

Chiara Benitez and Sarah Chekfa  
Professor Waite  
PMA 3490, GOVT 3705  
15 December, 2016

## NEW FLESH: SCREENPLAY

### RATIONALE:

The films *Videodrome* (1983, dir. David Cronenberg) and *Blade Runner* (1982, dir. Ridley Scott) were used as inspiration and as a reference for the following screenplay.

In David Cronenberg's *Videodrome*, CEO Max Renn discovers a television channel broadcasting torture and violence, and, intent on pinpointing its origins, becomes grotesquely entangled in its twisted, borderline sadistic narrative. The "New Flesh", members of society who have been exposed to the broadcast signal, develop brain tumours that alter their perception of reality, blurring the line between the virtual and the physical. Renn begins to experience hallucinations, including a large hole in his stomach that acts as a VCR. Eventually, after discovering that the broadcast signal was developed as a NATO weapon, Renn completely loses touch with reality, and shoots himself in the head in order to transcend the physical world, or the "Old Flesh".

In Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner*, police officer Rick Deckard is tasked with "retiring" replicants, "Nexus-6" models who have come to Earth from off-world colonies in order to prolong their 4-year lifespans. Replicants and human beings are virtually identical; the only way to distinguish between a replicant and a person is to perform the Voight-Kampff test, a test that tracks the emotional responses of its test subjects.

Our screenplay examines the possibility of a New Flesh world, where the New Flesh has taken over—in the form of social media—and the Old Flesh is considered a medical condition that can be diagnosed with the Voight-Kampff test. New Flesh individuals display a lack of empathy, and are unable to internalize situations that are not mediated through social media. Similarly to *Videodrome*, which uses the desensitization to violence in order to demonstrate the overstimulation experienced by members of society, New Flesh individuals in our screenplay are overstimulated and thus desensitized by social media. Virtual reality is now more real than physical reality; intimacy can only be realized through social media.

While in *Videodrome*, the broadcast signal is utilized as a NATO weapon, our version of the signal is the social media site GLASS, which is being monitored by the government as a form of surveillance. The phone has become the government's newest weapon against its citizens; as a form of treatment, individuals suffering from "Old Flesh Syndrome" are forced to have cellphones wired into their hands, resembling Renn's hallucination of the gun that is wired into his hand in *Videodrome*.

Sarah and Chiara, our characters in the screenplay, are filmmakers who live in a remote community outside of urban society. The filmmakers have been commissioned to create a documentary on the New Flesh society in order to expose the reality of social media-use. The documentary is meant to be released to the public; we end the script with "Please Share", in order to further immerse the audience in the screenplay, as well as demonstrate the irony in asking people to "share"—on social media—a film criticizing social media-use. Even the filmmakers, with their self-righteous attempt to "save" the New Flesh from themselves, fall victim to social media.

With this screenplay, we hope to provoke and compel our audience to think about their own mediated interactions with society, and with one another.

AUDIO	VISUAL
<p>FAINT WHIRRING SOUND FROM MACHINERY CAN BE HEARD</p> <p>INTERVIEWER (<i>from off-screen</i>) Do you mind if we film?</p> <p>TEST ADMINISTRATOR: Not at all, as long as faces are blurred.</p> <p>INTERVIEWER: Great, thank you. Could you tell us what this test is for?</p> <p>TEST ADMINISTRATOR: This is a diagnostic test, mandatory for all citizens. It tests for Old Flesh Syndrome. We use this equipment to analyze their responses to situational questions.</p> <p>TEST ADMINISTRATOR Now I will proceed to ask you a series of questions. Don't worry—there is no reason to be afraid! Simply answer the questions as honestly as you can.</p> <p>TEST SUBJECT (<i>distractedly</i>) Can I use my phone? I want to share this on GLASS. This is pretty cool.</p> <p>TEST ADMINISTRATOR</p>	<p>BLACK Camera shakily raised up, as if it was on the ground and finally placed onto cameraperson's shoulder</p> <p>INT - OVER THE SHOULDER SHOT - From shoulder of test administrator (wearing a long white lab coat), whose back is facing the camera. The test administrator is facing a test subject. The test subject is hooked up to high-tech equipment (similar to the Voight-Kampff experiment from Blade Runner). Faces are blurred. Test administrator is turned towards camera as she speaks.</p> <p>MEDIUM SHOT - Test Subject drumming fingers on the table</p> <p>MEDIUM SHOT - Test Administrator calibrating equipment, turned back to test subject</p> <p>LONG SHOT - Test Subject and Test Administrator sitting at opposite ends of a table</p>

<p>(<i>chuckling to herself</i>)</p> <p>Sure. You can share this entire experience after we're done with the test. It'll only take a few minutes.</p> <p>TEST SUBJECT</p> <p>(<i>dejectedly</i>)</p> <p>Fine. Let's get this over with...</p> <p>TEST ADMINISTRATOR: Okay. First question. Think of two scenarios. One: Your friend shares a video of a turtle lying on its back, unable to flip itself back to the upright position. Two: You personally witness a turtle lying on its back, unable to flip itself back to the upright position. How would you react to each situation?</p> <p>TEST SUBJECT (<i>thoughtfully</i>):</p> <p>I would definitely reshare the first video, or at least comment on it! For the second situation...I think I'd probably take a video of it and share it on GLASS. It would get so many likes!</p> <p>TEST ADMINISTRATOR</p> <p>I'm sure it would. Moving on to the next question: A well-respected professor tells you that turtles are now extinct. However, you see a video on GLASS that suggests otherwise. What are you more inclined to believe?</p> <p>TEST SUBJECT</p> <p>OMG, that's so easy! Obviously, I'd believe the GLASS video. I <i>always</i> believe whatever I see on there. I mean, since so</p>	<p>CLOSE-UP - Screen that test administrator is looking at (the face of the test subject is visible on the screen). The test subject can be seen (out of focus) in the background of the shot.</p> <p>MEDIUM SHOT - Test Administrator flipping switches on equipment</p> <p>CAMERA MOVES BACK AND FORTH BETWEEN TEST ADMINISTRATOR AND TEST SUBJECT AS THEY SPEAK</p>
--	--

<p>many people shared it, it must be true. That's just science! Why should I believe the professor? Where's his proof?</p> <p>TEST ADMINISTRATOR</p> <p>Great! You're almost done! Last question. You just found out your pet turtle just laid eggs. How do you react?</p> <p>TEST SUBJECT</p> <p>Well obviously I'd wanna tell my friends! And the best way to reach them is through GLASS. I'd share a photo of my turtle ASAP, and watch the likes pour in.</p> <p>TEST ADMINISTRATOR</p> <p>And pour in they would! Well, I have to say, your results look good.</p> <p>TEST SUBJECT</p> <p>So do I pass?</p> <p>TEST ADMINISTRATOR</p> <p>With flying colors. You're perfectly healthy.</p> <p>TEST SUBJECT (<i>excitedly</i>)</p> <p>OMG, that's so great! Let's take a selfie! I want to share this moment on GLASS. Everyone. Must. Know!</p> <p>CAMERA SHUTTER CAN BE HEARD</p>	<p>CLOSE-UP - Screen with test subject's face. Test subject's face can be seen reacting as test administrator tells him that he has passed. Camera pans up and moves as test subject gets up to take selfie with test administrator</p> <p>MEDIUM SHOT - Test subject and test administrator taking a selfie</p> <p>CLOSE-UPS - Equipment (beeping, displaying vital signs, etc.)</p> <p>CUT TO BLACK</p> <p><b>TITLE CARD: NEW FLESH</b></p> <p>FADE IN FROM BLACK</p>
--	---

<p>CAMERAWOMAN <i>(from off screen)</i></p> <p>So we should probably get some shots of how they navigate their everyday lives.</p> <p>INTERVIEWER</p> <p>Sounds good, Sarah. I'll talk to them, too, so we can get a closer look at these nutjobs. There's definitely no shortage of material here.</p> <p>INSTRUMENTAL SOUNDTRACK HEARD, BUT SLOWLY FADES INTO AMBIENT CITY NOISE</p> <p>INTERVIEWER</p> <p>Wow...it's like another world out here. I've never seen anything like it. It's like they're all mechanized...trained to do one thing. And you'd think if someone was training all their energies and efforts to one focal point, one task...that task should be something glorious, sacred, almost holy. What makes it so disturbing is that their energies are all centered in on GLASS. GLASS...that notorious cesspool of virtual</p>	<p>EXT - ESTABLISHING SHOT - Film crew's van moving down the road</p> <p>MEDIUM SHOT - Inside of film crew's van, interviewer is sitting in driver's seat, driving but occasionally turning to the camera, which is being held by the camerawoman in the passenger's seat</p> <p>CUT TO: ESTABLISHING SHOT - Streets of New York City. Everyone is on their phone, whether taking pictures, filming things, or just using social media</p> <p>MEDIUM CLOSE-UP - Interviewer standing on the sidewalk, looking around</p>
---	--

<p>validation...far from godly, but it has become their monomania. They're not even human anymore. They're nothing like us.</p> <p>Sarah...I'm scared.</p> <p>CAMERAWOMAN <i>(from off screen)</i></p> <p>Oh please, get over yourself Chiara. But it's true—they don't even notice that we're here. If only I could achieve that level of intense concentration at work.</p> <p>INTERVIEWER</p> <p>That girl didn't even look up from her phone!</p> <p>AUDIO/CITY CHATTER HEARD FAINTLY IN BACKGROUND</p> <p>CAFE AMBIENT NOISE HEARD</p> <p>INTERVIEWER</p> <p>The cafe...the home-away-from-home of the everyday metropolitan city-dweller. It's tame here. Let's see what they're up to.</p> <p>WOMAN'S LAUGHTER HEARD</p> <p>CAMERAWOMAN <i>(from off screen)</i></p> <p>I wonder what that woman was laughing at.</p>	<p>Camerawoman's arm can be seen gesturing at people on the street</p> <p>A person on the street bumps into the camerawoman, shrugging it off and muttering an apology without looking up from their phone</p> <p>CUT TO: LONG SHOT - Interviewer walking down the streets of Manhattan, followed by camera</p> <p>CUT TO: INT - ESTABLISHING SHOT - Café filled with people sitting individually, each at their own table. Camera moves to include interviewer in the shot, who is standing near the camera (MEDIUM-SHOT)</p> <p>Woman can be seen in the back of the cafe laughing at something on her computer</p>
--	---

<p>INTERVIEWER</p> <p>Let's go ask her? Privacy doesn't exist nowadays.</p> <p>INTERVIEWER</p> <p>So sorry to bother you ma'am, but may I ask what you were laughing at? I could use a good laugh. It's been a rough day.</p> <p>WOMAN AT CAFE</p> <p>Oh no I'm so sorry if I was too loud! My friend just sent me a picture of her coffee cup. The barista made her the wrong drink and spelled her name completely wrong!</p> <p>INTERVIEWER</p> <p>No worries; you weren't bothering anyone! What cafe was your friend at? I'll be sure not to visit it in the future.</p> <p>WOMAN AT CAFE</p> <p>Oh no that's what makes it so funny! It was actually this cafe! She's sitting somewhere over there I think. Girl with the red hair.</p> <p>INTERVIEWER</p> <p>I can't believe that just happened...this is so much worse than I thought it would be. They were literally in the same cafe.</p>	<p>CAMERA MOVES TO FOLLOW INTERVIEWER DOWN THE CAFE</p> <p>MEDIUM SHOT - Interviewer approaching woman sitting at a table</p> <p>Interviewer looks up quickly at the camera in shock</p> <p>CAMERA QUICKLY PANS TO OTHER SIDE OF THE CAFE AND ZOOMS INTO THE FACE OF THE WOMAN'S FRIEND</p> <p>CUT TO: MEDIUM SHOT - Interviewer standing on the street again</p>
--	---



<p>Jesus...Okay, what's our next stop?</p> <p>CAMERAWOMAN (from off screen) I think it's at the building next door. Office.</p> <p>INTERVIEWER All right...let's head over there.</p> <p>INTERVIEWER What the hell...should I ask that guy what's going on? We are walking in unannounced...</p> <p>CAMERAWOMAN I don't think these people are phased by anything anymore. Just go for it.</p> <p>INTERVIEWER Excuse me, sir. If you don't mind my asking, what exactly is going on here?</p> <p>COFFEE MAN (confused) What do you mean?</p> <p>INTERVIEWER Why is everyone on their phone?</p> <p>COFFEE MAN (taken aback) It's our GLASS break...we get one every 7 minutes. It's standard protocol...? How can you not know this?</p>	<p>CUT TO: INT - ESTABLISHING SHOT - Office. Everyone is on their phones. One man is standing at the coffee machine, making coffee while he scrolls through his phone</p> <p>Interviewer walks up to man at the coffee machine. Camera follows.</p> <p>Man does not look up from his phone</p> <p>Man finally looks up from his phone, bewildered and almost mistrustful</p>
--	--

INTERVIEWER

Oh sorry, we're not from around here. Hey listen, would you mind if we interviewed you? I'd really like to hear what you have to say.

COFFEE MAN

Oh sure no problem! I'm gonna share this on my GLASS page.

COFFEE MAN

So I've been working at Synchrony Enterprises for about 3 years now...we're a research sector of the GLASS group that's trying to come up with new ways for GLASS to improve the social media experience—the human experience, really—for the world. We're gargantuan, constantly expanding. Currently we're conducting simulations to test the level of virtual immersion of our users. It seems that they're only at an immersion level of 79 out of 100, and we're trying to come up with ways to increase this up to level 100. You know that's the goal. We strive for the best! Even Professor O'Blivion himself is involved in our efforts.

INTERVIEWER

*(from off screen)*

O'Blivion...the man himself, huh. What about people who don't use GLASS? Do you know anyone personally who is disconnected? Someone who isn't on social media, or doesn't use it as much as the average individual...

CUT TO: MEDIUM SHOT - Coffee Man sitting at table in a different room, glancing at his phone and sipping his coffee once in awhile

We don't like to talk about that here...it's a failure on our part. They have treatment for Old Flesh Syndrome now...the clinic down on 45th street is known for their experimental therapies, most of which have been highly successful at rehabilitating these individuals. You should go talk to them there. They know more about it than I do, thankfully.

FADE TO BLACK

FADE IN: ESTABLISHING SHOT - White, sterile-looking clinic, with screens lining all of the walls and patients sitting in cubicles.

This is incredible.

CUT TO: MEDIUM SHOT - Interviewer  
looking around in amazement

(to the doctor)

Interviewer taps a doctor on the shoulder. She is holding a tray of smartphones

Doctor, can we interact with the patients?

Doctor smiles and nods in response to interviewer. Interviewer faces camera and gives a thumbs up, walks to one of the cubicles. Camera follows

Good afternoon, ma'am. Would you mind if  
we interv-

Interviewer cuts herself off because she is in shock at the patient's hand. A phone is wired into her hand, melded into her hand (similar to the gun in *Videodrome*), driven into it with steely silver nails.

<p>PATIENT</p> <p><i>(calmly)</i></p> <p>Of course not, I'd be more than happy to.</p> <p>PATIENT</p> <p>I was first diagnosed with Old Flesh Syndrome when I came in for my annual Voight-Kampff checkup. Needless to say, I failed. It was bad...Apparently my average social media use wasn't up to par. I was immediately transferred to a socialmediatric facility on 5th Avenue. They tried to help me through social media therapy, counseling me on the merits of sharing my life online and connecting in the virtual realm. But nothing helped. I was untreatable. So, as a last resort, I was sent here.</p> <p>INTERVIEWER</p> <p><i>(from off screen)</i></p> <p>Does it hurt?</p> <p>PATIENT</p> <p><i>(laughs softly)</i></p> <p>Of course it hurts. But it helps—thank god it helps. Without it, I don't know where I'd be. Pain is only physical, unreal...it is a small price to pay for true, virtual bliss.</p>	<p>CUT TO: MEDIUM SHOT - Patient sitting in a new room. Her phone/hand is sitting next to her regular hand on the table</p> <p>Interviewer's arm can be seen, motioning to the patient's hand, mutilated by the phone</p> <p>FADE TO BLACK</p> <p>FADE IN: EXT - ESTABLISHING SHOTS - Outdoors, a large yurt with a cluster of smaller tents around it. People can be seen reading, chatting with</p>
---	---

<p>AVA</p> <p>So...Sarah, Chiara...I see you're back. You've been gone for quite a while. Was the other world that captivating? I'm surprised. I was under the impression it was metaphorically in shambles.</p> <p>CAMERAWOMAN</p> <p><i>(darkly)</i></p> <p>Ava, please don't say such things! Just the thought of being back there makes my skin crawl. Sure, I was captivated...I've never been so captivated by anything that disturbingly <i>wrong</i>. It was simultaneously the most morally unnerving and strangely alluring concept I've ever experienced.</p> <p>Tell her, Chiara...</p> <p>INTERVIEWER</p> <p>I couldn't believe it either. Sarah's right. It felt so wrong—all these people, so mesmerized by glossy virtual iterations of social-mediated connection, neglecting their real lives just to nurture their artificial ones.</p> <p>CAMERAWOMAN</p> <p>But that's also why it was so alluring. The way these people conducted themselves, solely concerned with the virtual and forever detached from the real. Nothing real impacted them, unless it was converted to virtual form. Theoretically, they could avoid real disasters simply if</p>	<p>one another, children are playing outside. No phones in sight.</p> <p>CUT TO - INT - ESTABLISHING SHOT - Camerawoman, Interviewer, and a new woman (Ava) dressed in gray sitting around a table.</p> <p>Camera takes close-up or medium shots of the individuals as they speak.</p>
---	--

they didn't present themselves in the virtual world they're so concerned with.

AVA (*knowingly*): Yes. Yes, yes, yes...just what I suspected. Thank you for this footage, Chiara, Sarah. This is exactly what we need right now. This is exactly why I commissioned you two to go on this mission. I wanted an inside look at this curious civilization. We've already ascertained that their government is the mastermind behind this social media obsession. Their government...it is trying to monitor the population in hopes of quelling any sign of rebellion. So it has resorted to this borderline totalitarian form of implicit surveillance, getting everyone on their phones so as to be able to surveil them 24/7. It's sick, really. This is why we're here. I'm going to watch this footage carefully...it will help me gauge the situation more clearly and better understand exactly what we're dealing with here. We must free the people from their virtual prison and restore them to their senses.

INTERVIEWER: It's a brilliant plan. All in the name of righteousness.

CAMERAWOMAN: I'm glad we could help.

INTERVIEWER

(Voiceover): When this is what civilization has become, it becomes

FADE TO BLACK

FADE IN - MEDIUM SHOT - Interviewer in the car, looking out the window.

<p>difficult to breathe. For breathing implies life, and life requires a vitality of spirit, a quickness of mind, an acknowledgement of reality—something these stricken individuals so jarringly lack. Can we promise to you, the audience, that they are indeed living humans? It depends on your definition of life. In your mind, does life require a response to stimuli unmediated by the virtual realm of social media? Or does one pass for living by only maintaining a response to that which is virtual? What is life? What is reality? These are all questions worth exploring, but are impossible to derive real answers to. All we can do, right now, is observe. Watch these people live their “lives,” and hope that someday, just maybe, they will wake up to the quiet horror that has cast itself upon them.</p>	<p>MONTAGE - Scene 1: Man gets into car accident. Cries out for help, as his car lies upside down, broken, sparks firing, lights flashing, flames surrounding him as if he is the flame and the flames is the moth. From underneath the rubble, he cries out for help. He is bloody, his arm twisted at an unnatural angle, his face covered with ash and tinged with fear. His cries for help are left unanswered, as people film him on their cellphones instead of calling for an ambulance. His little girl, miraculously unscathed, picks up his phone and posts on GLASS: “Somebody help! Please! We’ve been in an accident.” Not until she posts this virtual plea for help do the civilians begin to help her and the man, calling for the police and coming near to sort through the rubble.</p> <p>MONTAGE - Scene 2: Children, perhaps 2nd-grade level, are at school. The teacher is at the front of the room. She stands up to take attendance. After calling each student’s name, they respond by raising their hands, phone clutched. An unfortunate Johnny’s name is called, who whispers quietly that he left his phone at home. The teacher’s face darkens, and the class grows quiet. “This is your third time this week, Johnny. Please step outside.” Johnny begins to cry. The teacher walks up to him, telling him to be quiet, and putting him in</p>
---	---

	<p>the "Detention Room"--a small white room, with no decorations or windows--where he is given a makeshift cell phone and forced to go on GLASS.</p> <p>MONTAGE - Scene 3: People across the city on their phones, interacting with one another over cellphones instead of in person. No one is looking up at anyone--everyone's head is bent, looking down at their screens as if entranced.</p> <p>FADE TO BLACK</p> <p>FADE IN: Title card: "PLEASE SHARE"</p>
--	---