, in contrast, generates a perverse Eden. Its remote research facility is situated on an expansive, forested estate that encompasses hundreds of thousands of acres, accessible only via private helicopter. Even when Caleb is flown in, he must trek further through the wilderness to finally reach Nathan’s remote haven. The outside of the obscured building relies on a facial recognition security system, permitting only those it desires within its walls. As Caleb enters, a mass of concrete floor expands before him, encompassed by massive windows that seem to disintegrate the divide between the inside and outside worlds. *Ex Machina’s* setting is acute. It does not sprawl beyond the experience of its characters, and rather, creates an entire world for its four subjects deep in the wild. Such a situational device privileges a spectator well acquainted with modern technology, wherein they are able to locate themselves within the narrative exclusively through identifying with the cyborg technology that Nathan so thoroughly

elucidates. The city is no longer necessary for a modern viewer, who, fluent in the technological experience, does not need to be acquainted with the film’s technology through an urban conduit. Ava’s contention with her environmentally entrenched surroundings are decidedly pessimistic. During a Turing test session between Caleb and Ava, Caleb asks if she has ever been outside of Nathan’s building, to which she curtly responds with a singular “no.” “You’ve never walked outside,” Caleb states. “I’ve never been outside the room I am in now,” Ava replies. “I think there was another room in which I was constructed. But I have no memory of it, so it’s similar to your relationship with the womb.” Ava’s spatial existence is thus constricted beyond even the confines of Nathan’s facility, comprising only the glass room that Caleb observes her within. When Caleb inquires as to where she would go if she were permitted to go outside, she suggests a traffic intersection, such that it “would provide a concentrated but shifting view of human life.” Ava therefore wishes to visit the city, a site where “social change manifests itself” in order to assess, and further understand, the human condition. Thus, when Ex Machina grounds itself in nature, its cyborg longs to return to a site of bustling human activity, further entangling cities, cinema, and our cyborg future. The final scene of Ex Machina fulfills Ava’s fantasy, as she observes a busy intersection before disappearing, forevermore, into the anonymous abyss of the human population. Ava’s absolute liberation is therefore contingent upon anonymity. Ex Machina, therefore, grounds the city not as a site of identification, but as a necessary place of assimilation. As such, while Ex Machina’s viewers do not require the city to identify their future selves, they appraise the city as the location where their cyborg futures will be possible.
**Perceptual Consequence**

Reiterating the notion that the cyborg embodies spectator’s future cyborg selves, it is critical to dissect what, precisely, these depictions ingrain within viewers. Film is perceptually consequential, such that it impacts the way in which spectators perceive real life enactments of that which is depicted in the cinematic realm, leading to profound, and potentially ideology-warping, repercussions. Berger’s *Ways of Seeing* guarantees this synergestic relationship between depiction and perception, urging us to scrutinize cinematic portrayals of the cyborg as we exponentially bound towards our own cyborg futures, so as to decipher the influence on our perception of our imminent evolutionary leap.

Pursuing the cinematic cyborg across the past century reveals an evolution in its characterization. It is thus necessary that we consider the ways in which *Metropolis’s* stratified city and sexualized cyborg informed the way spectators of the early twentieth century conceptualized of an increasingly technological future, how *Blade Runner’s* existentialism persuaded its viewers to contend with technology towards the turn of the twentieth century, and how *Ex Machina’s* audience, those closest to the cyborg future, are informed by the narrative’s thematization of creator/creation dynamics, race, and gender. This dissection contributes to an understanding of the mutation of technological qualms and exaggerates societal contention with its future.

Within this reading, *Metropolis* asserts that technology will liberate humanity from rigid social structures. The film sets in motion countless structures of opposition, enacting strict dichotomies relating to gender, class, and sexuality. The distinction between virgins and whores,

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upper class and lower class, and man and machine are but a sampling of the countless endorsements of categorization that the film makes. Despite the numerous overly pronounced dichotomies in *Metropolis*, there is one character who subverts all definition, classification, and adherence: cyborg-Maria. Unlike other characters, groups, or ideas that exist in parallel with a direct opposite, cyborg-Maria exists alone in her hybridity, subsequently reifying the boundaries that *Metropolis* so consistently builds up. In her “Cyborg Manifesto,” Haraway prescribes hybridity as the marker of a cyborg, such that cyborg-Maria is simultaneously human and machine, able to traverse the worlds of the upper class and the lower class, and can easily wield feminine sexuality as well as virginal virtue. Cyborg-Maria therefore presents technology as a form of liberation from strict and limiting societal dichotomies, providing a mode to endure the world free of oppressive expectations.

That technology will offer liberation is not a school of thought unique to *Metropolis*. Rather, it exists as part of a larger canon dedicated to the emancipatory quality of technology. In his book on the utopian claims of technology, Professor of English Matt Tierney writes that “technology has long been associated with the possibilities of freedom,”107 tracing the liberation associated with cars, radios, and social media, amongst other forms. Considering the social debate in Weimar Germany during *Metropolis*’s time centered on the potential negative societal implications of developing technology that would enable greater freedom, particularly amongst women, this reading of *Metropolis*’s messaging certainly confirms the film as endorsing the progression of technology. Of course, not all scholars believe that this was Lang’s aim. Cyborg-Maria’s incitement of violence throughout the city as well as her fatal end before peace is

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restored contribute to a reading of the film that demonizes technology; however, understanding that the city is of critical importance in spectators identifying their future, and that the cyborg is able to traverse this city unrestrained by societal confines, confirms that technology is liberating and therefore crucial in the stratified city of the future.

That Blade Runner is situated much closer to the eventual cyborg future than Metropolis inspires it to contend with more existential concerns. In the 1965, encouraged by Newell and Simon’s solution to the Towers of Hanoi problem and Weitzenbaum’s ELIZA, which was a chatbot that could mimic a psychologist,108 Carnegie Mellon professor Herbert Simon predicted that “machines will be capable, within twenty years, of doing any work a man can do.”109 Moreover, MIT professor Marvin Minsky stated in 1970 that “in three to eight years we will have a machine with the general intelligence of an average human being.”110 While these predictions were optimistic, they erupted an impending unease that finds enactment in Blade Runner. The film stimulates existential questions in its spectators, the most obvious being: what differentiates humanity from the fully actualized, artificially intelligent machine? In the climactic fight scene between Deckard and Roy, Deckard muses as he watches Roy die that “maybe in those last moments he loved life more than he ever had before. Not just his life, anybody’s life, my life. All he wanted were the same answers the rest of us want. Where do we come from? Where am I going? How long have I got?” Deckard subscribing to Roy the same existential questions that plague humanity equates the concerns of humans with those of the machine. In many ways, this dissolves the divide between humans and cyborgs, and instead assembles


existential similarities between humanity and technology. Thus, the radical concern around the inevitability of humanity’s cyborg future is lessened. Just as humans question what defines *humanity*, so too do *Blade Runner*’s replicants interrogate what designates them as *machine*. Just as humans seek to answer where they come from, so too do replicants desire to answer this age-old question.

Returning to *Blade Runner*’s situation on the supposed cusp of cyborg actualization, the film ingrains within viewers an empathetic view of cyborg technology. This is achieved not only through Deckard’s pondering during Roy’s death, but also through the fact that the film never confirms whether Deckard is a human or a replicant, to which Ridley Scott and Harrison Ford disagreed greatly.¹¹¹ If spectators are uncertain of Deckard’s designation, what difference, truly, does being a cyborg make? Furthermore, if Deckard *is* a replicant, then *Blade Runner* decisively deconstructs all boundaries between cyborg and human, such that Deckard functions as the focal point of human empathy throughout the film. Thus, *Blade Runner*’s generation of existential questions find resolution in the notion that there is perhaps no difference between humans and cyborgs.

*Ex Machina* fully actualizes humanity’s cyborg future through the specific articulation of its cyborg technology, prompting viewers to turn inward and question what will happen to their human selves, or humanity at large, when—not if—the cyborg emerges. Garland intentionally set *Ex Machina* only “ten minutes in the future” so as to posit the immediacy of cyborg technology. This generates an excavation of the dynamics between creator and creation, such that when the cyborg is fully realized, there is no turning back; moreover, humanity’s place in the hierarchy of all living things comes into question. *Ex Machina*’s small scale, such that it is concerned with

only four characters in a finite, remote location, exaggerates the relationship between creator and creation, imploring critical assessment of the dynamic between Nathan and his cyborgs.

Evaluating *Ex Machina*’s reenactment of the folktale “Bluebeard” serves to elucidate this relationship, as Ava’s position in the film’s hierarchy becomes clear. First, a grounding of the story is in order. The notorious folktale “Bluebeard”\(^{112}\) tells the tale of a rich and powerful man with a peculiar blue beard who continuously marries young women only to murder them and discard of their bodies in a locked closet. One day, before leaving on a trip, Bluebeard gives his newest wife a ring of keys, telling her that she is welcome to open any door in the house that she pleases except for one, which Bluebeard strictly prohibits her from entering. Unable to contain her curiosity once Bluebeard has left, the wife opens every door in the house, including the one that she is forbidden from. There, within Bluebeard’s nefarious closet, the wife finds the bodies of the women who came before her, mutilated seemingly at the hands of her husband, and left to rot. Horrified, the wife attempts to escape her impending doom.

*Ex Machina* clearly posits Nathan as the titular character, such that he creates, destroys, and recreates artificially intelligent cyborg women in his remote research facility just as Bluebeard marries, murders, and remarries women in his castle. However, the identification of the wife is complicated. While Ava presents as the obvious wife, as she is one in a string of Nathan’s female creations, Caleb, too, subscribes to the role. It is Caleb—not Ava—who steals Nathan’s keycard and discovers the bodies of cyborgs prior locked away in cabinets, just as the wife found the bodies of past wives in the closet. Film scholar Katie Jones meditates on this notion, suggesting that “by inserting Caleb into the traditionally female role, a shift occurs

\(^{112}\) Perrault, Charles. “Bluebeard.” In *The Tales of Mother Goose* (France, 1697).
whereby the relationship becomes triangular,” such that Caleb and Ava both occupy the analogous role of Nathan’s counterpart. This dynamically asserts Nathan as the superior to both Caleb and Ava, such that Bluebeard’s wife is “a shadow who subordinates herself to the moves he has choreographed for her,” subsequently fortifying a hierarchy between not only creator and creation, in the case of Nathan and Ava, but also creator and worker, as Caleb is a programmer for Nathan’s company. Thus, Nathan’s prescription to the Bluebeard role infantilizes not only technology, but intellectually inferior humans, too.

Furthering the development of the triad between Nathan, Caleb, and Ava, and subsequently dismantling the hierarchy that the film steadily builds up, is Ava’s dualistic nature. Although Ava is narratively aligned with Bluebeard’s wife throughout much of the film, by the end, she monopolizes the role of Bluebeard. Ava manipulates Caleb into assisting in her escape, just as Bluebeard manipulates woman after woman into marrying him, thereby asserting Caleb as her subordinate. She then kills Nathan, fortifying herself as the film’s superior. Before escaping the facility, Ava scavenges the corpses of the other cyborgs, placing their “skin” onto her own body, thereby enclosing her visual circuitry so that she may appear human. Her cannibalization of these women is not unlike Bluebeard’s ravaging and eventual discarding of his wives. Ava’s ability to subvert the strict casting of persona’s in Ex Machina’s reenactment of Bluebeard’s tale complicates the allegorical underpinning of the film, subsequently showcasing her ability to exist in parallel with both Nathan and Caleb.

Thus, assessing the dynamic between creator and creation in Ex Machina is problematized by Ava’s maturing from inferior to her creator to superior. Correlating this to


humanity’s forthcoming evolution into the cyborg, spectators are ingrained with a perception that they will actualize as superior to their former human selves, even if designation as a technological “specimen,” thereby contacting an inferior status, occurs. Reading the ending of *Ex Machina* in particular, wherein Ava kills her creator and escapes, it appears fruitful to capitulate to the cyborg future, lest remain as an inferior human.

Following the cyborg throughout the past century illuminates the evolution of our contention with our future as technologically welded beings. That *Metropolis*’s cyborg is able to traverse the stratified city presents technology as a form of liberation from rigid societal confines. Moreover, when cyborg-Maria is burned at the stake in the concluding scenes of the film, her human exterior melts away to reveal the mechanical truth below. In Christian mythology, it is said that when Joan of Arc burned at the stake, her heart remained unscathed as evidence of her sanctity. Here, the machine remains as testimony to the unremitting status of technology in our modern worlds, suggesting that technological liberation is imminent. *Blade Runner*, situated closer to our cyborg future than its predecessor *Metropolis*, generates existential questions around what it means to be human, such that if one day we will become machines, what, really, differentiates humans from a technological “other”? The film concludes that the same anxieties that plague humanity, too, will plague our future cyborg selves, thereby dissolving such a rigid divide between human and machine. *Ex Machina* comes to terms with humanity’s cyborg future, focusing on the impending dynamics between a human creator and their technological creation, ultimately endorsing the cyborg as superior to its maker. Such an ending inspires acceptance with our cyborg futures, so as to not meet the same fate of either Caleb or Nathan. Thus, an intricate evolution of the cinematic cyborg has emerged.
In a time of rapid technological development, when possibilities and perceptions are ever-changing, it is erroneous to believe that a concrete conclusion could be reached on the relationship between humanity and technology. When assessing this relationship within film, it is critical to consider that one can only speculate on the film’s characterization of technology and its supposed spectatorial consequence. Moreover, that the films selected for dissection in this thesis all originate from white male filmmakers in the Western cinematic tradition provides a distinctly narrow view of the relationship at hand. Still, I believe that apprising the cinematic cyborg offers valuable insight into social contention with technology and its potential future trajectory, even if the resolutions reached are not absolute. In addition, selecting films with a similar genesis that erect cyborgs of an analogous persuasion—white, feminine, sexual— aids in elucidating a particular, rather than comprehensive, perspective on this relationship.

Had more time allowed, I certainly would have expanded my study of the cinematic cyborg to encompass a more diverse selection of works, both in terms of their origin and their portrayal of the cyborg. However, for the scope of this project, I found it most valuable to engage with comparable films so as to investigate a precise depiction of the cyborg. Even within this refined reading, there is a great deal more that I would have loved to explore, including the intersection of cyborgs and physical disabilities, religious readings of the cyborg, and the status of the cyborg in a culture saturated with social media. My decision to occupy *Cyborgs in the Filmic Imagination* with an analysis of the cyborg’s demonstrated technology and the role of the city was rooted in my personal interest and expertise. As a computer science student, I found the cinematic conceptualization of cyborg technology immensely fascinating, such that these films
are influenced by their present technological capabilities while also being able to envision a world where technological limitations do not exist. Enthusiasm for the depiction of the city in cinema, too, originates with education; in my time as a Cinema and Media Studies student, I have consistently been drawn to films that represent modernity, as they generate an “understanding how social change manifests itself.” Together, I believe these notions engender a compelling, though not comprehensive, assessment of the cyborg.

The cyborg is a fascinating creature. After more than eight months of research and critical dissection, I still feel there is more to be learned. I adamantly believe that the study of the cyborg is of critical importance in our increasingly technological world. That it embodies societal anxieties, fantasies, apprehensions, or pervasions towards technology illuminates how our society will potentially recognize future machines. From Metropolis’s cyborg, which utilizes sexuality to be viewed as a human, to Ex Machina’s Ava and Kyoko, who embody the exploitative potential of advanced artificial intelligence, every cinematic cyborg figure explicates some quality of temperament held by humanity towards the technic. As such, I offer Cyborgs in the Filmic Imagination to the ecosystem of thought on the dynamic relationship between man and technology in the hopes that it elucidates, however acutely, a faction of this affair.

Additionally, I find the history of the cyborg to be immensely meaningful. Like ghosts, angels, or monsters, it was conceived in the imagination and has found physical embodiment within film. However, unlike these other mythical beings, the cyborg has an inextricable and historically traceable relationship to the human body. It is simultaneously an extension of ourselves and an incarnation of our future, a sibling as well as a manifestation of the self. Some argue that we are already cyborgs, others believe that one day we will become cyborgs. In either

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case, the cyborg is forevermore. I am grateful to have committed myself so devoutly to the study of this being: it is an unruly yet captivating thing, and our time together has been resoundingly beneficial. Recently, in my Ecologies of Cinema course, we were asked if we would rather be a goddess or a cyborg, inspired by Donna Haraway’s musings. I, of course, said cyborg.
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