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# Sequels and SAMs: Re-contextualized Media and Affective Memory

Ben Rogers

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**SEQUELS OR SAMS: RE-CONTEXTUALIZED MEDIA, AFFECTIVE MEMORY, AND**

**BLADE RUNNER 2049**

A Thesis

Presented to

The Academic Faculty

By

Ben Rogers

In Partial Fulfillment

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## Literature Review

Post-structuralism is an idea that rethinks the relationship between creation and critique. Articulated well by Gregory Ulmer, the creator and critic of art are not on opposite sides of a piece of art; instead, both artist and critic create and construct art in their own way—Roland Barthes refers to both as writers.<sup>1</sup> This is based on the principle that there is no true reflection of the world because any viewer of either the creation or the critique will bring his own subjective background and context to the situation. Not even language can be understood as a common truth.

Because we experience subjectively, Ulmer suggests that the best way to create or critique is by gathering multiple pieces connected to an idea, placing them together in a montage, and, in turn, allowing for the creation of something new.<sup>2</sup> Instead of a mirroring effect where one signifier leads to one specific signified, e.g. the color red signifying only love, a signifier can be repeated over and over in new contexts with other groupings, which allows for no true conclusions.<sup>3</sup> But not all producers create post-structural representations, and the discussion of who creates and reproduces art, and in what way, has risen together with the mass reproduction of art in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Whoever controls the creation of art establishes knowledge, and in turn power, that influences how people feel about the world in the present as well as shape their understandings of the past.

In the 1930's, Walter Benjamin theorized that the reproduction of art was changing the way we interact with it. He referred to it as mechanical reproduction. Until that time, art carved in stone or on buildings was always attached to the concrete space. Because of this, art was used

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<sup>1</sup> Gregory L. Ulmer, "The Object of Post-Criticism," In *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (New York: The New Press, 1983), 83-84.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

for rituals and had a certain wonder about it.<sup>4</sup> But as technology allowed for mass reproduction of art, it increasingly became a place of contestation for ideologies. On the one hand, mass production of art worked as a masking tool for totalitarian ideals and beliefs.<sup>5</sup> On the other, mass production gave more people the opportunity to create art and therefore join the discourse. The control over who gets to create and produce art affects not only the present but also what we remember as individuals and as a culture at large.

Using multiple frameworks to describe our public memory of history, Mathew Hoadek and Kendall Phillips tell us that the past we know often depends on power relations in the present.<sup>6</sup> They note that starting in the 1980's, writing about how and what we remember increased. The increase in forms of media has added another layer to the development of private and public memory and how they relate to one another. Specifically, mobile media has made scholars focus on the relationship between time and space. This literature review explains the ways that people interact with media to establish memories and how new creations of media have changed the way we think about our lives in relation to space and time.

Even before mobile media, American Studies scholars were exploring the relationships that exist within certain spaces. They often ask who has voice and in turn agency. If certain groups do not have the chance to speak about their experiences or struggles, their lives are devalued by the larger culture; therefore space becomes a place where “discursive and political work can be done when people recognize that space is the place to do it.”<sup>7</sup> As media becomes

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<sup>4</sup> Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Mechanical Reproducibility,” ed. by Hannah Arendt, trans. by Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 24.

<sup>5</sup> Jentery Sayers, “Technology,” In *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*, ed. Bruce Burgett and Glenn Hendler, (New York: New York University Press, 2014)

<sup>6</sup> Mathew Houdek and Kendall R. Phillips. “Public Memory.” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication*, (2017), doi: 10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.013.181

<sup>7</sup> George Lipsitz, “Space,” in *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*, ed. Bruce Burgett and Glenn Hendler, (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 231.

globalized, media scholars have paid particular attention to how we make spaces into places and how certain voices help shape and form identity within the places that we inhabit.

As more people use mobile media in the spaces of our everyday lives, Jason Farman has established his theories about “self-embodiment” in media. The idea is that the distinction between the virtual and material world are becoming less clear as we move closer to technologies being invisible.<sup>8</sup> Less clear does not mean less productive. It means our interactions in the actual world and the virtual world affect each other. From there, both spaces of embodiment can be remembered both individually and collectively as public memory; public memory can be understood as moving beyond individual memory and encompassing the social heading of a collective and/or official history.<sup>9</sup> Throughout history, new media has made people nervous about the future of social interaction; they ask, how will new technologies change the way we interact and come to know ourselves? Increasingly, media scholars have subdued their anxieties about new technologies and started focusing on how technology can work as a productive space for connecting people and things and creating new ways of forming memories.

### **Embodiment and Space**

In this section, I start by establishing how we can learn to understand our bodies as living in affectual space. I then move to discussing how this understanding of our bodies can be created in virtual spaces. Media scholars take seriously the simplest affectual and physical experiences, as well as the largest cultural, philosophical, and historical presence of ideas. For obvious reasons, *mobile* media technologies have opened discussions over space. The Actor-Network-Theory (ANT) articulated by Bruno Latour is a nice framework for understanding how we interact within space. Latour seeks to change the understanding of the social from something that

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<sup>8</sup> Jason Farman, *Mobile Interface Theory: Embodied Space and Locative Media*, (New York: Routledge, 2012), 7.

<sup>9</sup> Houdek and Phillips.

happens just between people to something that happens between people, objects, and ideas. He notes five different ways to classify and interpret “social”: methodology, actions, groups, facts, and objects themselves. ANT takes into consideration how “things” affect us, which works nicely for talking about new technologies. Only by understanding the connection between all five pieces in any one moment will an understanding of the whole develop. As a framework of study, Latour cautions against moving too quickly to get conclusions. He implores scholars to look at what exists, and then connect the actions, groups, facts, and objects without trying to fit them into pre-established frameworks.<sup>10</sup> Kathleen Stewart describes this type of affect-based study as one that understands that objects are never fixed but “move in and out of existence.”<sup>11</sup> This type of ethnographic interpretation asks that we see the world from where we stand—not from above looking down but in the middle of the complexities of everyday life.

Latour’s five pieces connect to create certain spaces and can be done with or without mobile devices. Seemingly in response to the explosion of mobile media and the scholarship that has followed, Phil Bratta describes what he calls a “Lived Event,” which can come in the form of public performance art, topological space, and collective action. Bratta explains that a Lived Event represents an affective and proprioceptive type of experience devoid of mobile media.<sup>12</sup> In all three situations, the rhetoric of these events can literally *be* the bodies that move within and create the space. The performance can then be understood without having to be explained with a conclusion, another concept of post-structuralism.<sup>13</sup> Feminist scholars have often used this notion to extend the discussion of *moving* bodies as rhetorical. According to Maureen Johnson, Daisy Levy, Katie Manthey, and Maria Novotny, people counter dominant norms of heteronormative

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<sup>10</sup> Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: an Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 23.

<sup>11</sup> Kathleen Stewart, "In the World that Affect Proposed," *Cultural Anthropology* 32, no. 2 (2017): 198.

<sup>12</sup> Phil Bratta, “Rhetoric and Event: The Embodiment of Lived Events,” *Enculturation* (August 12, 2015).

<sup>13</sup> Ulmer, 94.

and patriarchal whiteness, in the spaces they exist, by cultivating “an even more expansive view of embodied rhetorics, one that supports our discipline’s movement beyond seeing the body in binary terms as either objectified or subjectified.”<sup>14</sup> To establish spaces that reflect both goals, both the performer *and* the audience must be involved in the process, which in theory makes the event unpredictable and able to create new spaces for progress.

Bratta establishes his theory of the Lived Event based on his anxiety about the mobile GPS. The GPS system works within the Cartesian map model, in which each person already has a mental conception of the whole from start to finish.<sup>15</sup> For example, if I follow the GPS to the store, I cut off possibilities for new or better routes and may even stop considering that there may be other alternative routes. Whereas Bratta sees the mobile device as particularly Cartesian and therefore unable to create change, other scholars have discussed how new technologies allow for people to interact and dialogue in new ways. For example, Jessica Slentz talks about the Cleveland Museum of Art’s use of touch screen technologies that allows people to interact with the art. They are used to “foster rhetorical experiences that shift the interpretive position of the visitor, allowing the visitor to actively and publicly participate in types of activities that in the past were exclusively undertaken privately by the institution.”<sup>16</sup> Although the original art may be displayed by the institution, people can use technologies to alter and change the meaning. It also shows that large institutions are not the only one’s creating and producing art.

Following in the footsteps of Benjamin, Henry Jenkins refers to the reinterpreting and reproducing of media as convergence culture. Convergence culture happens when grassroots consumers take a piece of art created by the large institutions, rearticulate it, reproduce it, and in

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<sup>14</sup> Maureen Johnson , Daisy Levy, Katie Manthey, and Maria Novotny, “Embodiment: Embodying Feminist Rhetorics,” *Peitho*18.1, (2015), 39.

<sup>15</sup> Bratta.

<sup>16</sup> Jessica Slentz, “Habits of Interaction: Touchscreen Technology and the Rhetorical Experience of Co-Curation at the Cleveland Museum of Art,” *Enculturation* (July 20, 2016).

turn, give it new meaning. People utilize the old and make it something new. This can happen multiple times across multiple platforms as ideas and aesthetics are borrowed and manipulated by the grassroots populations.<sup>17</sup> Jenkins' articulation of convergence culture matters because it works locally by and through anyone participating. When anyone has the potential to be involved in the discourse, new ways of thinking are created. For Jenkins, it ultimately changes the way media is produced and therefore has possibilities for changing large institutional ideologies that are established through mass production. When people go to the movie theater, they are making a decision to be entertained, but mobile media has allowed for the creation and reproduction of art within the fabrics of our everyday lives. This does not mean that all forms of mobile media are just for entertainment.

Throughout Farman's *Mobile Interface Theory*, he persuades readers to consider how people have come to create a sense of self through the use of mobile media.<sup>18</sup> Farman argues that habitual practices on mobile devices create true embodiment for a user in the same way that Lived Events can. He borrows from Ben Schniederman to describe how media technology works within a certain predictable framework, and if enough positive outcomes exist within a mobile interface, the "haptic reciprocity engages the user in a feedback loop that produces sensory-inscribed embodiment."<sup>19</sup> Both Bratta and Farman believe that habit can create new spaces for sensory-embodiment, but Farman sees beyond the Cartesian model of the mobile device and seeks to embrace the possibility for new ways of forming identity. Forming identity with the use of media is crucial to the understanding of memory discussed later in this review.

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<sup>17</sup> Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 3.

<sup>18</sup> Farman, 12.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

Cultural studies scholar Ben Highmore adds to the possibilities created by habit in his work *Ordinary Lives: Studies in the Everyday*. As many people would probably admit, distraction can be a negative word in that it implies that we cannot stay focused. Some even blame this distraction on the constant barrage of media. But, distraction can also be considered an attention to something new and more productive.<sup>20</sup> When we have a habit, we know what to expect and can do it without thinking. When we can do something without thinking, we have the opportunity to think about something else. Highmore suggest that the media saturation has trained people to establish habit for some things while learning to make distraction productive. For example, we can be scrolling through the internet and understand the plot of the TV show playing nearby.<sup>21</sup> Basically, we are better at navigating the world.

Moving through media spaces connects well to affective movements of daily life because “the practice of embodied space offers an experience of spatiality as an immersive world that is created as more than what is immediately available to the senses.”<sup>22</sup> Stewart explains that there are multiple singularities beyond the senses that connect to create our experience. When we understand media as a part of these connections, we are forced to look more precisely at the way we explain our sense of being in the world, including the way we interact with and remember our past.<sup>23</sup> From this point, I want to transition into how new types of media affect the way we remember.

### **Creating Memories with Media**

In the past century, the role of the senses in making memories has changed drastically. Literature can be understood as linear because we read books from start to finish within a

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<sup>20</sup> Ben Highmore, “Absented Minded Media,” in *Ordinary Lives: Studies in the Everyday* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 127.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

<sup>22</sup> Farman, 78.

<sup>23</sup> Stewart, 192.

chronological narrative. But, electronic technologies allow for a shift from linear time. Psychologist Hugo Munsterberg wrote that the invention of the film, or the Photoplay, created new ways of *having* to remember.<sup>24</sup> Munsterberg compares the theater to the film—which at the time of his writing in 1916 was relatively new. In theater, the first act must be *remembered* during act two, but with the photoplay, “the reality has lost its own continuous connection and become shaped by the demands of our soul.”<sup>25</sup> With the introduction of flashbacks and close-ups, the act of remembering a scene in its entirety, based on recollection, no longer becomes necessary. The parts that need to be remembered are objectified on screen. Within this context, the temporal element of life blurs.

A hundred years later, Vivian Sobchack builds her essay on a similar premise to Munsterberg’s chapter on memory but structures her essay starting with photography, then cinema, and a step further to electronic media. In discussing the static state of a photograph, she explains how an image is objectified and possessed by “inviting contemplation *of* the scene,” as something that existed in the past.<sup>26</sup> These photographs become memories that we possess not just in a material sense but as validation of our past. Sobchack uses the 1982 film *Blade Runner* as an example. In the film, as the distinction between real and artificial humans comes into question, photographs are considered markers of an authentic past. Photographs give us a way of self-possessing, or attaching a sense of truth to our past. They form pieces of our identity and who we imagine ourselves to be.

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<sup>24</sup> Hugo Munsterberg, *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study*, (D. Appleton and Company, 1916), 93.

<sup>25</sup> Munsterberg, 95.

<sup>26</sup> Vivian Sobchack, “The Scene of the Screen: Envisioning Photographic, Cinematic, and Electronic ‘Presence’,” in *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (University of California Press, 2004), 6.

The advent of the cinema in the next step of our historical progression, “invited the spectator *into* the scene.”<sup>27</sup> With cinema, we are made aware of our own act of viewing and what it looks like to see the world. Because a film constantly moves forward and with a degree of anticipation, it creates a moment simultaneously of a subjective temporality as we go through the plot of the movie but within an objective real time. We know we have our own narrative outside of the subjective time of the movie but we are engrossed in the narrative of the movie’s plot. When we watch films, they “construct a subjective temporality other than—yet simultaneous with—the irreversible direction and forward momentum of objective time.”<sup>28</sup>

However, Sobchack argues that the distinction between objective and subjective has blurred since the arrival of electronic technologies. Electronic technologies like the VCR allow for the stopping and rewinding of moving images, but we always watch them in our own subjective chronological order, even if we rewind a certain part and watch it twice. When we watch a movie, there is a linear structure in its narrative, but we experience it in our own intentional and subjective lived body experience as we look forward to what we will see next. Whereas the photograph focuses on our identity in the past, the cinema is based on an excitement for the future.

Further development of electronic technologies has allowed for people to create and alter their own forms of cinema. The saturation of technological data, according to Sobchack, creates simulations of what would otherwise be concrete ideas. The reproduction of images and cinema as data makes the images lose their “moral and physical gravity.”<sup>29</sup> With unlimited stimulation, people desire immediate gratification in an absolute presence. Compared to the subjective experience we have when we watch a movie, electronic media does not offer either “a point of

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<sup>27</sup> Sobchack, 12.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 13

<sup>29</sup> Sobchack, 15.

view or visual situation.”<sup>30</sup> Sobchack argues that we no longer see time as past/present/future but “is now constituted and lived paradoxically as a *homogeneous experience of discontinuity*.”<sup>31</sup>

However, in her endnotes, she acknowledges that more scholars are working toward understanding how people can virtually embody more productively.<sup>32</sup> Farman’s work mentioned above would fall into this category. As with anything that at first seems overwhelming, people have adapted to navigate the over saturation of media and found ways to not be overwhelmed.

As we experience the world through photographs, videos, and/or mobile media, all of the images intermix with our own experiences and become part of the same past. Victor Burgin uses the phrase “sequence-image” to refer to the way recollections of past images will transpose themselves onto the everyday scenery in our minds.<sup>33</sup> These images are based on affectual and perceptual moments in our past, but are not in a linear story. For example, Burgin describes how we no longer experience the cinema in just one context. We see trailers of it, parts of it in other situations like advertisements, or on a billboard. These fragments become part of our memory but often in an indescribable way.<sup>34</sup> For Burgin, once the memories are described, they become part of a narrative and become objectified, but this has not stopped people from trying to find other ways of describing our past.

One way of recalling the moments of our memories is through a form of cognitive mapping. Didem Ozkul and David Gauntlett created a sketch mapping exercise to get an understanding of how people connect certain moments to certain places. They take the idea of a cognitive map, which is really a “fluctuating set of stored knowledge and emotions,” and turn it into an art-making exercise where they ask people to sketch their associations with certain

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>33</sup> Victor Burgin, “Possessive, Pensive and Possessed,” *Mixed Media, Mixed Memory*, (2006), 199.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 200.

places.<sup>35</sup> Although related more to place than actual memories, they do argue that getting a sense of place can then create a recollection of what happened and with whom, ultimately creating a story of the self and potentially a better understanding of identity.<sup>36</sup> They conclude that by presenting our lives on media platforms, we often create a highlight reel of our lives, which may in turn create a more positive sense of self.<sup>37</sup>

Importantly, our memories are always infused with the broader cultural representations beyond what we see with our own eyes. Burgin identifies this relation to a cultural memory as a “third memory” that “allows the transmission of experience across generations.”<sup>38</sup> This memory does not come from individual experience but from the cultural history established through audio-visual platforms. These memories are often attained through consuming them on a mass scale. Burgin borrows from Bernard Stiegler who wonders whether we can ever really have our own singular identity when many of us watch the same television and cinematic programs.<sup>39</sup> Burgin notes that, to use Jenkins term above, convergence culture allows the potential for adding consumer and grassroots voices to the discourse on multiple platforms. People can condemn and resist institutional ideologies. Still, Burgin is skeptical of our ability to create individual testament. Again referring to Stiegler, Burgin questions whether the framework of “culture as spectacle” is so instilled in people’s minds that it is the only framework they can work within.

As other scholars have noted, mobile media makes the distinction between the dominant and the grassroots creators blurry. Compared to the act of going to the theater and paying for a movie, people now have access to what used to be separate platforms all on one device. When

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<sup>35</sup> Didem Ozkul and David Gauntlett, “Locative Media in the City: Drawing Maps and Telling Stories.” In *The Mobile Story*, ed. by Jason Farman, (New York: Routledge, 2014), 116.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>38</sup> Burgin, 203.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 204.

people do not know who is creating the representations, it becomes harder to decipher between the dominant and grassroots creations. This goes a step further when trying to represent history. As Ekaterina Haskins uncovers, dominant historic representations are looking more like grassroots representations because they want to connect with the popular imaginations.<sup>40</sup> With electronic media, fewer demarcations exist between private and public memory. The next section discusses the relationship between dominant and grassroots creators of media and how the connection between the two affects public memory.

### **Public Memory and the Politics of Media**

Media's relevance in everyday life makes physical media devices and the artifacts stored within them part of cultural memory. Before I dive into a more detailed breakdown of theories and example, I want to establish a few concepts from a few different authors. Jason Kalin acknowledges that "recent scholarship has begun to argue more explicitly that new media technologies oblige scholars to rethink memory by 'changing what we consider to be the past' along with the acts of remembering and forgetting."<sup>41</sup> I noted above that Sobchack sees the increase in data as a devaluation of the body and a loss of the linear past/present/future. I also said she gives credence to scholars studying embodiment of these data-filled spaces. As noted, Farman falls into this category. For Farman, the oversaturation of the database exists only in theory.<sup>42</sup> In order for the database to exist, it must have direct activity with it. Therefore, when people interact with the database, it becomes a part of a lived narrative.<sup>43</sup> To put it in further context, the lived narrative of a virtual space can be paralleled to the Lived Event established by Bratta. Therefore, in the same way that a Lived Event creates new conceptions of space so, too,

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<sup>40</sup> Hoadek and Phillips.

<sup>41</sup> Jason Kalin, "Gathering Memories from Augmented Reality," In *Augmented Reality: Innovative Perspectives Across Art, Industry, and Academia*. ed. Sean Morrey and John Tinnell (South Carolina: Parlor Press, 2017), 123.

<sup>42</sup> Farman, 126.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

can interactions across a database. Because mobile arenas are lived subjectively as people use the technologies, they can become spaces of community, conflict, and change within the structure of multiple stories existing through them.

In his discussion of augmented reality, Kalin uses ideas from the authors Joanne Garde-Hansen, Andrew Hoskins, and Anne Reading, who pursue "a concept of digital memory as one that rethinks time as linear and moves toward a concept of time and memory as spatial and involving organic participation with inorganic structures," creating a new memory ecology from time to space.<sup>44</sup> For these scholars, remembering is not based simply on what is remembered, but how it is being remembered and within what platforms.

Some scholars believe that media must work within the constructs of skills already established or otherwise leave the viewer disoriented. In discussing the benefits of the Cleveland Art Museum's interactive features, Slentz says that the digital knowledge brought to the exhibit by viewers allows them to become involved in a way that would otherwise take certain levels of expertise. For instance, people use their fingers to swipe, drag, and draw on the art pieces which can "determine what they *can do* with its interface and the content it displays," and allows for "new ways of interpreting and meaning-making."<sup>45</sup> Throughout most of museum history, interaction with the art was impossible. Curators organized and exhibited art pieces in certain defined orders, and all the viewer was able to do was observe. As Farman indicates, the key here is the reciprocity of spaces.<sup>46</sup> One way to determine the future politics of a space is to ask whether there is reciprocity between creator and viewer. Without it, we are subject to the established frameworks of classical viewing experiences as well as ideologies.

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<sup>44</sup> Kalin, 123.

<sup>45</sup> Slentz.

<sup>46</sup> Farman, 70.

Although the example discusses the potential for politics of media, I am not interested in museums as compared with other forms of media like mobile media and cinema. This is because people do not always critique the spaces they interact in on a daily basis. By analyzing social media, Farman found that people “seek reciprocal relationships with people who tend to reiterate their worldview.”<sup>47</sup> Scholars have focused on the potential of mobile media devices for establishing societal and political conflicts. Particularly helpful in this area is Tarleton Gillespie who argues that “technology can create distinct political valences, picking and choosing among human practices according to a veiled agenda” or of the particular designer of the product.<sup>48</sup> He borrows from Steve Woolger who claims that like traditional texts, the meaning of a tool is a product of its interpretation in a particular context.<sup>49</sup> The goal must be to figure out the potential possibilities for use, and what is inherently “left off the list.”<sup>50</sup>

This begs the question of who is the author of our memories and how much control do we have in forming and displaying them. One way to look at memory construction is to focus on metaphors and the possibilities they promote or diminish. Gillespie discusses the way that metaphors are used for remembering. Metaphors make concepts easier to learn because they make confusing concepts usable.<sup>51</sup> Using Latour’s Actor-Network-Theory, Gillespie sets up the idea that people interact with things, or tools, to produce certain ways of thinking. Therefore, our thinking is in certain ways established by these tools. Metaphors can establish certain restrictions because they encourage others. Even when there is collaboration between author and viewer, the

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>48</sup> Tarleton Gillespie, “The Stories Digital Tools Tell,” In *New Media: Theories and Practices of Digitextuality*, ed. Anne Everett and John Caldwell (Great Britain: Routledge, 2003), 109.

<sup>49</sup> Gillespie, 111.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 114.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 114.

actual tools still only allow certain pre-established ways of interacting and thinking.<sup>52</sup> I want to acknowledge a few examples to show how this can happen.

In traditional artistic or literary fields, the commissions for art have historically come from the elite. In public places, this means that the community has no chance to dialogue about what they want displayed. Victoria Gallaher and Margaret LaWare discuss, for instance, the arm of Joe Louis in Detroit titled “The Fist” and the way it relates to cultural memory.<sup>53</sup> According to Gallaher and LaWare, the problem with the statue is who actually commissioned the work; rarely are the community members involved in the process of making decisions about what art will be commissioned. Because the art is in a public place, whatever is commissioned will inevitably become part of their cultural memory. If I were to see the statue, I would have some type of reaction. If my reaction fit into a certain already established framework, it may be hard to look at it in another way later on in my life.

Michael Frisch, a historian and professor at New York State did a study on the cultural memory of his students to show how engrained these preconceived notions can be. He argues that the American people’s memories have been pigeonholed into an “ongoing fixation on creation and myths of origin.”<sup>54</sup> For instance, when he analyzed his class over a few decades, the two most popular figures remembered in American history were George Washington and Betsy Ross. According to Frisch, while Washington often holds the title of Father of our country, Ross works as the religious reference of the Virgin Mary. Whereas Mary was the vessel for Jesus, Ross was the vessel for the American flag, i.e. the most sacred symbol. This is just one example

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 118.

<sup>53</sup> Victoria J. Gallaher and Margaret R. LaWare, “Sparring with Memory: The Rhetorical Power of Race, Power, and Conflict in the Monument of Joe Louis.” In *Place of Public Memory: the Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials*, ed. Greg Dickinson, Carole Blair, and Brian L. Lott, (The University of Alabama Press, 2010), 89.

<sup>54</sup> Michael Frisch, “American History and the Structures of Collective Memory: A Modest Exercise in Empirical Iconography,” *The Journal of American History* 75, no. 4 (March, 1989), 1134.

of how long-held cultural memories are difficult to imagine in other ways. When kids go to school, play with their friends, and grow-up, they begin to establish certain long and short-term identities. The conflict over who gets to have a say in establishing those identities changes the way we think about and interact with media.

### **New Media Possibilities for Constructing Memories**

Understanding the power of cultural artifacts and public history formation has led to the creation of media devices and theories that allow for new ways of forming memories. This includes site-specific mobile applications and also augmented reality or ubiquitous computing, all of which allow for re-contextualizing memories. They also allow reciprocity between dominant and grassroots individuals within particular spaces. Farman employs the idea that in media practices that connect orality, archive, community, and individual, the passive role of learning and remembering does not apply but instead allows for more types of engagement.<sup>55</sup> Kalin, who I use to discuss augmented reality, explains how all collective memory is already augmented because it relies on materials for support.<sup>56</sup> Therefore, if we change the material, then we change the memory.

For some scholars, ever-present media makes moments potentially unmemorable.<sup>57</sup> For others like Kalin, ubiquitous computing creates ways of making life more memorable. He describes the act of walking around the city with the help of augmented reality apps. As we experience this realm of augmented reality, we have the ability to share moments both in real time and asynchronously. Through these various apps, Kalin shows us how other people's past moments, as well as our own, are layered together on top of one another. As we move through

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<sup>55</sup> Farman, 120.

<sup>56</sup> Kalin, 122.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 121.

certain spaces, the memories or histories attached to those spaces through the digital technology allows for new ways of connecting with people and ideas.<sup>58</sup>

The human networks that exist in memory are not enough to reflect how we actually gather memories, which are not always just between people. Along the same lines as the Actor-Network-Theory, Kalin use Thomas Rickert's idea of *ambience* to describe all the interlocking surroundings and the way that technology can be a part of these memories in our daily lives.<sup>59</sup> Ambience considers all affectual singularities. Stewart says that a "world charged with affect is a prolific, mixed-use contact zone in an ongoing state of transition that leaves people improvising with already-felts.<sup>60</sup> Already-felts refers to the memories and feelings that we always carry with us to interpret the world. With the help of augmented reality, Kalin calls this experience "digital ambient memory," which describes an experience infused with music or visual surroundings that reflect a more comprehensive world experience. In this subject-object scenario, the subject soaks in the surroundings, including the functions of augmented reality, that then become the way we experience. Kalin says that, "digital ambient memory connotes a holding together in time, a gesture toward how to live life inside time."<sup>61</sup>

When we experience ambience, we make life more memorable. Referring to Google Glass, Kalin explains that, "Though many of these activities [of daily life] are ostensibly ordinary and mundane, the Glass videos portray them as worthy of memory, and thus the impetus for connecting with others."<sup>62</sup> He argues that instead of focusing on the media tools, we will connect the virtual with the components of material, everyday life—creating more worthwhile moments to remember.

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 127

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Stewart, 2.

<sup>61</sup> Kalin, 130.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 132.

I want to include a necessary side note in this otherwise forward-thinking section. The creation of a world of mobility and embodiment does not always include real movement. In *The Mobile Story*, Marc Ruppel asks an important question: “if we don’t actually go anywhere when we use these devices, then what’s the point?”<sup>63</sup> Where Kalin describes a virtual world that infuses with the existence of the real world, Ruppel highlights the possibility for mobile media to create an entirely fictional world for the user. As compared to interactive space, the fictional world relies solely on the original authors for content. In these cases, media perpetuates itself by having fiction stories that rely on other forms of media within their plots. In terms of ambience, technology becomes part of the ambience of other technologies, therefore furthering the capitalistic breadth and desire for more technology.

Technologies matter because they have historically helped mold certain economic structures. Sobchack contextualizes the relevance of her work by quoting Fredric Jameson, who “correlates the major technological changes that revolutionized the structure of capital—changing market capitalism to monopoly capitalism to multinational capitalism.”<sup>64</sup> If we understand how technologies infuse dominant ideals of hegemony into everyday life, we counteract the reality of it by introducing cognitive dissonance. Paula Levine’s essay looks at how new lessons can be learned from connecting through media across different spaces. She uses an experiment by Charlan Nemeth to talk about the science of neuroplasticity.<sup>65</sup> Nemeth asked two groups of people to associate simple relations out loud, for instance the sky with a color, but he had one person provide a dissenting voice. This person may say the sky was red. In the groups

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<sup>63</sup> Marc Ruppel, “I Heard it Faintly Whispering: Mobile Technology and Nonlocative Transmedia Practices,” In *The Mobile Story: Narrative Practices with Locative Technologies*, ed. Jason Farman (New York: Routledge, 2014), 208.

<sup>64</sup> Sobchack, 4.

<sup>65</sup> Paula Levine, “On Common Ground: Here as There.” In *The Mobile Story: Narrative Practices with Locative Technologies*, ed. Jason Farman (Routledge: New York, 2014), 148.

with the dissenter, he found that people had more creative responses: essentially proving that people must be provoked in order to understand new ways of thinking. According to her research, the more experiences one has the more their brain develops, so “locative and mobile media . . . allows new possibilities for reconfiguring experience in the physical, public space that can become an opportunity to reshape experiences in which viewers see things differently on the ground.”<sup>66</sup> She explains that everyone must interact in the shaping of their cognitive mapping in order to build upon “empathetic narratives” as a means for understanding the world. Through sketch maps, as described about by Ozkul and Gauntlett, we retell our stories in order to shape our identity and self-representation; this in turn asks us to consider our “symbolic output in relation to other people’s and tends toward a positive and ‘identity-affirming’ role.”<sup>67</sup>

Another example of the way to create these empathies can be seen through Ulmer’s creation of what he calls the Konsult. The Konsult is a way of getting people to collaborate together by using technology. The goal is to create a poststructural montage. He envisions it being used during times of trauma. In these times of a trauma, the group of people who have been affected share details about family, history, mythology, and philosophy that are all put into an archive. When all the pieces are put together, they create a montage that provides an “experience of identification with the testimonials collected in the archive.”<sup>68</sup> Ulmer posits that in times of trauma, sharing commodities or goods is not enough to make people happy. Because goods can always be manipulated as something to be sold, they can always be turned into exchange value.<sup>69</sup> Within the archive of the Konsult, the individual meanings of narratives are

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 149.

<sup>67</sup> Ozkul and Gauntlett, 124

<sup>68</sup> Gregory Ulmer, “The Konsult,” in *Florida*, ed. Jeff Rice (Anderson: Parlor Press, 2015), 282.

<sup>69</sup> Ulmer, 288.

repurposed for the goal of the Konsult as a whole. For the people who experience the collection of stories, they can understand their community's needs and connections better.

### Next Steps

On the one hand, I believe media scholars are particularly interested in the *possibilities* for media and may forget to acknowledge the realities at hand. On the other hand, our future realities only change for the better if we imagine them first. The way we think towards the future makes how we feel about our past all the more relevant. This is why it is necessary to continue to evaluate the way we feel about and interact with our memories. But just because memories affect the future does not mean people always *want* to remember the past. If we use Lanham's outline of the rhetorical ideal of life, we get one perspective of the goal of the Western person.

Established by Aristotle, the goal is based on the rhetorical man who thinks about pursuing, progressing, and most of all seeking pleasure.<sup>70</sup> This type of thinking focuses on the present alone. At other times in this man's life, he "flatters himself" with imaging himself in the larger context of the world and becomes serious.<sup>71</sup> Then, he returns to seeking immediate pleasure.

According to Lanham, this is a necessary oscillation back and forth. But, Farman refers to Benjamin to describe how "progress obscures" our view of the past.<sup>72</sup> Benjamin uses a metaphor of an angel being blown into the future looking back on the wreckage of the past. Through this metaphor, we understand that the past never exists as linear or even whole and complete.

Benjamin refers to the storm that creates the wreckage as our version of "progress."<sup>73</sup> Although we desire pleasure and progress, we often forget our past, but we can also be reminded of it in certain contexts.

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<sup>70</sup> Richard A. Lanham, "The Rhetorical Ideal of Life," In *The Motives of Eloquence*. (New Haven: University of Connecticut Press, 1976), 3.

<sup>71</sup> Lanham, 7.

<sup>72</sup> Farman, 135.

<sup>73</sup> Farman, 135.

## Introduction

“Consciousness is never constituted purely, simply and originally, in itself; it is always both a little bit monkey and a little bit parrot”<sup>74</sup>– Bernard Stiegler

### Temporality

The American people have adopted specific time units in their daily lives in large part because of the rise of a capitalistic society. According to Karl Marx, Walter Benjamin, and many others, capitalism must make the *time* (on our watches) equal to production *value*.<sup>75</sup> Workers in a capitalist society adhere to units of time for work, time for pleasure, or time with the family. These are broken up into minutes and seconds that can be quantified and made into profit. Mary Ann Doane explains that time is, “in a sense, externalized, a surface phenomenon, which the modern subject must ceaselessly attempt to repossess through its multifarious representations.”<sup>76</sup> People navigate these timeframes daily, yet when we think about it, we are aware that different hours do not feel the same length.

Nothing changes our relationship to these timeframes more than the creation of the temporal motion picture. On one level, this essay stems from a history of writers who have sought to understand the relationship between people and the various forms of audiovisual technologies. In the first section of this introduction, I discuss temporality through the work of Bernard Stiegler in his two volumes of *Symbolic Misery*. The word *temporal*, in this sense, refers to any object “constituted by the flow of its passing . . . a film [in the theater] only appears to the extent that it disappears.”<sup>77</sup> Like a film, consciousness is also temporal (Stiegler also uses the phrase *in flux*). All interactions with the audiovisual involve some form of an adoption of

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<sup>74</sup> Bernard Stiegler, *Symbolic Misery Vol. 1: The Hyperindustrial Epoch*, trans. Barnaby Norman (Editions Galilee, 2004), 28.

<sup>75</sup> Mary Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, the Archive*, (Harvard University Press, 2002), 7.

<sup>76</sup> Doane, 9.

<sup>77</sup> Stiegler, *Vol. 1*, 17.

temporality. Television and cinema are temporal, whereas a hardcover book is not. A reader may get “swept away” by the narrative of a book, but the act of reading does not parallel a particular temporality.<sup>78</sup> The book itself is not a temporal aesthetic because there is no listening component to envelope the consciousness.

Different forms of media have different degrees of adoptive temporality. Some films are seen on a mobile phone lying in bed, and songs are blared through headphones as people walk the streets. On the television at home, the parallel of temporal consciousness and the temporal show or film can be interrupted by pressing *pause* or getting a snack. These types of viewing spaces add a *social component*. The effect of the *social component* is therefore specific to the *space* in which people interact with media.

With the proliferation of electronic mobile media, this *adoption* into electronic temporality can happen at any place and at any time and may include our own past self as a character (in our own home videos or social media posts). Jason Farman includes in his introduction to *Mobile Interface Theory* the similarities between mobile media and cinema, but he explains the type of temporality afforded by mobile media as *immediate*, “immediacy privileges a seamless connection to our media so that they fluidly integrate with our bodies and our surroundings,” as viewers are transported into the space of the narrative.<sup>79</sup> I use the word *space* instead of *time* because Farman theorizes that all temporal interactions happen in certain spaces. In these spaces, the virtual and the material worlds collide because we can *embody* both spaces fluidly. Bolter and Grusin, in discussing remediation and immediacy, say that media “attempts to achieve immediacy by ignoring or denying the presence of the medium and the act

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<sup>78</sup> Comics are one of the best examples of this difference. It is worth reading Scott McCloud’s *Understanding Comics*, who details the importance of “reader involvement” for reading comics.

<sup>79</sup> Farman, 7.

of mediation.”<sup>80</sup> To achieve immediacy, the connection between the virtual and material spaces becomes *invisible*.

This invisibility works twofold for the viewer. For one, it makes the social component possible, which I will refer to as participation. This type of participation can simply mean using and interacting with forms of media. On another level, participation only happens through the use of the senses and the possibility for affectual responses (I will go into this in the first section of Part 1).<sup>81</sup> But invisibility also allows for a synchronization of consciousness that is entangled with capitalist consumerism. The synchronization of consciousness is how Bernard Stiegler argues that marketers and dominant institutions attempt to control societies. In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, people tuned into the same television programs at the same times. Individual consciousnesses, then, came to expect certain visuals similar to everyone else, or essentially *no one*.<sup>82</sup> In Stiegler’s theory, we lose the ability to understand depth and time. We react within a *technical grammatization*, similar to the pheromones that lead ants’ decisions i.e., by our consumption-driven roles.

From an individual viewer’s perspective, this synchronization may include interpellation. *Interpellation* happens when viewers relate to a certain character or theme and “recognize themselves as subjects through ideology.”<sup>83</sup> This is a powerful tool for both marketers and artists. For artists working against control societies, including some film writers, interpellation provides people with new ways of thinking as well as chances to empathize with viewpoints that are otherwise impossible. However, with consciousness synchronized by the increasing presence of

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<sup>80</sup> Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media*, (MIT Press, 2000), 11.

<sup>81</sup> Stiegler also borrows this term from Leroi-Gourhan in *Symbolic Misery: Vol. 2* in the chapter “Sensing through Participation.”

<sup>82</sup> Stiegler, *Vol. 1*, 20.

<sup>83</sup> “Interpellation,” *The Chicago School of Media Theory*, University of Chicago, 2018, <https://lucian.uchicago.edu/blogs/mediatheory/keywords/interpellation/>

media, all temporal aesthetics have the ability to shape, contort, and create ideologies for viewers that they both relate to and are subjected by simultaneously.

When people are subject to temporal aesthetics in the whirlwind of consumerism, they lose the ability to create *singularity*. Singularity is the attachment of aesthetics to singular objects that are experienced when we desire and are fulfilled by the *unexpected*. Stiegler argues that the ability to create singularity is threatened by the proliferation of media for the purposes of marketing. In the age of electronic media, our exposure to the audiovisual can create an overwhelming sense of loss because marketing thrives on consumerist *expectations*. Without experiencing new forms of aesthetics that create affectual response, we never experience the unexpected and in turn lose our desire to project ourselves or participate.<sup>84</sup>

This can happen in all forms of media, but for Steigler, the cinematic experience can work counter to, or disrupt, consumer-based media. As compared to most electronic media that foster the reuse and re-articulation of the old for the benefit of capitalistic growth, the adoption of temporality in the cinema creates the potential for singularity. Stiegler argues that with cinema, we move *into* the world of the movie. He gives the example of someone who enters the movie theater, sits in an uncomfortable chair, with a toothache, and annoyed with someone at work. After the movie starts, they forget about the chair, tooth, and annoying coworker. Stiegler says that “you are no longer in your body; you are in the screen. You have adopted the time of the film.”<sup>85</sup> I acknowledge that the cinema experience can also be interrupted, but, even if I hear a cough during minute 45, I was fully immersed up to that point and quickly return to the temporality soon after.

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<sup>84</sup> Stiegler *Vol. 1*, 90.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.* 19.

Like television, the cinema involves an adoption of the audiovisual by the consciousness of the viewer, but there are important differences. The cinematic experience allows for different expected desires to create a participatory response when faced with the unexpected. This experience connects the aesthetic film to the audience as a “we.” In contrast, the *unexpected* does not happen with consumerism. Instead of a singular “we” in one moment, a synchronized consciousness across multiple spaces is that of “no one.” With television and other electronic media, there is a never-ending explosion of temporalities that attempt to relate to the viewer as well as change and warp their sense of a past. The important thing to consider is how our relationship with the audiovisual is under threat by dominant institutions, but keep in mind that there are always ways of interacting with temporalities that are participatory and productive.

### **Singular Memory**

The idea of a singularity touches on an important question: if we embody certain narratives through cinema, television, or mobile media, then once these temporal moments pass, how do we *remember* them? Are they remembered as part of everyday life? Are we able to separate the themes, ideas, and language of the media from our other temporal experiences in a particular time period in our past? If not, the establishment of control societies has unlimited potential; the way we interact, dream, and desire would be continuously rewritten to meet the current capitalist goals.<sup>86</sup> However, I will argue that certain memories are separate from, though affectually related to, our interactions with all forms of the audiovisual. In the same breath, I must acknowledge that memory is inherently fickle. Memories can change over time and are not always reliable. But before I discuss my own concepts relating to memory, I will first discuss other theories that describe the relationships between memory and media.

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<sup>86</sup> While I use this from Stiegler, I also am influenced by Gilles Deleuze, “Postscript on the Societies of Control,” (MIT Press, October, Vol. 59. 1992). <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0162-2870%28199224%2959%3C3%3APOTSOC%3E2.0.CO%3B2-T>

Stiegler refers to memories that are formed through technologies as tertiary memories. If I lived in a certain house for many years, I will have many memories of it. But if I see a video of the house, the video is remembering the house for me. This limits the memories I had before seeing the video. Stiegler argues that tertiary memories set the horizon, or potential expectations, for our secondary retentions, which are recalled in our imagination. We also have primary retentions which are what we must remember in a particular moment in order to react. We always filter these primary retentions through our secondary retentions, but we learn these secondary retentions from tertiary retentions or the memories of other temporalities. Our tertiary memories, then, through the filter of primary and secondary retentions, affect our everyday interactions and choices. This includes how we identify ourselves, imagine our futures, and choose what to believe—within a certain *limited* number of possibilities.

Stiegler argues that tertiary memories can limit the *singularity* of our memories when television or film *remembers* for us. We all exist in the present only in relation to the past. But in any culture, the past is always rewritten by new writers/creators. Stiegler explains the importance of memories using John Locke's idea that "I am *singular* through the singularity of the objects with which I am in relation."<sup>87</sup> Essentially, when we are unable to attach certain aesthetics to ourselves, we no longer have singular pasts. Not only are we subject to synchronized temporalities, but because of interpellation, we envelope and perpetuate the themes and values of dominant institutions as the sights and sounds of our past are transformed in new contexts for marketing purposes. A people without singularity fall subject to the formation of a historic cultural memory that relies solely on the evolving representations in all political and rhetorical discourses.

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<sup>87</sup> Stiegler, *Vol. 1*, 5.

In this sense, memories of films affect even our most intimate reactions and responses. The important point to consider is that all of our temporal activities affect our future selves. But a film is not always remembered “correctly” or in its totality. Victor Burgin argues in *The Remembered Film* that our past is intermingled with our own experiences as well as experiences we have seen on screen. This may include a billboard, commercial, or the thousands of places to scroll through information on the internet. Burgin quotes Jean Laplanche who explains memory and fantasy, “as a ‘time of the human subject’ that the individual ‘secretes’ independently of historical time. Temporal ‘secretions’ very often combine memories and fantasies with material from films and other media sources.”<sup>88</sup> This theory shows how memories of multiple temporalities will inevitably change and warp. Therefore, the synchronization of consciousness can be broken up by these multiple interactions; the “we” that developed by the viewing will inevitably differ. Still, this theory assumes that the unconscious mind will work against the powers of dominant institutions naturally. There is no participatory element and, although true, can still create a limited number of tertiary possibilities and lead to a lack of singularity.

Most films are created and marketed by Hollywood or other major production companies. Because of increasing wealth and resources, Hollywood is able to create larger markets, better quality of films, and recruit (subjectively) better actors. Roland Barthes acknowledges the possibility of a “third meaning” for viewing—one that is different from hegemonic viewing and unable to be described with language—but he admits that common responses to films can come from emotions that derive from, “an average effect, almost from a certain training.”<sup>89</sup> This training shows how Hollywood movies establish hegemonic discourses and themes for viewers. If we cannot differentiate our memories outside of technically produced tertiary memories, then

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<sup>88</sup> Victor Burgin, *The Remembered Film*, (University of Chicago Press, 2004), 15.

<sup>89</sup> Burgin, 66.

we have no ability to critique the discourse of media. The repercussions of this possibility have unlimited potential as we are exposed to new marketing rhetoric and films on a daily basis.

Although not in all cases, I agree with Stiegler's theory of synchronized consciousness in the sense that this synchronization is Hollywood and television's *ultimate goal*. With this in mind, this paper discusses the relationship between Hollywood films and the formation of memories. Through the framework of affect theory, I understand the concern of dominant institutions controlling affect, but I also continue the argument that by understanding the development of memory, and creating habits that foster their growth, new affects can be produced through certain types of cognitive and bodily participation.

### **Participation**

Stuart Hall's notion of "decoding" contends that viewers do not always interpret films in the way they were "encoded" to be understood.<sup>90</sup> Even if we do decode them as intended, our initial decoding of a film can change as we interact with other media in new spaces. This is because we do not always remember the narrative or even the viewing experience. Burgin argues that the narrative of a film does not matter as much as our affectual responses to it: "the more the film is distanced in memory, the more the binding effect of the narrative is loosened."<sup>91</sup> The combination of films and everyday life create an array of associations and ideologies that are different from the original viewing.<sup>92</sup> Burgin explains that films are not remembered by everyone in the same way, "consciousness may be synchronized in a shared moment of viewing, but the film *we* saw is never the same as the one *I* remember."<sup>93</sup> Burgin further discusses the way movies

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<sup>90</sup> Stuart Hall, "Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse," *University of Birmingham*, September, 1973.

<sup>91</sup> Burgin, 66.

<sup>92</sup> Burgin, 110.

<sup>93</sup> Burgin, 110.

can be refigured by the unconscious as we are reminded of films in association with other moments in our lives. This happens within other media spaces that we encounter on a daily basis.

With new forms of media allowing people to interact in new spaces, the amount of spaces to contest hegemonic discourses has increased. Giving grassroots artists the technology necessary to create, parody, and manipulate Hollywood films has created what Henry Jenkins refers to as “convergence culture”; this is when dominant institutions and grassroots individuals contribute ideas *back and forth* across local cultures and nationalities.<sup>94</sup> When we encounter representations of convergence culture, memory associations that we have with certain aesthetic objects can change. A parody or a reinterpretation of a film from grassroots artists has the power to change the type of interpellation that takes place for the viewer. This creates breaks up grand narratives into smaller subjective experiences. Mobile media platforms are battlegrounds for ideologies because they allow for branches of thought to grow from the original Hollywood creations. The key to convergence culture is access to technologies and the participation in the convergence process. Although Hollywood movies have more money, resources, and often better quality of films, the proliferation of new media allows grassroots artists to create new viewing experiences. With that being said, it is extremely important to understand that wherever the spaces of the masses are interacting (e.g. YouTube), marketers from Hollywood will soon involve themselves in these spaces.

As new technologies provide new spaces for interaction, Hollywood marketers find new ways to impact the consciousness and ideologies of viewers. But memories of these films do not always have to establish hegemonic ideologies. In Part 1: Hollywood Sequels, I explain one possible relationship between memory and media with the creation of the term *staple associative memory (SAM)*. To foreshadow, these are memories of moments that are in association with

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<sup>94</sup> Jenkins, 17.

films but have a specific social component separate from the media itself. In the second half of Part 1, I intend to show how Hollywood tries to re-establish their relevance through certain types of films. This is being done in a particular way through the use of the film sequel. The sequel works in a number of effective ways, but one important development is the use of old scenes directly placed into sequels. The use of old scenes in new films has become easier with the creation of new technologies, most importantly the use of digital actors. While this may be seen only as a plot device, I want to argue that it has larger implications for the way we remember. When we see old scenes or characters—either the original actors or digital models—the films either replace or reconstruct the memory of the original film. This works counter to the creation of singularity for viewers. An example of this potential is the sequel to the movie *Blade Runner* (1982), a film set in the futuristic year 2019. The sequel, *Blade Runner 2049* (2017), will be the text I center my ideas on throughout the work.

Both the creation of *staple associative memories* and Hollywood's attempts to diminish and erase these personal histories are discussed within the framework of affect theory. I do this by trying to pay close attention to intimate, social, and specific ways of interacting in the world. At the end of Part 1, I discuss how the use of affective methodologies can benefit the individual reader in their own life, as well as how scholars may use the phrase in their own work. In the ideological split between the importance of cognitive or bodily affects described in *Affective Methodologies*, I lean toward the cognitive, but I also rely on the need for social participation—which inherently includes both affectual bodily and cognitive responses. By the end, I hope my discussion of *staple associative memory* will open up new possibilities for other people interested in cinema, memory studies, and affect theory.

In the second chapter, I will move away from the cinema and discuss other spaces of media consumption, focusing on Netflix. I argue that Netflix *also can* create embodiment and singularity. And there may be a social component embedded in the watching as viewers decide when and where they want to watch. But they are also enveloped into the fantasy world of television in specific ways, ultimately leading to a synchronization of consciousness and new forms of dominant interpellation. Using the television show *The Office*, I explore the way that breaking the fourth wall in television can entice the viewer into certain ways of watching. As others have done before me, I argue that in order to critique hegemony, people *must* interact with media in a critical way. Seeing a movie for the first time subjects the viewer to the narrative of the director/writer because we desire the revealing of the story. If the original viewing of a film is an embodiment of the film, then the control is in the hands of the creator. While this can lead to the unexpected, it also fails to differentiate the writer's intent or the source of the art. The goal, then, is to rethink or critique the first viewing experience by recognizing the power of affect in establishing memories.

I end the work with a discussion of *Blade Runner 2049* as a science fiction model for real world technology, focusing on the artificially intelligent character, Joi. Joi is the companion to the main character, Kay, but she exists only as a projected form of augmented reality. While other films have included artificially intelligent love interests (*Her* 2013 and *Ex Machina* 2014 come to mind), the use of an augmented reality character has particular relevance to the future of film. By this, I mean the chance for films to enter into the spaces of the material world through the use of augmented reality. Films entering into spaces outside of theater create the possibility for new ways of viewing films in a critical way, but they also allow for potential negative repercussions like the control of movement. The use of this type of character also does a degree

of cultural work by foreshadowing potential future technologies and creating a certain real-life potential for the technology. In this last section, I will include my thoughts about memory for the future of media.

### **Real-world Application**

I believe my work is necessary for a few reasons. One, the evolution of media continues rapidly, and therefore needs to be critiqued as it evolves. Two, I believe I can help extend an explanation for how Hollywood creators are threatening further hegemony by reusing old scenes and making movies that parallel *watch* time and destroy singularity. Many scholars have argued that global capitalism no longer fights strictly over materials in a Marxian sense but over consciousness.<sup>95</sup> Stiegler says that it is “television’s vocation to synchronize individual temporalities of consciousness so as to constitute global markets . . . with a view to accentuating their massively consumerist expectations.”<sup>96</sup> Although movies have the ability to critique this temporal synchronization, I argue that Hollywood also plays a role in creating a specific and controlled temporality.

Within the vein of affect theory, I also acknowledge my own role in the creation of this work. I try to follow the goals laid out in *Affective Methodologies* by recognizing my situational position as a researcher and producer of knowledge.<sup>97</sup> I have a personal connection to *Blade Runner*. My brothers and dad like it, I like it, and I was interested when the sequel was released. My admittance of this film as one of personal importance may create a certain bias to my writing, but I believe we only write when we are affected by something anyway. I also believe I am at a crux in my life as a writer: I am learning and reading about more complex and theoretical ideas which have allowed me to at least associate with other academic writers. At the same time,

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<sup>95</sup> Refer to Deleuze in his work on “control societies.”

<sup>96</sup> Stiegler, *Vol. 1*, 88.

<sup>97</sup> Britta Knudsen and Carsten Stage, “Affective Methodologies,” (*Palgrave Macmillan*, 2015), 5.

I struggle with certain readings and concepts. While this may discredit some of my work, I believe this crux is valuable. Partly from my readings of feminist scholarship, I strive to keep at least one foot on each side of the theory/academia and method/activist “dichotomies.”<sup>98</sup> This includes being reflexive, acknowledging potentially juxtaposing ideas, and being accountable for my methods and the sources of my ideas. On one side of the spectrum is the world of theorists from where, eventually, it may be difficult to return. If I were to return, it would be to the life of a person swept away uncritically in the technologies, social situations, and products that most people consume at face value. My work hopefully bridges an invisible gap that I believe exists between the people who live without questioning and those who feel compelled to read for the sake of learning and change.

In sum, I hope my work uses relatable language for many readers and provides insights into everyday living and ways for thinking about the future. Whether or not my analysis is effective, I want reiterate now and at the end how much I believe that there is an ongoing battle over memories that will invariably affect the future. Without *singularity*, we lose the ability to find value in the idea of knowing we have a bond with singular objects and a specific past; Stiegler calls this self-love. This affects cultural as well as individual identity, how we interact in a community, as well as the ability to learn, create discourses, and collaborate in the spaces that we work and live.

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<sup>98</sup> Richa Nagar and Amanda Loch Swarr, “Theorizing Transnational Feminist Praxis,” (*New York: New York University Press*, 2010) 5.

## Part 1: Hollywood Sequels

### Staple Associative Memory

When the television entered into middle class homes in the 1950s, viewers were subjected to *what, when, and how* to watch: one of three stations, at a scheduled time, and according to the director's will. With electronic media, the scheduled time frames have changed, and the options for what to watch have expanded. But the ability to connect to an aesthetic object is even harder as we are exposed to more images than ever before. Marketing has grown and infiltrated our most intimate spaces. One of Stiegler's main arguments is that that the cinema is "par excellence the aesthetic experience able to fight aesthetic conditioning on its own terrain."<sup>99</sup> It stands to reason that if the experience in the theater is threatened then the ability to counter aesthetic conditioning becomes more difficult. Unfortunately, this is the role of the movie sequel. By revisiting and reusing old characters and scenes, the movie sequel distorts the singular connection to a past aesthetic (the original film). By paralleling *watch time*, the sequel feels natural to the viewer, but like television, this parallel is an attempt to reinsert the control over time. When we watch a sequel, we are not only being shown *when, what, and how* to watch but more importantly *when, what, and how to remember*. With no differentiation of memories, we are subjected to the themes and ideologies of the newest versions. As history scholars attest, history is continuously re-written, so the control of individual memories affects the creation of ideologies in the future.

Sequels are different from a remake or a story that has been passed down through generations. All art steals from the past in some way and there are certain archetypes that are consistent in films, but every culture must rearticulate what has come before in a new form. Sometimes the reuse of an old story just needs a new technology like "digital re-mastering" or

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<sup>99</sup> Stiegler, *Vol. 1*, 83.

“3D glasses,” and other times the characters may need an updated setting as with the reiteration of *Romeo and Juliet* directed by Baz Luhrman in 1996. These are remakes that audiences understand as such. People enjoy new versions, but they do not necessarily erase or change a previous experience with the story. Rearticulating or remaking art takes on many forms, but before the photograph, the ability to rearticulate was strictly in the physical hands of the artist. Walter Benjamin, in his seminal works on mechanical reproduction, explains how a painting or sculpture was never exactly the same and always fit into an historical moment.<sup>100</sup> Whereas the photograph and cinema allow for art to be mechanically reproduced, electronic media gives marketers the ability to reproduce art increasingly easier and faster.

Passing down representations of cultural artifacts has changed with electronic media. The creation of a piece of art and when someone views it is often flattened onto one moment. As Benjamin understood, this makes art lose its historical relevance. Greg Ulmer extends Paul Virilio’s argument that art in the electronic age moves at the speed of light. This has created what Ulmer refers to as “now time,” which explains the technological ability to experience an overwhelming number of past aesthetic objects whenever we want.<sup>101</sup> With electronic media, any temporal art can be used again in a new context. This includes songs, television, and movies. As discussed above, sounds and images are reused and reconfigured in a never-ending loop of temporal synchronization. But the variety of electronic media has also allowed for the mixing of temporalities. I argue that this has opened up new possibilities for establishing connections with aesthetics objects.

Because of different platforms for viewing or listening, the temporalities of movies and songs can be intertwined with other daily activities. These movies or songs are experienced for

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<sup>100</sup> Benjamin, 14.

<sup>101</sup> Greg Ulmer, “Flash Reason,” (*Cybertext*, 2013), 1.

multiple hours of people's lives. If I spend four hours listening to music throughout the day, then I spend four hours meshing my other temporalities with that of the temporalities of the songs. Vivian Sobchack explains this as a combination of objective time and the subjective time, and that "we understand that these two structures exist *simultaneously* in a demonstrable state of *discontinuity* as they are, nonetheless, actively and constantly *synthesized as coherent* in a specific lived-body experience (emphasis in original)."<sup>102</sup> Therefore, these moments are remembered together as combined and intermixed temporal moments of our pasts. With this in mind, we may conclude that the temporality of a song is only partially embodied by the listener as other senses are used to move throughout the day.

Navigating and filtering these temporalities has become a necessary skill in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Ulmer contends that judging electronic media includes more of the senses than ever before, but some temporalities overwhelm others, often when art is objectively beautiful. He uses Kant's idea that we all recognize beauty as a common thread, regardless of language. Ulmer states that "'Beauty' is not a property of an object or thing, but a feeling by which subjects become aware of a harmony among their own faculties. A concept or rule is lacking for the feeling."<sup>103</sup> Upon recognizing beauty in a song or moment of a film, these moments become part of an individual's memories. These moments are affectual responses, but they happen within a combination of specific emotional or physical states that were already present. I may be listening to the most objectively beautiful song, but if I am distracted by a family emergency, the song may be ignored. When I hear the song later, I may not recognize it, or I will associate it with an emergency. This means that the memories associated with electronic temporalities will differ when combined with everyday activities. Even in a similar physical location like Georgia,

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<sup>102</sup> Sobchack, 12.

<sup>103</sup> Ulmer, "Flash Reason," 3.

different viewers will have experienced media in different contexts. As Burgin explains, two people may both see a film together, yet one person remembers the film forever and the other forgets it the next day.

Movies that are important to any one individual's past are identified by what Walter Benjamin calls "purposive remembering."<sup>104</sup> When we like a film or have a particular affectual response to a scene, we will remember it when triggered by something later in life. After more than one viewing of a film, the narrative solidifies in our memory. Although no one remembers a film perfectly, this solidification is important. On second viewing, we know the plot and the narrative and are no longer anticipating the next temporal moment. In one sense, the movie is objectified and solidified as an aesthetic. When experienced in a particular moment in the presence of a sensible group, this creates the singularity of "we."

When I was growing up, I was able to watch my favorite movies over and over again. I still find myself quoting lines from *Robin Hood* on a daily basis. But I do not confuse moments of this film from other moments in my life; I am fully aware that I am quoting the movie and what part of the film I am quoting. Through repetition, I was affected by the film in new and interesting ways. In *Absent Minded Media*, Ben Highmore discusses how ordinary daily life is filled with small beauties. Through the habitual interaction with the ordinary, we open up to new ways of thinking; for me, the habit-like viewing of *Robin Hood* allowed for a different way of remembering it.<sup>105</sup> Instead of being a memory of the film, this memory is *triggered* by the film, *but I associate it with a certain space in the past*. With this type of memory, I favor the temporal experiences outside of the film as compared to the film itself or some unidentifiable combination of the film and another event in the unconscious.

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<sup>104</sup> Burgin, *The Remembered Film*, 82.

<sup>105</sup> Highmore, 125.

This type of memory also happens with songs. Some songs always remind us of specific experiences in our past. As we engage in our daily lives listening to songs, we are participating in other activities as well (although songs are temporal, they do not always have narratives, which makes less to embody by the listener and more potential for other associations; for this reason, the song example may be more relatable). The important component of this type of memory is that we listened to the song or watched the film multiple times. Through repetition, we re-situate the beauty in the film or song and associate it with other interactions. Only by solidifying the narrative in our minds can we disestablish ourselves from the attempt to synchronize temporality by consumer media. Instead, we focus on other aspects of life during that time. I call this type of memory a *staple associative memory* or SAM.

In this definition, I use the word *staple* because certain films are stapled onto certain periods of life. Unless we have another period where we watch the movie over and over again, the film will always remind of us a particular experience or space. *Associative* refers to anything that is outside of the narrative itself. These memories exist in my imagination not only beyond the viewing experience but to other things in my life I associate with that time period. The details of the film take secondary status to my own associations with the film. This is just one example of many movies in my past that are not just movies but triggers for other times in my life.

Understandably, the strength of these associations may vary, which may be based on the type of platform we experience the combination of temporalities. When we watch with other people at home or listen to music on the go, we increase the chance for other temporal associations. These memories may connect to a positive or negative event in our memory and may be purely affectual, narrative-based, specific, or general. But regardless of the emotion or

narrative in our memory, these memories connect specific aesthetics to certain feelings; they extend us away from the temporality of the audiovisual object and become specific to our lives.

Just because people in a certain geographic place may be exposed to similar films does not mean that each film had the same effect on each viewer. The first exposure to a film is “a powerful bond,” but with only one viewing, a sequel can alter or erase the original.<sup>106</sup> Therefore, to firmly establish singularity, there may need to be more attempts and stronger associations. When we see a movie multiple times, the subjective temporality of inhabiting the world of the film changes from the original. Any of these viewing experiences may trigger the associative connection, but regardless, the film returns to a piece of art, as an object, and it is associated with other temporalities in our past separate from the film viewing experience.

I mentioned that one of my SAMs is triggered by *Robin Hood*. This film has become part of my past and establishes my selfhood. By having this film in my past, I attach an aesthetic to my past. It is just one memory of many that makes me feel unique. This film may lead to a staple associative memory for someone else, but that person will decode it differently and relate it to a different time in their past. This creates *singularity* to a certain aesthetic and also to a particular space. To explain with an example, if I watch a film for the first time but my grandfather has already seen it, we may embody the film similarly upon that single viewing experience, but our memories of the watching the film, in conjunction with all of our other memories, will invariably differ. This difference is positive because it allows for a singularity in the moment but a different association across generations. As new films are produced with new writers, new memories are associated with old ones, even if we watch movies out of the order that they are released in *watch time*.

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<sup>106</sup> Stiegler, *Vol. 1*, 18.

The next few sections discuss the relationship between Hollywood writers, producers, marketers and anyone else who has seen Hollywood movies. The alignment of watch time with film sequels is one of the ways Hollywood attempts to threaten attachment to originals. In specific ways, *Blade Runner 2049* threatens the possibility of having *staple associative memories* that have formed in specific contexts and been remembered at different times in different spaces. In the context of “now time,” different memories that lead to creations of different identities can be manipulated and reconfigured by Hollywood movie sequels.

### **Threatening Staple Associative Memories**

Establishing *staple associative memories* is not a simple process because we need a combination of beauty and multiple views in order to solidify the text as an objective narrative. Also, just because we have these memories does not decrease our desire to see new movies. In a society driven by marketing, we want to see the newest releases. As Stiegler notes, as singular pasts are threatened, people try to differentiate themselves with products. This process of loss and consumption is a never-ending cycle, but the mentality stems partly from the American values of individuality as well as the growth of capitalism common in the Western world.

The constant release of new movies and songs are reminders that there is more to be experienced. Richard Lanham calls this the desire of the rhetorical life: a rhetorical person desires pleasure, winning, persuasion, and progress. This rhetorical desire works as the opposite of philosophy. He argues that we oscillate between the rhetorical/particular and philosophical/essences.<sup>107</sup> I see these terms relate to art in the following way: new art is rhetorical, whereas art in a *staple associative memory* is philosophical. Stiegler argues that the

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<sup>107</sup> Lanham, 5.

“particularization of the singular is its annulment.”<sup>108</sup> Essentially, the essence of a past is reused in a rhetorical context as objects serve particular purposes in the flow of marketing.

Having a list of *staple associative memory* texts makes people feel like they have lived, have worth, and that they have been through something that they can connect with at any future moment. Even without an actual list of art, people realize they have these texts when they see an old movie they have not seen in years that they used to love. They become simultaneously excited and nostalgic by understanding the old film as being part of a unique historical period. This unique historical period, of which all historical periods are, must be considered only as a memory or in relation to the past, but it cannot overlap with any other past. If it overlaps, it *devalues the experience and is forgotten*. When we no longer associate a film with a period, we do not keep that period as part of our evolving creation of selfhood.

The ability to threaten these memories comes from the ability to reuse audiovisual art in new contexts. Stiegler claims that recorded song was the most important musical event in the 20<sup>th</sup> century because “masses of ears suddenly started to listen to music—*endlessly*.”<sup>109</sup> He uses the film *Same Old Song* as an example of how the reuse of music has both a binding effect on viewers but also creates an “ill-being.”<sup>110</sup> In the film, the actors mime well-known songs in Paris. The songs create an “avalanche of ghostlike returns” which helps establish a connection with the audience in that particular space; this is a step in the direction of creating a singular “we.”<sup>111</sup> But because of the reuse of old songs, this connection creates a disgust or realization of a negative type of reuse of the old songs. The reuse of old songs destroys the change of a “we” in association with any particular song. If everything is just reused, there is no singular. The film

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<sup>108</sup> Stiegler, *Vol. 1*, 6.

<sup>109</sup> Stiegler, *Vol. 1*, 20.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 21

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

may make people feel as if all old songs are unworthy or undesirable, which in turn creates a questioning of self worth.

I agree with Stiegler that the reuse of the past can create an ill-being, but the viewers of *Same Old Song* become aware of the ill-being early in the process of viewing. They know that the movie revolves around the novel idea to reuse old songs in a new context. This allows for people to dissociate themselves from the temporality of the film and critique this component. With an understanding of *staple associative memories*, the concern I have with Stiegler's use of *Same Old Song* as an example is that *staple associative memories* may not be threatened. Stiegler notes that the memories of the songs are "sometimes very vague—floating memories," and this understanding of memory is what creates the ill-being.<sup>112</sup> Texts that are attached to SAMs are not vague or floating (although they may evolve). For some of the songs in the movie, they will produce a floating memory, but for ones that have strong affectual associations with them, these memories will pull the viewer toward the associations with those songs again.

The fact that the original song created an affectual response is what will sustain the *staple*, regardless of a single reminder or adoption of temporality of the song later (the situation that *Same Old Song* creates). In *Volume 2*, Stiegler describes how important participation is in establishing singularity. Singularity is established because of sensory participation. The ability to sense only comes from a production of the self by "acting out" in response to an aesthetic.<sup>113</sup> This participation is what creates SAMs.

This is all to say, if I were to watch *Same Old Song*, I might have certain songs that already included SAMs, and I would be attracted to them again, just as I was initially. I am attracted because I know my song/s better, and I have already attached them to particular

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<sup>112</sup> Stiegler, *Vol. 1*, 23.

<sup>113</sup> Stiegler, *Vol. 2*, 36.

associations in my past. Once I realize that the songs are mimed, reproduced, and unattached, the association I had with the original SAM will remain relatively intact.<sup>114</sup> The example of *Same Old Song* is clearly a reproduction of songs, which creates the ill-being. People are aware that the songs are being reused, which allows for a conscious refusal of these new renditions as valid. In sum, there can be a push-back by viewers from adopting the temporalities, and therefore they do not have any participation or critique of the film.

Another type of audiovisual scenario, though, may not allow for a conscious push-back: learning that a song samples from another song. If I hear a song that gives me pleasure, only to find that the chorus has been sampled from a previous generation, this may create an embarrassment from being tricked when I am finally made aware. *This* scenario is the epitome of Stiegler's ill-being because I have been tricked by the creators. This embarrassment may produce a strong affect and a memorable one at that.

Listeners react this way because they believe strongly in two ideas. One idea is that they live in a particular historical moment different from any that came before. The other idea is that they have a past specific to their own formation of selfhood. When I watch a film multiple times, I no longer am subject to the film's temporality but have extended the film into other temporal moments associated with the watching of the film in a specific space in my past; I *appreciate* my *staple association memories*. No one remembers watching *Robin Hood* in their memory in the same way that I do. This means that the memory is part of my individual selfhood. It becomes *incomparable*.<sup>115</sup> Although I may not control when or in what context I hear the song later, the memory association is relatively intact or stapled.

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<sup>114</sup> To note, I may gain a *new* staple associative memory with a different song that I may have been less familiar with before the film.

<sup>115</sup> Stiegler refers to the "singular" as "incomparable" in *Volume 2* page 36 and other times throughout the book.

Both *Same Old Song* and *Blade Runner 2049* are examples of control over consciousness and memory. But in the case of *Same Old Song*, the audience is aware that the songs are being reused, so hearing the old songs may not produce as much of an affect, which comes through sensory participation. This lack of participation is also Stiegler's point, but my tangential point is that *Same Old Song* may *not* create an ill-being; it may just be remembered as a novelty or not at all. However, similar to the surprise from learning a song uses a sample, *Blade Runner 2049* *does* create an affect of surprise for the viewer by using old scenes in new contexts. These scenes are not the focal point or the novelty of the film; any viewer would never expect to see them. Therefore, because these scenes create an intense surprise, they have the potential to erase the original affects, which erases the original affectual attachment to *Blade Runner*.

Through this technique, the original scene that created the affect and in turn SAM can create a strong enough affect to reconfigure the original memory of the scene. Consumer culture thrives on the idea of the new, and it works increasingly hard to value the new over the old. In many cases, marketers attempt to use the old in new contexts to flatten the experiences of multiple generations. Different generations most easily identify through visual representations and temporal objects that are specific to each generation: this includes any artistic visuals. These differences are crucial for growth into new societies by combining, understanding, and creating cross-generational discourses. But these differences can be threatened by Hollywood, which is why we need to articulate the threat and try to establish memories attached to specific aesthetic objects. If the memories or differences become obsolete, the potential for a control society based on specific norms becomes all the more real.

### *The Evolution of Blade Runner*

The original *Blade Runner* was released in 1982 and featured a dystopian future in the year 2019, with the popular actor Harrison Ford in the lead role of Deckard. Deckard's job is to hunt down and retire rogue replicants, android-like beings who look like humans but are used as workers/slaves. On his mission, he falls in love with Rachael, a replicant who does not know she is a replicant. In *Blade Runner 2049*, Rachael is no longer alive because she died giving childbirth. The lead character and blade runner, Kay, is a new, more controlled version of a replicant. These new models of replicants were created by Niander Wallace, a technological genius who wants to expand his number of replicant slaves to conquer new worlds. He is attempting to find Rachael's child to understand replicant reproduction and create more slaves. At one point in the film, Kay believes he might be the child of Rachael, and with his augmented reality girlfriend Joi, must track down the answers to his and Deckard's pasts.

For many works of art, electronic media or otherwise, the original release may not be seen by many people. My dad saw the original *Blade Runner* in the theater, but the majority of viewers did not receive it well, as shown by critical response and a low box office total. The film made a measly 6 million dollars and was gone from theaters in a week.<sup>116</sup> When I saw the film approximately 20 years after the original release, I experienced it in a very different social, material, and emotional state than my dad. But technologies do not evolve in the same way as organisms. Belinda Barnet discusses how technical objects evolve and how we might trace their evolution, "Technical machines can reappear, borrow from each other across branches, and then rapidly evolve in a single generation."<sup>117</sup> But for the viewer, everything "new" feels like a natural evolution. Marketers try to create seamless transitions that parallel *watch time*. Therefore,

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<sup>116</sup> Brian Raftery, "The Replicant: Inside the Dark Future of Blade Runner 2049," (Wired, 2017).

<sup>117</sup> Belinda Barnet, "Technical Machines and Evolutions," Edited by Arthur and Marilouise Kroker (*CTheory*, , a139, March, 2004), [www.ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=414](http://www.ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=414).

where *Blade Runner 2049* fits into the historical time period is very important for how it is written, marketed, and branded. The idea of a new film entices the desire of the consumer. No longer seen as purely art, both movies become part of the stepping stones in the synchronization of consciousness. This synchronization promotes the new and rewrites the old in the process.

One way to look at how Hollywood builds brands is by tracing the historical lineage of a film. The original *Blade Runner* is based on the novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* by Philip K. Dick published in 1968 (which is based on other science fiction narratives and ideas). When I search it on *Amazon.com*, the most recent additions include the title at the top, but then below in a bigger font, “the inspiration for the films *Blade Runner* and *Blade Runner 2049*.” The most recent film iterations of the story take precedent over the book, even though the movies vary significantly from the original. The *Amazon* reviewer writes:

*Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* is a book that most people think they remember and almost *always get more or less wrong*. Ridley Scott's film *Blade Runner* took a lot from it, and threw a lot away. Wonderful in itself, the film is a flash thriller, whereas Dick's novel is a sober meditation. *As we all know*, bounty hunter Rick Deckard is stalking a group of androids who have returned from space with short life spans and murder on their minds—where Scott's Deckard was Harrison Ford, Dick's is a financially strapped municipal employee with bills to pay and a depressed wife (emphasis added).<sup>118</sup>

The reviewer makes assumptions about the reader based on a shared historical *watch time*. They assume that if we are reading this excerpt then we have seen the film. Paradoxically, they claim that people typically remember the book wrong, while assuming that we have all seen the movie *correctly* because “we all know.” They are favoring the most recent cultural artifact over another and rewriting the history of the film. This otherwise insignificant review is just one an example of how the old is seen as less valuable and can be replaced by the new through a slow dismantling of the past.

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<sup>118</sup>“Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep,” *Amazon*, 2018, <https://www.amazon.com/Androids-Dream-Electric-Sheep-inspiration-ebook/dp/B000SEGT10>

This type of assumption about the viewer narrows the amount of potential SAMs; assuming there is one way of viewing a film or reading a book is detrimental to their creation. Also, *Blade Runner* is not like other films; the movie is notorious for having multiple director's cuts. The movie has seven different cuts; the most recent one, and the one totally controlled by director Ridley Scott, was released in 2007. From my own viewing, I would not describe the replicants as "androids" nor as beings with "murder on their minds" but as beings looking for an extension on life. Each of the different cuts of the film could have a different tagline. One version creates a love story between Deckard and the replicant Rachael: they drive away into the distance at the end of the film. Other versions bring into question whether or not Deckard himself is a replicant through the use of a dream sequence featuring a unicorn. A dream with a unicorn may signify a memory that is impossible and the possibility that his memories are also implanted. For viewers, a storyline that has different plotlines depending on the version creates the potential for more variations of affectual experiences. These critiques allow the interpretation of the film to be in the hands of the viewer.

On the contrary, multiple versions may seem like a reuse of the old in the whirlwind of consumption, and this argument is valid. But one must consider that Ridley Scott's original version was not released until 2007. This battle between producers and artist is telling. While we can assume that Scott intended to create a memorable and singular viewing experience, producers saw monetary value in the release of multiple versions. This of course is specific to their current needs. Even as producers use different versions for monetary value, they eventually sought to reconfigure the story and characters into a grand narrative. To do this, the writers of the sequel pay strict attention to the timing and dates of the plotline and release.

The movie is titled *Blade Runner 2049*, which is a very specific year in the future. The date in and of itself has very little, if anything, to do with the plot itself. Including the year in the title is part of the attempt to reestablish the “natural” timeline of history. On IMDB the synopsis reads, “A young blade runner’s discovery of a long-buried secret leads him to track down former blade runner Rick Deckard, who’s been missing for thirty years.” On the same IMDB page, the storyline starts, “thirty years after the release of the first film, . . .” Do these tag lines mean thirty years in the time of the movie or thirty years in *watch time*? Essentially, both may be true. The original release was 1982 and the remake was in 2017, approximately 35 years apart. Through a paralleling interval of time, creators assume the audience saw the movie 35 years ago. Instead of acknowledging the multiple versions of the film, these taglines assume the world created in *Blade Runner* has existed in some alternative space, and we now get a peek into a reality that never stopped. This establishes a parallel universe, one that mirrors the thirty years that have passed in the life of the viewer. The films marketers use this strategy because for many people, the film is a memory of a certain time that is associated with a valued past. By showing that real time has passed, the consumptive desire for the new overtakes any philosophical need for a memory that is associated with a historical time period. This marketing of the movie manipulates the *when* of watching the film because the experience parallels “natural” years of living.

### ***Exploring “What” and “How” to Remember***

If *Blade Runner* (1982) triggers a *staple associative memory* for someone, then they have specific associations with the film and with the time period in their memory. As seen by its poor reception, the film has many elements that did not fit into the expectations of the 1982 viewers, which probably means that there are more chances for affectual response.<sup>119</sup> The *unexpected*

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<sup>119</sup> I am implying that poor reception either means poor quality or themes outside of the norm. Marginal themes often create stronger affects.

triggers affectual responses. Most genres are rather stable, but the elements of *Blade Runner* fit into multiple genres—sci-fi, detective, romance. As stated above, Ridley Scott was not allowed to release his original version. This proves how even popular writers are ultimately at the mercy of larger Hollywood executives. While the original release did produce multiple moments of beauty (arguably), the vision of the writer was compromised in order to fit into the mold of normalized themes. For instance, in the theatrical release in 1982, Deckard and Rachael drive on into the distance and fulfill their romance, whereas the final cut does not include this scene. This fits into typical romance genres and tries to tame or control some of the more ambiguous elements of the film. When themes are expected, they produce less affect in the viewer. The flattening of affect exemplifies Hollywood's desire to control the *what* and *how* of watching and remembering in order to better commodify art.

In the fictional world, a blade runner is like a special investigator who hunts replicants, futuristic beings who are almost indistinguishable from humans. Sobchack analyzes the original *Blade Runner* in her own essay about memory and media. She explains how valuable a photograph is for people's understanding of selfhood. She explains this by using the moment when Deckard tells Rachel that her photographs are not real: "Told that both her memory and its material extroversion actually 'belong to someone else,' she not only becomes distraught but also ontologically re-signed as someone who possesses no real life, no real history—although she still remembers what she remembers, and the photographs still sit on her piano."<sup>120</sup> What we classify as a real human is an important theme in *Blade Runner*.

In the world of replicants, there is an eternal struggle between humans and replicants who seek better lives; therefore, Rachael giving birth changes the socially assumed belief that replicants are lesser beings. If the replicants are able to have children, then they must have rights

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<sup>120</sup> Sobchack, 7.

as humans. In the film, Kay, the new blade runner, and Wallace, the new creator of replicants, are both looking for Rachael's child. Wallace wants the replicants to procreate so that they can be his slaves for inhabiting new worlds. In order to do this, he captures Deckard to try to find out where the replicant-child may be hiding. When Deckard and Wallace meet, a well crafted scene asks the audience members to question their memories. Similar to the response Rachael has about her fake photographs, the sequel also questions the validity of the memory of the original film for the viewer i.e., a SAM—a singular past experience that creates selfhood.

### *Deckard's Memories*

As stated above, one of the long-standing debates of the film is whether or not the main character, Deckard, is in fact a replicant. The sequel addresses this concern in a climactic moment in the film. Sitting across from each other, Wallace shows Deckard a video of the moment that Deckard first saw Rachael. In this moment, the viewers are also seeing the same scene that they have seen before—one with a particularly objective beauty both in the form of the woman and the cinematography. In the scene, Rachael is not walking toward Deckard in a far away shot but walking toward the viewer. Just as Deckard is being forced to remember his memory of Rachael, so are the viewers. In the film, Wallace questions Deckard's memory of the event:

Is it the same, now, as then? The moment you met her. All these years you looked back on that day, drunk on the memory of its perfection ... how shiny her lips ... how instant your connection. Did it never occur to you that was why you were summoned in the first place? Designed to do nothing short of fall for her right then and there. All to make that single perfect ... specimen.<sup>121</sup>

In this moment, we too are being asked to rethink our original memory in a new setting not only within our own lives in a new theater or at home on the couch but also in the context of the fantasy world that we now embody in that moment. The answer to the long-standing question is

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<sup>121</sup> Official Script, 93-94.

brought up by a character in the film. Essentially, Wallace attempts to answer the question posed by the audiences over the last 30 years. In this moment we may ask ourselves, *is* Deckard a replicant who was designed to fall in love with Rachael just to procreate? Questioning a long-pending question can create a strong affect in the viewer.

The next scene is an interesting manipulation of time, space, and technology. Out of the shadows, no longer on a hologram, a young, physical Rachael appears and walks toward Deckard. Both the audience and Deckard know that this young Rachael cannot exist, but the film uses a synthespian, an actor made to look like a real historic person that doesn't actually exist. Despite any longing for the character, both the audience and Deckard must quickly reconcile that the original actress, Sean Young, cannot possibly look young again. Interestingly, for viewers enveloped in the fantasy world, the potential to recreate a replicant that looks just like the original Rachael *is* entirely possible within the confines of the replicant technology. The official screenplay notes for the scene read, "A perfect recreation of all he ever wanted is right in front of him. In the flesh. Instantly filled with longing. With disgust." As she walks closer to him, the notes then read, "we are transported back decades in seconds."<sup>122</sup> The use of "we" is illuminating. Stiegler understands that when the audience exists as a "we," they are subject to the parallel consciousness of the film, which has powerful repercussions. Apparently, the writers understand the power of this "we." For the writers, this "we" includes any person that has ever seen the film, but it simultaneously destroys the singularity of the original film. This shows how they purposefully work within the understanding that new films replace or disfigure old ones and destroy the singularity of aesthetics.

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<sup>122</sup> Official Script, 96.

In the film, Deckard walks away from the new Rachael replicant, citing that “her eyes were green.”<sup>123</sup> He is saying that he trusts his own memories, and he could never be convinced otherwise. The screen notes say he is filled with “disgust,” a feeling the viewers may share. He is promoting that any replication is unworthy and not the same. *Yet* by the very fact that the sequel exists, the writers are asking the viewers to rethink their original memory. Deckard’s affectual response to a different eye color, the basis for his rejection of Rachael, may not be as easy for the viewers. If we can say that Rachael is a staple memory for Deckard in the same way that the original *Blade Runner* movie is a *staple associative memory* aesthetic, neither Deckard nor the audience can ever forget the possibility of another Rachael. This changes the narrative, character, and understanding of the original story. By reusing old scenes, *Blade Runner 2049* dramatically changes the *what* and *how* of remembering the original film.

### ***Kay’s Memories***

Remembering also has plot significance for the main character, Kay. Whereas the first film asks the questions of what classifies real humans, the sequel asks what classifies real memories. At the beginning of the film, Kay, as a new model of replicant that must obey, is aware that his memories are not his own i.e., that what he remembers was not *lived* by him. In the same way that Stiegler discusses the ill-being or loss of narcissism, Kay takes no pride in memories that are not his. He was given those memories; he therefore does not associate them with his selfhood. But, as the film continues, both he and the audience are led to believe he might be the child born of Rachael, and Kay begins to question whether his memories may have actually been lived by him.

Just like Rachael with her photographs, Kay claims ownership of the memory of a wooden horse he had as a child. When he goes to the place he remembers hiding the horse, he

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 96.

finds it, so we assume this will validate that he was a child. But he still questions whether the memory is an implant or not. As compared to Rachael whose past is threatened by a false photograph in 1982, the 21<sup>st</sup> century viewer knows that many images and objects can be falsified or manipulated. Kay, too, is unconvinced of the physical object as proof of a real past. So he visits a memory creator for replicants, Ana Stelline, and asks her what makes memories “real.” She says that her creations of memories seem real because “It feels authentic, and if you have authentic memories, you have real human responses.” He replies, “How can you tell the difference?” To which she explains, “We recall with our feelings, anything real should be a mess.”

Kay only remembered pieces of his past, and because he was unclear about the memory, he believed his false memories may have really happened to him. This is because the truths that he had established about his memories were placed into a new context and given new parameters. With multiple surprises throughout, when someone watches *Blade Runner 2049*, they may also re-associate their original memory to that particular aesthetic and in turn lose their sense of the object’s relationship to the past. The scenes in the film that once related to a specific space in life are intermixed with a new space in life. This affects the ability to maintain *staple associative memory*. The life associations with *Blade Runner* that were singular then become disassociated in the mind of the viewer. This gives the power to create and control affectual responses back into the hands of Hollywood. When my father and I watch the *Blade Runner 2049* together in 2017, despite our different associations with the films in our memories, we reenter into the world of blade runners and replicants as *equals*, equally susceptible and malleable in an evolving temporal fantasy.

## Engaging Staple Associative Memory

Up to this point, it may seem like I am arguing that people should not watch *Blade Runner 2049* for fear of replacing the singularity of the original. This is not the case. On the contrary, we must try to create opportunities for more *staple associative memories*. The idea of a “mess” is not entirely true because it implies that memories are not at all reliant on the *ways* we interact with media. Are memories only just a “mess” driven by emotions? There must be something we can do to work toward a way of watching and interacting with films that does not leave people spinning in the whirlwind of temporalities and consumption. I’ll put it in question form: what can people do to navigate an environment where aesthetics are reused again and again to satisfy the goals of marketing?

This question is not simple, but scholarship on affect theory may help initiate a path. As a reminder, we must not lose sight of the fact that the memories in our past are most often unreliable and malleable, but by paying attention to our own affectual responses, we recognize their role in creating memories. In *Ordinary Affects*, Kathleen Stewart explores the various affectual encounters people may have that shape understanding and action in the world. The things we watch may either stick or not in unpredictable ways. She writes that ordinary affects “pull the subject into places it didn’t exactly ‘intend’ to go.”<sup>124</sup> The “unintended place” is one way of understanding *staple associative memories*. When we are reminded of a film, the memory of the film pulls us to some other social or affectual interaction. The key is that SAMs typically, though not always, are created through a certain type of viewing experience: re-watching.

Re-watching involves making a choice. To find beauty in an aesthetic cannot be controlled, but immersing ourselves into the artistic space can create a stronger connection to it, a singularity, a purpose. Therefore, we must not be hesitant to interact with new forms of

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<sup>124</sup> Kathleen Stewart, *Ordinary Affects*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 40.

aesthetics, but when we find something that produces a strong affect, we must cling to it. When the affectual responses of joy, anger, sadness, surprise have been exhausted, move on to something else. Once the affectual connection has been exhausted, the “space” we *were* listening or watching becomes a new and different space with new temporalities. If I listen to the same song for a week, that week has become its own space in my memory. When I recall the moment at any point in the future, I am carried back to that space. *Blade Runner 2049* may create a strong affect for viewers, but to separate it from *Blade Runner*, we must associate the film with a particular space in life so as not to differentiate the scenes, characters, and themes of both films. By repetition, even with limited sensory participation, memories can be formed with specific aesthetic objects.

To just say *re-watching* is purposively an oversimplification, but I keep it simple because the aesthetic and affectual responses to films are important and must not be overcomplicated. To overcomplicate the process of watching a film can take away from these responses and seem like an attempt to control them. Instead of trying to find certain elements in a film, the goal is to involve ourselves in spaces that can lead to something new and hopefully associative. The hope is to move away from understanding objects as fixed but instead understand them as moving in and out in a complex relationship.<sup>125</sup> In order to do this, people must place themselves in spaces that have social interaction between, around, and during the watching of films and other media.

Notice that I do not anticipate the creation of art by all people. While I certainly believe everyone can and should create art, I also understand that it may not be interesting, exciting, or even materially possible for all people. The goal is simply to accept our responses to art, indulge them, and establish them as important pieces in our lives. If so compelled, walk out of the theater and walk into another one, but find an art with an affect that breaks up the way consumption

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<sup>125</sup> Stewart, “In the World,” 4.

erases history.<sup>126</sup> This will allow viewers to notice aspects of the film they did not notice the first time watching; find subtle favorite, interesting, or surprising parts; or have a discussion about the film over coffee the next morning. The *staple associative memory* may end up being this coffee experience. When a person sees this film later playing on a subway, the plot is long forgotten, but the sip of the coffee and the laugh of a friend return.

For scholars trying to understand the importance of *staple associative memories*, I believe it starts with an understanding of memory as important in all contexts. Scholars like Greg Ulmer and Elena Trivelli have encouraged analysis of affect during times of crisis or in extreme situations, and their insights are eye-opening, but Ben Highmore and Kathleen Stewart's studies of the ordinary are also important. When trying to understand the formation of selfhood or a culture more generally, the associations with films can create telling insights into what may seem like insignificant memories. In one sense, they work as artifacts similar to a photograph but, through their unique forms of beauty and temporality, can have a wider and more intimate range of affects and associative stories.

With that being said, to study memories is inherently a difficult task. As Trivelli shows us, the researcher must be allowed to let their own affectual responses guide their work—not only to guide in predictable ways but to let these affects open up new ways of seeing the world. In my own case, I started this project, consciously or unconsciously, in part because of my own life. As I transition into new spaces and new jobs in graduate school, memories of my young life weigh heavily on my mind. Halfway through this project, I helped my parents move out of my childhood home. My mother played the same songs she has played since I was child as I sifted through my collections and treasures. This experience helped me conceptualize between

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<sup>126</sup> In *The Remembered Film*, Burgin discusses two men who spent their time moving from theater to theater gaining fragments of memories that created a new experience. Obviously, profit-making theaters will frown upon this, which is a testament to their goals, but it is a helpful exercise.

temporal and non-temporal artifacts as I cleared out old spaces where I used to live. As I listened to music in the car, I tried to establish SAMs by listening to songs on repeat and sharing and discussing them with other people. Of course, I have no way of knowing how these memories will form without interacting in and through the new spaces I will inevitably visit in the future.

New media has allowed for these social interactions to take place in new spaces, but it does not mean that all new media is inherently social or counter-hegemonic. We must critique our own memories and identities and not take our memories for granted. It takes an active participation in new spaces to engage in new ways of seeing the world. In the next section, I discuss ways of interacting with media that are prone to conscious-adopting and the immersion into the fantasy worlds of dominant Hollywood productions.

## Part 2: Alternative Media Platforms

### Netflix

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the film industry has moved into the era of online streaming. The stores of Hollywood Movies or Blockbusters no longer exist to offer “classic” films. While I still have many DVDs, I watch them less than when I was a child. This lessens the amount of physical artifacts that I retain from my past. As Stiegler explains, “the stability of the sense organs is an illusion inasmuch as they are subjected to a never-ending process of defunctionalization and refunctionalization which is tied, precisely, to the evolution of artifacts.”<sup>127</sup> In the case of Netflix originals, Amazon movies, and Hulu, the amount of old artifacts has become fewer, but the control of the viewing experience has become greater. To note, these platforms can and will evolve; the bigger concern is one of access to artifacts. As a child, I was able to create *staple association memories* because I owned the hard copy of the movies; I could watch them any time I wanted. Although I may have spent more money for individual movies as compared to a Netflix subscription, I was not subject to films of my generation alone. By watching them multiple times, I was able to critique them as objects as I entered the temporality of the movies on my own terms.

The advent of mechanical reproduction changed the way we understand the relationship between space and time. As Farman attests, all narratives exist in spaces. New spaces of media have allowed people to control when they want to watch films. But these mobile media devices are still used within the structures designed by the creators. Tarleton Gillespie speaks to the metaphors and design structures that enforce certain horizons of thinking. He quotes Phil Agre who says that media systems may “elevate some central category as a ‘normal’ case, so that integrity of the system depends on its success in hiding or explaining away the associated

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<sup>127</sup> Stiegler, *Vol. 1*, 4.

marginal category.”<sup>128</sup> In any particular system, marginal associations are limited, so the potential for associations in the past are even more threatened. On a very basic level, the main limit of these platforms is less access to past films. We can watch Netflix wherever we want, but we can only watch what Netflix is allowed to include by production companies. Although there are other platforms for grassroots content, Netflix deals almost exclusively with major television corporations and Hollywood. But the streaming of these movies replaces the need for owning a hard copy. As Wheeler Winston Dixon explains, “Netflix is so anxious to be rid of DVDs that once a title enters the streaming universe, the physical DVD is summarily dropped from its inventory . . . the content factor has become almost incidental. If it can be streamed, Netflix wants it; if not, it doesn’t.”<sup>129</sup> For people who have associations with past films, they sacrifice past *content* for the illusion of *control* in the present. Yes, I decide when I want to watch a show, but when the shows are released and which shows I can watch are up to the Hollywood executives and Netflix producers.

Because the quality is better on Netflix and the prices are cheap, many people use it. As early as 2011, Netflix streaming accounted for 22 percent of all internet traffic on average.<sup>130</sup> Because of the ability to control when to watch, Netflix has opened a window to a new way of watching in the form of binge-watching. Binge-watching is when someone watches many episodes of a show in a row, totaling as many hours as a movie if not more. As noted above, the cinematic experience is different from other media interactions, but binge-watching creates an immersion and synchronized consciousness into the film similar to the cinema. Stiegler identifies the cinema as the source for fighting the control over consciousness, but Netflix binge-watching

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<sup>128</sup> Gillepsie, 116.

<sup>129</sup> Winston Wheeler Dixon, *Streaming: Movies, Media, and Instant Access*, (University Press of Kentucky, 2013) 109.

<sup>130</sup> Wheeler Winston Dixon, 143.

may also have the potential to create singularity with certain shows or films. But in comparison to the “we” provided in the theater, Netflix may be watched alone, secluded, and in no way connected to anyone. This flips the coin on its head. Because of limited access and a quick turnover of films, the control over *what* to watch creates a synchronization of consciousness similar to television or other consumer based media.

It goes without saying that binge-watching may come from a desire to immerse oneself into another world, but some shows are notoriously interactive and therefore more immersive. Again, this is a two-sided coin that may create an adoption (leading to singularity) or an individual experience that is subject to manipulation (non-social and consumerist). One particular show uses a device that makes the characters feel parallel to the *watch time* of the society: *The Office*. This show, adapted from a British version and originally airing on NBC but now exclusively on Netflix, is about a group of workers at a fictional paper company. In the fictional world of the show, the company is being filmed for a documentary. In a revolutionary breaking of the fourth wall, the characters look directly at the camera because they are talking to the “documentary crew,” but to the viewers, the characters are talking directly to them. Bolter and Grusin may explain this as a “naïve” type of viewing.<sup>131</sup> Viewers know that the characters are not speaking to them, yet in the moment of viewing, there is a belief or “marvel” hold on them. This technique creates a cast of relatable characters and easier interpellation of the film. Because the characters seem to be interacting with the audience, the divide between the temporality of the film and that of the objective temporality is blurred.

Because the show is a documentary that the characters eventually get to watch, the show also mentions the idea of being filmed in everyday life and the effect it may have on memory. At the end of the ninth and final season, the characters are shown watching the documentary. Like

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<sup>131</sup> Bolter and Grusin, 31.

in *Blade Runner 2049*, old scenes are reused in the show that the viewers must reconfigure in their memory. This creates a layering of the show on top of itself. In a show about regular work people, *The Office* recordings look similar to personal recordings that any regular person may make. In the finale, Jim, who falls in love with and marries another worker Pam, explains the significance of the documentary to him, “Imagine going back and watching a tape of your life; you could see yourself change and make mistakes and grow up. You could watch yourself fall in love, watch yourself become a husband, become a father. You guys gave that to me, and that’s an amazing gift.”<sup>132</sup> Jim’s speech implies that seeing our past through film is objectively positive and that layering old memories onto new ones does not take away from the memory of the time we have in our imagination. In actuality, remembering through tertiary temporalities allows for the lived memory to be warped and changed. As a viewer, we are also reminded of these scenes that we “lived” with Jim as we adopted the temporality of the show. The show erases its own potential for singularity by reusing old scenes in new episodes.

### **The Personal Video**

The recording of life can be done by anyone with access to a mobile video camera. This started with the invention of the home video. The home video complicates the relationship of film and identity with a particular type of tertiary memory. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, many people will have videos of when they were younger. When we re-watch these videos, we re-contextualize *ourselves* in relation to the present context. As I watch the movie, I see a version of myself that I must share temporality with in my moment of viewing, despite the fact that I have already lived that moment in a different temporality that also exists in my imagination.

For example, when I was 20 years old, I watched a home video of me as a 10-year-old. In the video, I am in my childhood living room with my younger brothers. My parents direct and

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<sup>132</sup> “The Finale,” *The Office*, Season 9, episode 23.

ask us questions. While we play in the living room, a second home video plays through the VCR on the television. In the second video, I am five. In the first home video, my brother and I imitate the younger versions of ourselves. As I watch at 20 years old, I am aware of my body existing in that moment in three different times. As I think about the video now, I exist in four moments simultaneously: the 25 year old me now, and my respective 20, 10, and 5 year old selves. But I do not remember the 20 year old watching experience. I cannot remember who was in the room or what day I watched it, but I remember the video of myself watching myself. All three memories have been flattened into one moment. Importantly, the moment not on video is forgotten. This is a unique example of tertiary memory that has changed my own memory. While I am still able to make associations of that time period that are not on the film, the actual moments of film are replaced in my imagination: the aesthetic has lost its singularity. Clearly the videos of my past life have overpowered the ability for other memories to associate with certain times in my life. Seeing old films in new contexts has implications on how I remember. My past, in a sense, has been quantified and qualified into these units of video tape recordings.

The home videos of my younger selves are different than a photo album. A photo album clearly separates certain moments. Even a collection of videos together can be separated, but the use of video within another video makes the original video impossible to remember the same way ever again. They are indelibly linked into a new narrative. This is the worst possibility of Virilio's "now time." Not only can art be layered onto the current moment, but the existence of a past as one existing only in our imagination or secondary retention is put into question. Personally, seeing my former self was grotesque. The grotesque affect also works to erase my lived memory. I did not want to imagine that I acted in that way at some point, even in moments that would be objectively okay to anyone other than me. Other people may never experience this

type of tertiary memory of the home video, but the possibility may become more prevalent in the future.

### **Augmented Reality and the Blade Runner “Future”**

I want to make sure to reiterate that in my opinion there is nothing inherently daunting about the technologies of new media. Jenkins explains the black box of media as a fallacy because all new technologies exist within certain eras and cultures.<sup>133</sup> I am not concerned with the threat to human communication. Neither do I think that the seemingly unlimited “database” is overwhelming. As Farman explains, the database only exists in *theory* because every interaction we have with *mobile* media requires direct activity.<sup>134</sup> Every use of mobile media is also a temporal interaction and one that could fit into a narrative structure. Because every lived moment exists temporally, Farman analyzes how different spaces construct interactions and ultimately identity. He is critical of those who say that new media makes people more disconnected. Every generation had similar fears about new technology, and yet each generation continues to interact and enjoy each other, although often within spaces that “intermix the virtual and material.”<sup>135</sup> However, it is important to focus on the new spaces where we interact because of Hollywood’s constant threat to memory.

Media technology evolves quickly, and new technologies have changed the way we use digital tools. This is an ongoing relationship between the imagination of writers and the creators of technology. Many inventions that have been on screen are being slowly pushed onto the market. One of these is augmented reality. Augmented reality is a temporal experience that may involve all facets of the senses, which opens up the potential for participation. But it also may never show the same moment twice, causing a perpetual desire for new material. The less

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<sup>133</sup> Jenkins, 15.

<sup>134</sup> Farman, 127.

<sup>135</sup> Farman, 6.

participation we have and the more saturated our temporalities are with Hollywood media, the less possibility for forming SAMs. Therefore, there has to be a balance between the two.

Otherwise, people do not participate in the formation of their ideologies and experiences. We become swept away by fantasy worlds without acknowledging the need for material and sensual development.

One character in the *Blade Runner 2049* film, Joi, is an interesting mix of an artificially intelligent augmented character. She is a virtual program created by Wallace to service the needs of people for companionship. At the beginning of the film, Kay's version of Joi is bound to Kay's house by his current technology, but, when Kay must leave his home for good, she enters into an "eminator." Although she has freedom to roam freely, her *being* exists in a thin disk that Kay keeps in his pocket. This allows her to move about freely and create her own experiences. On the one hand, the film shows the possibilities to create memories through augmented reality. Although Joi is programmed to serve Kay's every need, Kay and Joi create a believable relationship that evolves according to their experiences together. This follows with Jason Kalin's work on augmented reality who says that augmented reality would create a return to the physical spaces of the world. No longer bound to the box of a phone, augmented reality can exist within other spaces of the world and increase people's sensory participation.

Eventually, Joi's disk is destroyed and consequently her *being*. Towards the end of the film, Kay is standing on a dark bridge with a giant blue version of a recorded Joi talking to him. Kay does not say anything, so his feelings about seeing Joi are left up to the audience, but it can be deduced that he questions the memories he has of her. In comparing his own life to that of Deckard's, he sees his own memories as worth less than Deckard's daughter's memories. In this moment, he decides to go find and free Deckard from Wallace, regardless of his personal

sacrifice. Even though he had an authentic experience with Joi, he knows that his interactions with her were programmed, repeatable, and therefore not *singular*. Despite the social component of their interactions, the fact that Joi was programmed left Kay unsatisfied.

This inclusion of the social component segues into another concern for augmented reality: the control of *movement*. Movement creates affects. In the same way that embodying media can create certain conscious synchronization, augmented reality may be able to establish and limit movement. For example, I frequently dance when I listen to songs, whether it is in the car or in public (I sing in my head, so it can really be anywhere). I am always surprised that my movements seem to evolve in relation to videos I have recently watched. If I were to experience these videos in an augmented reality experience, I could willingly copy these movements despite their limitations. Dance, or movement more generally, is one of the best ways of recalling memories. Nathan To argues that “movement can transcend the limits of verbal and written engagements of haunted histories.”<sup>136</sup> We must acknowledge other ways of producing visual art that extend beyond language. Especially in regards to lost memory, the ability to move can create affectual triggers that jostle and reveal old histories. Therefore, any limitation on this movement through the use of augmented reality can be harmful in the long term.

Stiegler believes that symbolic misery comes from “a loss in individuation which results from the loss of participation in the production of symbols.”<sup>137</sup> The irony (which also implies the reality) is that there is a loss of participation at the same time that there are more opportunities to create symbols with new media. Although it may seem like there is participation, the divide between the rich and poor has only grown as capitalism continues to extend to new markets.

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<sup>136</sup> Nathan To, “Diasporic Montage and Critical Autoethnography: The Mediated Visions of Intergenerational Memory and the Affective Transmission of Trauma,” *Affective Methodologies*, ed. Britta Timm Knudsen and Carsten Stage, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 82.

<sup>137</sup> Stiegler, *Vol. 1*, 10.

These two ideas are related more intimately than ever. Therefore the questions remain, will we be swept away, unwilling to use our senses to participate in production? Can we learn to see ourselves as more than receptive beings and as participators? As I stated at the end of Part 1, this does not mean that people must paint on a canvas or remix a video to participate. The difference has to do with what spaces we decide to experience affect and how we spend our days embodying media. We can involve ourselves in as many virtual experiences as possible so long as we acknowledge our own diversified identities that can be created as we exist in this media saturated, market-driven environments.

### **Conclusion**

Throughout this paper, I have not discussed any specific themes or ideologies promoted in *Blade Runner 2049*. Perhaps surprisingly for a sci-fi, I probably could write an in-depth analysis of gender, class, or the environment, all of which are important in the film. Set in the future, the world in the film has an enormous divide between classes, has particular gender implications, as well as many other themes. Although I do not analyze them in this paper specifically, they are imbedded in the argument. Without specific and diversified singularities, we lose the ability to critique any issues relating to class, gender, and race. We become swept away by the grand narratives and rewriting of history that happens as the “old” is repurposed onto the “new.”

At the very least, I believe memories are important and that Hollywood seeks to control affectual responses, control the possibilities for choices and identities, sell products within these narrow desires, and make profit. One way to counter this development is to make other representations of films, but not everyone must have artistic skills to have singularities. These may be unrealistic goals, and they will not stop institutions from making cinema and controlling

media. However, the tools that people do have *are* their valuable and different experiences, their different grammars; people have lived in different generations. These unique perspectives can be displayed through media devices, artistic skill, language, or in a form of an indescribable affectual and body-centered event.<sup>138</sup> Regardless of the tool, the goal is to understand and attempt to form *staple associative memories*. For poststructuralists, this may be similar to the idea of citing. Greg Ulmer created what he calls the “Konsult,” a technological space where the combination of experiences and citations can create better collection of memory and community during a time of crisis.<sup>139</sup> But, we must also cite in our daily lives. This is done by sharing and talking to other people about art and engaging in the process of decoding film. I ask readers to filter through the mass and find narratives, analyze them, talk to friends about them, recontextualize them with art if you are so called. Watch movies a thousand times.

I ask this fully aware that many people will not want to participate. Lanham describes the nature of the Western man as one of oscillation between the rhetorical and the serious. Mobile media allows for the pleasure of the rhetorical in more contexts, and very little is stopping this desire. But there is also the possibility of the grotesque, which is an affect that in part drives my research. I feel a grotesque feeling when I see my younger selves in a home video or when I learn a song has been sampled. The grotesque self that I saw in the previous versions of myself gives me power in the present. If time does not exist, then I have no reason to rush to work, or to buy the new thing. The obsession with the *watch time* has led to an intense desire to live longer and longer. Medicines, scientific discoveries, and pragmatism all work under the assumption that more time alive means a better life. But without a past, our futures are not our own to live.

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<sup>138</sup> See Phil Bratta’s work on “The Embodiment of Lived Event.”

<sup>139</sup> Ulmer, “The Konsult,” 271.

At the climax of *Blade Runner 2049*, Harrison Ford playing the role of Deckard sits trapped in a spinner (flying car) on the concrete bank of the Pacific Ocean. Outside among the rising tides, Kay and Wallace's henchwoman, Luv, fight for the right to control Deckard's future. Kay wants to connect him with his daughter while Luv wants to use him to create slaves. As Harrison sits helplessly waiting while new models of people fight around him, I cannot help but relate his situation to that of the present day viewer. Ford's position looks bleak, both as a character and as an actor, as the character he played in 1982 is reprised and warped into the future. Not only is the real actor aging, but his original creation in *Blade Runner* fades along with him. And with it, fades the memories of those who watched the original film; their past re-taken by Hollywood's visual effects and streaming world. The leader of the original rogue replicants Roy Batty said it best. As he dies on a rooftop sitting across from Deckard, he contemplates the memories he has gained in his short time on earth, "all those moments will be lost, like tears in rain."

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