

FROM PASTICHE CITY TO THE SCREENING OF THE
EYE? OR, GEOGRAPHIES OF A DIEGESIS:
POSTMODERNISM, HYPERSPACE AND SIMULATION
IN THE SCREENING OF *BLADE RUNNER*

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**FROM PASTICHE CITY TO THE SCREENING OF THE EYE? OR,
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From pastiche city to the screening of the Eye? Or, geographies of a diegesis: postmodernism, hyperspace and simulation in the screening of *Blade Runner*

The serial use of images, and the ability to cut forth across space and time, free it [film] from many of the normal [spatial and temporal] constraints, even though it is, in the final analysis, a spectacle projected within an enclosed space on a depthless screen.

(Harvey, 1989, 308)

It is a strange prejudice which sets a higher value on depth than breadth, and which accepts 'superficial' as meaning not 'of wide extent' but 'of little depth', whereas 'deep' on the other hand signifies 'of great depth' and not 'of small surface'.

(Denny, cited in Deleuze, 1993, 261-2)

***Blade Runner*: A preliminary screening**

Early in the 21st century, THE TYRELL CORPORATION advanced robot evolution into the NEXUS phase - a being virtually identical to a human - known as a *Replicant*.

The NEXUS 6 *Replicants* were superior in strength and agility, and at least equal in intelligence, to the genetic engineers who created them.

Replicants were used Off-world as slave labour, in the hazardous exploration and colonization of other planets.

After a bloody mutiny by a NEXUS 6 combat team in an Off-world colony, *Replicants* were declared illegal on earth - under penalty of death.

Specialist police squads - BLADE RUNNER UNITS - had orders to shoot to kill, upon detection, any trespassing *Replicant*.

This was not called execution.

It was called retirement.

(*Blade Runner*, opening text)

Sliding times: Tomorrow is today

Blade Runner has sparked an enormous amount of academic interest. Most of this interest has related to the deployment of a range of cinematic devices which supposedly exemplify our condition of postmodernism, postmodernization and postmodernity. This exemplification has already become something of a consensus, orthodoxy and cliché in the burgeoning literature on the film. For example: the mixing of genres; the fractalization of geography; the interruption of temporality; the indeterminacy of subject identities; the double coding of cinematography; the triumph of flexible accumulation within the husks of global corporations; the fusion of the mechanisms of capital accumulation and governance; the slow motion catastrophe of time-space decomposition; the omnipresence of the Fourth World; the proliferation of simulations and simulacra; the short-circuiting of memory, genealogy and history; and the banality and fatality of living on in the hereafter. In the diegesis of *Blade Runner*, the Los Angeles of 2019 is nothing more and nothing less than the total actualization of the dystopic horrors which remain only virtual today. It is not a time-space to come; it is the time-space which will have been today. When you stare at this screen, viewers are advised to adjust their time pieces accordingly: The future is today, and today has always already fled back to the future. Meanwhile, most of us can still recall that the virtual can always be actualized otherwise: Today is yet to come, and the future has always already fled forward to today. Somewhere along the line, the time-space circuits have been crossed. Welcome to the postmodern diegesis in which *post-modo* means future-anterior: the fissiparous present which is fated to become Other than what it will have been. In short, *Blade Runner* screens the eternal return of the virtual differences between today.

Such is the consensus, orthodoxy and cliché. And whilst we do not dissent from this understanding of the fissiparous present which will have hollowed itself out in an infinite abyss, we see none of this exemplified in the film itself. Indeed, we will argue that *Blade Runner* has very little to do with an exemplification and affirmation of either postmodernism, postmodernization or postmodernity. We watch the film from an altogether different perspective: As an exemplary screening of the Eye. And yet, despite the fact that *Blade Runner* is replete with Eyes, there is almost no reference to them in the literature on the film itself.

Before turning our attention to the screening of the Eye in *Blade Runner*, we will focus on the theoretical account constructed by Bruno (1987) and adopted almost wholesale by Harvey (1989) and Wakefield (1990). During the course of this engagement, we will largely confine ourselves to three questions: What problematic animates the specific questions which have been posed in relation to *Blade Runner*? Why has this problematic systematically missed, repressed or dissimulated the screening and migration of the Eye? And what problematic is capable of grasping the significance of the Eye's migration?

Blade Runner, Capitalism and Schizophrenia

In *America*, Baudrillard (1988a, 38-9) contrasts the distressing sight of 'a man eating alone in the heart of [New York] city' with the Californian jogger, protagonist of an 'easy-does-it Apocalypse' evoking the end of the world. Of the New York inhabitants, 'no longer even concealing themselves to eat leftovers in public', Baudrillard suggests: 'this still belongs to the world of urban industrial poverty.' Of the thousands of lone joggers, 'each running on their own account, with no thought for others, with a stereophonic fluid in their heads that oozes through into their eyes': 'that is the world of *Blade Runner*, the post-catastrophe world.'

What difference is being evoked in this sketch of urban life in America's two most extreme cities? It is a difference which repeats a fundamental division in writings on the postmodern, and a division which is played out in microcosm in the possible theoretical readings of *Blade Runner*. We will attempt here to outline the analysis of the film which has quickly assumed the status of the 'conventional wisdom' of *Blade Runner*. It is an analysis which sees 'postmodernity' as an historically specific epoch, and which sees the postmodern as being characterised by the fragmentation and mixing of both space (i.e. spatially disparate entities are juxtaposed and superimposed), time (especially in the form of memories) and filmic genres (specifically *film noir* and Science Fiction: Grist, 1992; McCaffery, 1991). This fragmentation and mixing can be read as a direct result of the processes of postmodernization (i.e. de-differentiation) which are particular to the historical epoch of postmodernity. It is an account which prioritises the historical dimension, and a linear History at that. But without wishing to negate the insights into *Blade Runner* these presuppositions provide, such an account can be seen to rest upon an essentially modernist interpretation of the postmodern.

In this section we will offer a critical reading of the theoretical consensus that has emerged on *Blade Runner* in an attempt to problematise and deconstruct the presupposition that the **postmodern** is an epoch (**postmodernity**), which is progressively instituted in both time and space through specific socio-economic processes of de-differentiation (**postmodernization**), and from which a correlative cultural logic (**postmodernism**) can be discerned. In the remainder of the essay, we shall seek to develop an alternative screening of the film, beginning with an insistence that the postmodern has nothing whatsoever to do with an historical movement that colonizes the space-time of a receding modernity. As Bennington (1989, 86) puts it, '*in a certain sense*, the postmodern might be said to *precede* the modern.' And this prefatory gesture proves interminable. This is why we will speak only of deterritorialization, and nothing of periodicity. Rather than a mirror of the real space-time of our postmodern condition, *Blade Runner* will have been a screening of the Eye.

The postindustrial city: Waste and pastiche

In her seminal essay on *Blade Runner*, Bruno (1987) closely follows Jameson's earlier account of postmodernism as the 'cultural logic of late capitalism' (Jameson, 1985, originally published in 1983: See also, Jameson, 1984;1991). Bruno suggests that the film is an exemplary image, a 'fictive metaphor,' for the postmodern condition, thus defined. This account has been adopted, largely uncritically, by both Harvey (1989) and Wakefield (1990). Whilst Wakefield puts something of a Baudrillardian gloss onto Bruno's argument, Harvey's adoption of the analysis is to reassert the idea that postmodernism is merely a cultural form explicable by developments in capitalism - though rather than Jameson's reliance on Mandel's (1975) notion of late capitalism, Harvey draws on the theorisation of a new mode of flexible capital accumulation deriving from French regulation theory. In developing the argument that *Blade Runner* provides a metaphor for postmodernism as the cultural form associated with the most recent stage of capitalism, Bruno, following Jameson, makes strong appeals to the nature of the space and time in the film. This is especially evident in the idea of the *postindustrial city* being centrally related to the postmodern. But Bruno's stress upon postindustrialism marks a first aporia in this reading of the film. Bruno (1987, 63) reads a good deal of significance into *Blade Runner's* explicitly stated location and time - 'Los Angeles, 2019' - a world that is only 'a step away from the development of contemporary society'. It is noted that 'The future does not realize an idealized, aseptic technological order, but is simply seen as the development of the present state of the city and the social order of late capitalism.' There is a good deal of mileage in the idea that *Blade Runner* portrays a future dominated by giant corporate powers (signified, for instance, by the 'Enormous neon images [which] float like clouds above fetid, hyper-violent streets, while a voice intones advertisements for extra-terrestrial suburban living in "Off World"', Davis, 1992, 1, and the vast headquarters of the Tyrell Corporation which produces the genetically engineered *Replicants*). But this reading of the film as a simple projection and intensification of today's capitalism is in many ways too easy. Before abandoning such an approach, however, it is important to consider the dimensions this analysis reveals.

'It is in the architectural layout of *Blade Runner* that pastiche is most dramatically visible and where the connection of postmodernism to postindustrialism is evident', remarks Bruno (1987, 62). The consideration of the spatiality of the diegesis centres on Jameson's (1985) discussion of pastiche, which he explicitly connects to 'the postmodernist experience of space' (Jameson, 1985, 113). Other than suggesting pastiche as a new aesthetic which seems to define a new, disorientating hyperspace, Jameson (1985) offers little discussion of precisely what this might mean (though he does go on to explore the implications of this elsewhere by recourse to cognitive mapping, Jameson, 1989). Pastiche is defined as a mimetic form which differs from parody in that it bears no satirical impulse with respect to any norm - it is 'parody that has lost its sense of humour' (Jameson, 1985, 114). Inflected into spatial terms, pastiche simply implies the mixing of geographical traits which creates an unmotivated scene - the geography of *Blade Runner's* diegesis provides an excess of references which are simply *there*, for no apparent purpose (other than a game of recognition on the part of the spectator: Eco's double coding). Commentators on *Blade Runner* frequently list: neo-Mayan architecture (in fact this is significant - it signifies a hierarchically ordered society); Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*; Great Universal Studio's 'New York Street' set; the Ennis-Brown House designed by Frank Lloyd Wright; Classical Oriental, Greek, Roman and Egyptian styles; and so on. The urban realm of *Blade Runner* thus presents us with a pastiche city: 'We are not presented with a real city but with an imaginary one: a synthesis of mental

architectures, of *topoi*... *Blade Runner*'s space of narration bears, superimposed, different and previous orders of time and space.' (Bruno, 1987, 66). For Bruno (1987, 65), therefore, the 'postmodern aesthetic of *Blade Runner* is... the result of recycling, fusion of levels, discontinuous signifiers, explosion of boundaries, and erosion.'

In Bruno's analysis, this recycling highlights 'the link between postmodernism and late capitalism' (Bruno, 1987, 63). Drawing on Laporte's (1978) *Histoire de la Merde*, Bruno (1987, 64) suggests that the production of waste functions as an indexical sign of a well functioning economy which, in its postindustrial-postmodern guise, is no longer repressed (Strictly speaking, however, since these elements can no longer be defined as matter out of place, they cannot be called waste). The repressed returns in the form of a cultural recycling - evident in the costumes of, especially, the *Replicants* Pris and Zhora where 'consumerism, waste, and recycling meet' (Bruno, 1987, 64). But despite this identification of a 'return of the repressed' in the form of rubbish, Bruno seems to insist that *Blade Runner* portrays a wholly dystopian vision of the city: 'The postindustrial city is a city in ruins' (Bruno, 1987, 65). There is certainly a strong sense in which *Blade Runner* portrays the city as 'hardly a utopia' (Harvey, 1989, 310), but this analysis of 'postindustrial decay' requires further consideration. Many parts of the city are in a state of decay (and this is paralleled in the premature aging of the genetic engineer J F Sebastian, termed 'accelerated decrepitude' by Pris). But this, and most especially the difference between this and the high-tech buildings of the Police Department and the Tyrell Corporation, seems to suggest much more than simply the deindustrialization of the city. The evidence of a hyper-deskilling of labour - even to the extent that genetic engineers such as J F Sebastian live in decaying buildings - is pointed up in, precisely, the difference between areas of the city. But even given this qualification, there is more to be said about the sense of both clutter and decay in the city. Thompson (1979, 131) has noted that any consideration of rubbish 'seems always to lead straight into illogicality, anomaly, and paradox. Regrettably, there are many who find these qualities not so much charming as monstrous, and there are some who would go as far as to maintain that the proper aim and object of serious thought should be the exclusion of such monsters.' That is, to use David Sibley's (1988) phrase, there is a theoretical tendency towards the *purification* of space and against the possible *affirmation* of rubbish. There is arguably something of this in Bruno's treatment of *Blade Runner*. Moreover, Culler (1988) insists that the idea of a distinctive postmodern 'return of the repressed' with respect to rubbish in the sense of an historical periodization is mistaken: it is 'not that the economic system has brought the postmodern world an increase of rubbish, and that art has participated in this [Jameson, 1985], but that the element of rubbish... [has] long been a part of sign systems and systems of value all along... we cannot dispose of rubbish with a narrative about its emergence or new role in the postmodern world but must reflect on the structure that locates this sludge or dross within or at the heart of systems of value or language.' (Culler, 1988, 182). Such an affirmation of rubbish is evident in, for example, the clutter of amazing toys which fill J F Sebastian's apartment in the otherwise deserted Bradbury building. The idea that the space of *Blade Runner* is saturated with decay is both imprecise and one-sided, and derives from the presupposition that the postmodern is a distinct epoch defined through negativity. (Philip K Dick's novel, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*, on which *Blade Runner* is loosely based, speaks of more than postindustrialism and the proliferation of accelerated decrepitude, whilst the post-nuclear holocaust context engenders a wholly different set of meanings than those made available to us in the film.)

Postmodernism, hypertelia and simulation

Ridley Scott's films display a vision of a corrupted and decaying megalopolis (as one critic viciously noted, Scott is unable to shoot a street without 'atmospheric' litter and sordid mist); in *Black Rain*, he finally stumbled upon an object whose reality itself gives body to this vision: today's Tokyo - no need, there, to take refuge with dystopian visions of Los Angeles in 2080 (*sic*), as in *Blade Runner*...

(Zizek, 1992, 217)

Wakefield (1990, 118) has suggested that Los Angeles, 2019, is very much an *ostensible* setting. Similarly, Bruno (1987, 65-6) herself has noted that: 'The city is called Los Angeles, but it is an L.A. that looks very much like New York, Hong Kong or Tokyo.' And Syd Mead, the 'visual futurist' of *Blade Runner*, has commented that: 'One of the principles behind the film is that it should be both forty years into the future and forty years into the past' (cited in Wakefield, 1990, 118). This statement carries with it a resistance to the idea that *Blade Runner* screens a near (post-modern) future, and least of all one that would belong specifically to Los Angeles. In a sense, the film is located everywhere and nowhere, and in a future which is already taking place today. This is why the film is virtual rather than impossible; heterotopic rather than paradoxical. And yet, for all of the juxtaposition and superimposition of diverse elements, the resultant amalgam offers no resistance to comprehension and analytic dissection: Bodies remain divisible by gender, ethnicity, class and brain structure; the cityscape remains divisible into discrete zones (the Eye Works factory; the Tyrell Corporation Building; Apartment blocks; China Town); the temporality remains an irreversible, universal and linear flow; images and implants remain inauthentic in relation to experience and memories; and so on and so forth. On this viewing, the subjectification, spatialization and temporalization of the film remains utterly banal and predictable insofar as it is combinatorial and kaleidoscopic: AND. AND. AND. In other words, what is screened are moments of time-space compression or contraction: So much variety crammed into so little time-space! Hence the oscillation between chaotic swarms on the one hand and fragments which dilate in order to saturate each frame on the other (an exemplary case of the latter is revealed in the film through a technonarcissistic and dilatory exploration of a three-dimensional photograph). In addition, this Möbius structuralism, which seems to contain fundamental differences and binary oppositions in almost absolute spatial, temporal and bodily proximity, is underscored and redoubled through the tight cropping of the film. Indeed, this is why the film is inherently molecular rather than molar: Left to itself, each individual fragment would proliferate in order to occupy all of the dimensions made available to it. And this renders the screen an ob-scene surface for fractal transparency, rather than a perspectival scene for the mirroring-effects of re-presentation. Moreover, the combination of Noir and Science Fiction in *Blade Runner* engenders a context ripe for nostalgic extrapolation: a perfect backdrop for a homely and yet heroic stroll through a trying rather than a malicious world. In short, the fusing of detection and invention ensures that nothing will escape recognition and comprehension: everything comes back to a dissimulation of truth behind a veil of counterfeit images and false mirrors: Is it live or is it *Nexus*?

What does all of this have to do with postmodernization, postmodernism and postmodernity? Quite simply, time-space compression is the socio-economic process which underpins all three: postmodernization is the process of de-differentiation which brings different elements into almost absolute proximity, threatening to short-circuit or earth their polarity and charge; postmodernism is the resultant crisis of representation within which it is no longer possible to assign each element an appropriate identity or place within the Order of Things; postmodernity is the epoch within which time-space compression has become qualitatively different through these processes of de-differentiation and fission; and it should also be apparent why this genealogy would also entangle and scramble itself, to the point where it will have been a pure simulacrum (Baudrillard, 1987). In short, *Blade Runner* exemplifies both the contraction of the grid required for subjectification, temporalization and spatialization, and the dilation of the elements which would formerly have been registered on such a grid. Ultimately, the contracting grid and the dilating elements will merge in a vertiginous, fractal, viral, metastatic and hypertelic transparency: And this will have constituted the migration of the Eye from the Body to the Screen. However, rather than pursue the convergence of contraction and dilation on a hollow screen (which is performed brilliantly by the Voigt-Kampff test, for example), Bruno, Harvey and Wakefield have persisted in viewing *Blade Runner* from the perspective of compression, reduction and diminution alone: Each element remains inviolable. As we noted above, all we are offered is a banal amalgam with increasing density, and a succession of irreconcilable differences in closer and closer proximity. And yet, each element remains distinct, individuated and intact. Little wonder, then, that such a perspective has had such difficulty in locating a moment of qualitative change which could function as a marker for periodizing an era of post-modernity. Indeed, this is why we suggest that such a perspective understands almost nothing about the hollow screen upon which the postmodern is projected.

In order to get a better purchase on the film than the conventional assumption that the postmodern is part of an historical periodization, the '*Post modern*' would have to be understood according to the paradox of the future (*post*) anterior (*modo*) (Lyotard, 1984, 81). This paradoxical *will have been* is precisely captured in Mead's account of the temporality of the diegesis of *Blade Runner* as a contraction of time. And it is on this basis that the interpretation of the subjectivity, spatiality and temporality of the postmodern may be best explained. The idea of the time-space of postmodernism instantiating a *hyperspace* inheres in the future anterior, or what Deleuze and Guattari term the virtual (Massumi, 1992, 36-7). On this view, time-space embodies a fractal quality (becoming-other), rather than a rigid grid for the location and unfolding of beings, which differs and defers the presences upon which all architectures of periodization would need to rest (Doel, 1992). 'There is no more system of reference to tell us what happened to the geography of things' (Baudrillard, 1987a, 126), which can also be framed in terms of the dissolution of the norm (in pastiche) through hypertelia (Baudrillard, 1990). The absolute proximity and promiscuity of things results in a redoubling of the scene (perspectival space and the virtual depth excavated through mirroring-effects) and the irruption of the ob-scene (hyperspace and the hollow surface of the screen). 'The result of this architectural pastiche is an excess of scenography', writes Bruno (1987, 67). But this does not, as Bruno (1987, 67) incorrectly asserts, equate in any way to the Situationist conception of the 'society of the spectacle' (compare Baudrillard, 1983, 54: 'We are no longer in the society of the spectacle').

Hypertelia corresponds to Baudrillard's (1983) insistence that the reality principle has been successively undermined (Baudrillard, 1983, 11) to a stage where it is effectively short-

circuited by pure simulation; the opposition between the real and its image will have been seen to deconstruct. Bruno (1987, 68) interprets the *Replicants* as archetypal third order simulacra (Baudrillard, 1983, 83; 1991, 309). This is, however, problematic. The undermining of the idea that signs constitute a presence which marks an absence (of the real) - the idea that there is an original to be re-presented by signs - reveals the *precession* of simulacra in an order of pure simulation. The real is thus redefined as 'that which is always already reproduced'. This redoubling of the real - the more-real-than-real - constitutes the hyperreal. Tyrell's declaration: 'Commerce is our goal here at Tyrell. "More-Human-Than-Human" is our motto' provides *prima facie* evidence that the *Replicants* are simulacra, but it is not the case that they are pure, third order simulacra, in which the hyperreal dispenses with the possibility of any form of simulation defined in opposition to an original, authentic form. Strictly speaking, a simulacrum does not 'belong' to an original: it resists calibration, appropriation and evaluation in relation to some Thing from which it could be said to have departed or deviated. A pure simulacrum cannot be re-turned to 'its' original, for it is precisely that for which there is neither original nor equivalent. In other words, a pure simulacrum replaces notions of difference and equivalence, with those of *différance* and *seriasure* (Baudrillard, 1983, 92-4).

Bruno (1987, 68) cites Baudrillard (1983, 4) as describing the simulacrum as 'an operational double, a metastable, programmatic, perfect descriptive machine which provides all the signs of the real and short-circuits all its vicissitudes', remarking that 'it would be difficult to find a better definition of the nature and function of the *Replicants* and their capacity of simulation in the narrative function of *Blade Runner*'. However, much of the film is concerned precisely with establishing, testing and verifying the difference between real, authentic human life on the one hand and the android simulation of human life on the other: organic presence (to live, experience, remember and die) versus machinic reproduction (to function, operate, encode and breakdown). (Indeed, much of the debate over the difference between the director's cut of *Blade Runner* - itself an untimely 'original' bearing the authority of the Director Himself - and the previously released version has effectively centred on the question of the status of the blade runner Deckard, the director's cut strongly implying that it is itself a *Replicant*, Instrell, 1992).

In addition to the formal testing for *Replicancy*, the appearance of glowing eyes in certain shots apparently distinguishes the *Replicants* from the authentic humans - and there are even more obvious signs of *Replicancy*, such as a range of superhuman capabilities. The *Replicants* do not, therefore, embody Baudrillard's (1983, 83) third order of simulation, in which the reality principle has been entirely dissolved. To the contrary, they are serially produced phenomena (but not mere automata) - machines of the second, industrial order of simulation - which are the (almost perfect) equivalent of a human being. And it is precisely this which enables the differentiation between the human and the nonhuman to hold (except, that is, for those moments when a *Replicant* does not know what it really is; and when a human enters doubt paralysis through encroaching paranoia). More generally, Baudrillard (1991, 309) has suggested that the Science Fiction genre itself corresponds to the second order of simulacra, 'SF being... an extravagant projection of, but qualitatively not different from, the real world of production.' It is perhaps in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (where the androids are all-too-human, by and large resigned to their fate, and in a state of almost permanent fear) rather than in *Blade Runner*, that a genre corresponding to the third order of simulacra is more closely approximated (insofar as the space available for critical projection is much less in the novel than in the film). Olalquiaga (1992, 12), commenting on

the novel, offers a more convincing argument than Bruno on the relation between humans and androids. They are deemed by Olalquiaga to represent an input to the socius which carries the possibility of overcoming the banality of hypertelia: 'humans are so out of touch with their own emotions that they must resort to machines in order to feel anything at all.'

To restate our position on simulation in *Blade Runner*: It is only on the basis of the assumption that there is a clear and detectable difference between the human and the *Replicant* which permits the remainder of Bruno's analysis to hold. And yet, for a plethora of reasons, the foundations for this distinction are perpetually breaking down: not only through the development of the *Nexus* brain structure and its coupling to the traits of faciality; but also because of the empathetic development between so-called humans and so-called *Replicants* (indeed, the whole basis of the Voigt-Kampff test is the supposed lack of an empathetic capacity in *Replicants* - but this 'lack' is due to a failure of socialization and normalization, rather than an essential feature of *Replicants* as such: see below). In short, viewing *Blade Runner* from the perspective of first and second order simulacra (automata and robots) is to adopt a position which leaks in all directions. As Roy put it in conversation with J F Sebastian: 'We're not computers, we're physical!'

'How much of your current output,' he [Deckard] asked, 'consists of types equipped with the Nexus-6?'

'All,' Rachael said.

'I'm sure the Voigt-Kampff scale will work with them.'

'And if it doesn't we'll have to withdraw all Nexus-6 types from the market.' Her black eyes flamed up; she glowered at him as the elevator ceased descending and its doors slid back.

(Dick, 1972, 38)

The significance of the Voigt-Kampff scale as a formulaic and hopelessly deranged means to test for the difference between humans and *Replicants* will prove to be the central motif of the migrating Eye in the latter part of the paper. For the moment, however, we will shift our attention more fully to the screening of subjectivity and subjectification in *Blade Runner* and focus upon the claim that the film exemplifies a new form of schizophrenia inaugurated by our entry (who, we?) into postmodernity.

Schizophrenia, subjectivity and space

Our age is, in especial degree, the age of universal schizophrenia, to which everything must submit.

(Grant, 1992, 25)

If only we knew what this kind of schizophrenia meant.

(Heidegger, cited in Ronell, 1989)

For Bruno (1987), it is the disjuncture between the temporalities of the *Replicants* and the humans which drives the narrative of the film. Central to her analysis is the restricted longevity of the *Replicants* and its relation to the 'real' time-span of 'authentic' human life which they desire (although there is conflicting evidence as to whether the restricted

longevity is due to an imposition of will or a failure of technology). Again, following Jameson, Bruno highlights the idea of a temporality specific to the postmodern epoch - but this idea seems to have little relation to the insights her analysis of the film then goes on to offer. Bruno (1987, 69) once again cites Baudrillard (1983, 132): 'We are now in a new form of schizophrenia. No more hysteria, no more projective paranoia, but this state of terror proper to the schizophrenic.... The schizophrenic can no longer produce the limits of his own being.... He (*sic*) is only a pure screen.' The *Replicants*, Bruno argues, embody a schizophrenic subjectivity. According to Jameson (1986, 119), the schizophrenic is 'condemned to live in a perpetual present' as a result of a break-down in the 'normal' accession of the subject into language. Since language signifies by means of the retroactive inter-relation and quilting of signifiers, the usual (Western) notion of temporality heading in linear fashion from the past to the future is, for the schizophrenic, inconceivable. But the 'perpetual present' of the schizophrenic is also characterised by a kind of shimmering intensity unbeknownst to the subjectivity which has successfully acceded into language. This account seems to accord with the dominant representation within the film of the *Replicants* life span. It is commented by Tyrell, for example, that 'a light that burns half as long burns twice as bright.' And immediately prior to its terminal breakdown, Roy poetically recounts to Deckard the vertiginous wonder of its experience: 'I've seen things you people wouldn't believe', whilst lamenting the fact that 'all those moments will be lost, in time, like tears, in rain. Time to die.' Bruno reinforces the idea that the *Replicants* embody a schizophrenic subjectivity by noting that in Dick's novel human schizophrenics respond to the Voigt-Kampff test in the same way as androids (and it is perhaps worth noting in passing that the corporation attempts to confound the test by getting an android to take it in the guise of a human schizophrenic whose poor empathy can be partly explained by being socialized and normalized amongst a group of androids and a handful of humans on a spacecraft! 'She was born on it; she spent fourteen of her eighteen years living off its tape library', Dick, 1972, 44). And yet, despite the empathetic correlation between them, Pris insists upon its Cartesian subjectivity: 'I think, Sebastian, therefore I am.' The limited four year life-span of a *Replicant*, although not quite a perpetual present (!), probably compresses experience with the effect of generating a heightened intensity (although this is far from certain). But the desire of the *Replicants* to extend their limited longevity necessitates a concomitant desire for entry into the established Symbolic order, by way of an 'Oedipal journey' (Bruno, 1987, 71). Bruno explores the questions of personal identity and personal history which circulate through this aspect of the film. In particular, the *gendered* nature of subjectivity is exposed in the 'successful' assumption of a (sexual) identity by Rachael in submitting to Deckard - contrasted with Roy's blinding and murder of the Father in the form of Tyrell and then its subsequent acceptance of terminal breakdown. (Here Harvey's, 1989, 312-13, point that Rachael's longevity - unlike Roy's - is not explicitly stated as being limited, allowing Roy space to refuse to submit to the Name of the Father has received short shrift from Massey (1991, 43-4) as neglecting gender politics. But in relation to the film, Harvey does have a point here.) However, the sense in which all of this - and Bruno's insightful remarks on the role of photographs as the materialization of memories essential to the establishment of identity in the diegesis of the film - can have much to do with defining a new era's subjectivity as schizophrenic is arguable. In short, we remain incredulous to the suggestion that the difference between humans and *Replicants* is articulated around some notion of schizophrenia. To the contrary, the supposed difference between them is constituted through differential normalization and socialization on the one hand, and inadequate technological development on the other. In other words, it is a matter of empathy rather than signification, and of coupling responses in the brain structure to the traits of faciality.

By contrast to the idea that schizophrenia is a result of the breaking down of the quilting of signification, Baudrillard's comments on schizophrenia relate to the notion of the ob-scene. The mirror is replaced by a screen. The mirror stage and the stable (mis)identification of subjectivity in the order of representation are replaced by the screening of an open and deterritorializing schizoid subjectivity which is always and already becoming other through 'a being-multiple, instead of a being-one, a being-whole or being as subject' (Deleuze and Parnet, 1987, viii). Contrast this nomadism with the rigidity described by Olalquiaga (1992, 15) in her suggestion that a panoptican space of surveillance pervades *Blade Runner*, referring to the scene in which Deckard explores the labyrinthine surface of a three-dimensional photograph, and the 'invasion' of his home by a Coca-cola advert and the face of the Japanese woman. It is suggested that 'traditional surveillance has been surpassed by a mixture of reality and simulacra that attains a sophisticated state of control - one where surveillance devices are no longer necessary, since a prevailing condition of tension and vigilance has successfully permeated everybody's imaginary.' But if this is the case (and certainly the police station contains classic traits of the panoptican), there is little here to actually suggest that *Blade Runner* connects to a 'new form of schizophrenia' (Baudrillard, 1983, 132; 1988, 26-7). To the contrary, the necessity of the 'retirement' of the renegade *Replicants* and the obsession with enforcing the distinction between them and humans speaks more of paranoia (the pathology of organisation), than of schizophrenia. Indeed, the film only really indicates this new form of schizophrenia in those sequences when there is both a facialization of the landscape and a landscapification of the face, with their reciprocal contraction and dilation converging on the hollow screen of the False Mirror *par excellence*: the transfixed, unblinking and gazeless Eye which has been uprooted from the mirroring-effects and virtual-depth of corporeality.

In spite of himself (*sic*) the schizophrenic is open to everything and lives in the most extreme confusion. He is the obscene victim of the world's obscenity. The schizophrenic is not, as generally claimed, characterized by a loss of touch with reality, but by the absolute proximity to and total instantaneousness with things, this overexposure to the transparency of the world. Stripped of a stage and crossed over without the least obstacle, the schizophrenic cannot produce the limits of his very being, he can no longer produce himself as a mirror.

(Baudrillard, 1988, 27)

In those moments in *Blade Runner* when the Eye migrates from both the perspectival space of the gaze and the hollow which locates and anchors it to the landscape of the face, we can catch a glimpse of the closing of the scene and the corrosion of the tain of the mirror, which simultaneously ushers in the irruption of the vertiginous transparency of the ob-scene and the hollow surface of the screen. But none of this is witnessed by either Bruno, Harvey or Wakefield, since they all persist in reacting to the succession of images on the screen as if they were in front of a mirror. It should come as no surprise, then, to discover that it may turn out to be a False Mirror (or even a labyrinth of False Mirrors).

Forget *Blade Runner*

Ridley Scott's particular 'gigantesque caricature' may capture ethno-centric anxieties about poly-glottism run amuck but it fails to imaginatively engage the real Los Angeles landscape - especially the great unbroken plains of aging bungalows, dingbats and ranch-style houses - as it socially and physically erodes into the 21st century.

(Davis, 1992, 2)

For Bruno (1987), Harvey (1989) and Wakefield (1990), then, *Blade Runner* can be viewed as an exemplary *mirror* of the essential, latent and virtual horrors of our postmodern condition, in which the fractal stage of value in late capitalism reigns supreme, and the cultural logic of everyday life is triangulated by banality, fatality and simulation. Ultimately, it is this crystallization of our contemporaneous condition of postmodernity which must be grasped, understood and resisted. Davis (1992), however, remains incredulous to what he describes as 'L.A.'s own dystopic alter ego.' For Davis (1990, 2), *Blade Runner* 'remains yet another edition of this core modernist vision': 'the future metropolis as Monster Manhattan.' In short, Davis yawns at the way in which the film stages the future 'as a grotesque, Wellsian magnification of technology and architecture.' For his part, Davis prefers to conjure a 'Gibsonian' map of the future, which unfolds through delicate extrapolation rather than crude magnification. Gibson, however, is obviously amused by, rather than incredulous towards, dystopian visions of Los Angeles: 'Town planners of LA have six scenarios of the way that the city could turn out and one of the worst ones is the "*Blade Runner* Scenario," which I think is great' (Gibson, 1993, 13). Moreover, Davis reminds us that the real Los Angeles is not surrounded by an 'Ecotopia - evergreen forests and boundless wilderness' (as depicted in the outtakes from Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining* which were tagged on to the end of the original version in order to placate disgruntled film-goers who appeared to dislike the downbeat ending) but rather by 'huge military air bases, bombing ranges and desert warfare reservations' and an 'emergent *Toxic Rim*' (Davis, 1990, 19: See also, Davis, 1993 and Soja, 1989). And yet, in eschewing the obsession with dystopic gigantism in favour of careful extrapolation, Davis nevertheless persists in viewing *Blade Runner* as an attempt to mirror the essential, latent and virtual Los Angeles of today. At bottom, he tells us to forget *Blade Runner* insofar as it is a false and feeble mirror: When you refuse to be seduced by 'the mile-high neo-Mayan pyramid of the Tyrell Corp. [which] drips acid-rain on the mongrel masses in the teeming Ginza far below,' and remove 'the overlays of "Yellow Peril"... and "Noir"... as well as a lot of high-tech plumbing retrofitted to street-level urban decay, what remains is recognizably the same vista of urban gigantism that Fritz Lang celebrated in *Metropolis* (1931).' Hence the fact that Davis has attempted to conjure up another mirror in which to reflect and exemplify the alternative futures of Los Angeles.

In summary, neither Bruno (1987), nor Harvey (1989), nor Wakefield (1990), nor Davis (1992), have managed to make the decisive move from mirror to screen. Each has remained seduced by the desire for the film to re-produce something - some reality - present or future. For Bruno, Harvey and Wakefield, it is supposed to reproduce, in exemplary fashion, the time-space of postmodernism, postmodernization and postmodernity. For Davis, by contrast, the film is a false and feeble attempt to reproduce the development of Los Angeles into the near future. In short, each has sought to render and judge the film in relation to a crystallization of either the features of our postmodernity or the near future of a specific locality. In the foregoing sections we have attempted to explicate how each of these

mirroring-effects breaks down in both their originary conceptualization and in their supposed exemplary screening in *Blade Runner*. And yet the defects in these endeavours cannot be overcome by conceptualizing and locating other mirroring-effects in the duration of the film. Cinema is not a mirror. It does not re-present, re-produce or re-play. Neither correspondence, nor coherence; cinema is a screen. As Deleuze (1986; 1989) demonstrates, conceptualization should work 'alongside,' rather than 'on,' the cinema: Resonance rather than reflection; encounter rather than capture; invention rather than re-presentation. In other words, whilst the mirror is always given over to and territorialized by something other, the screen is immanent to itself. Hence the juxtaposition of the two quotations from Harvey and Denny which inaugurates the screening of our paper. We will not attempt to identify the structure, meaning, location and significance of the image in the mirror, but we will try to resonate productively with the cinematographic conceptualization inherent to *Blade Runner*: A flow of externalized thought alongside a flow of illuminated celluloid. In short, to move from the political economy of the mirror (arborescence) to the rhizomatic multiplicity of the screen (nomadology) is to replace 'restrictive analogy with a conductivity that knows no bounds' (Massumi, 1992, 5). Rather than remaining within a paranoid discourse defined by the equation:

$$\textit{Blade Runner} = \text{our postmodernity} \neq \text{Los Angeles}$$

we will withdraw to an affirmative discourse defined by the equation:

$$\dots + \text{face} + \text{landscape} + \text{skin} + \text{transparency} + \text{eye} + \dots$$

Whilst the former equation is inherently fascistic and paranoid, concerned, as it is, with the establishment and regulation of boundaries and territories (in this case over identity and subjectification), the latter is essentially anarchistic and schizophrenic insofar as it traces the heterotopic movement of a multiplicity of fractal elements (in this case the migration and becoming-other of the corporeal Eye). In the case of *Blade Runner*, the difference between the two modalities of aligning conceptualization with film can be expressed by the difference between the *Body in pieces* (BiP) on the one hand, and the *Body without Organs* (BwO) on the other.

How can one discern the difference between a BiP and a BwO? The former is simply a dismantled body - either emptied through abandonment or homogenized through a cancerous proliferation - whilst the latter is what subsists when everything else is taken away. From the perspective which views a *Replicant* not simply as a copy of an original, but rather as a copy which strives to pass itself off as an original - and therefore to dissimulate its actual derivative and parasitic status - the film traces the encroachment of a Body in pieces: the thoughts, eyes, skin, and muscles all flee the simulacrum in succession.

Deckard:	She doesn't know?
Tyrell:	She's beginning to suspect, I think.
Deckard:	Suspect! How can it not know what it is!?
Tyrell:	Commerce is our goal here at Tyrell; 'More human than human' is our motto.

The screening of the Eye

The face, what a horror.

(Deleuze and Guattari, 1988, 190)

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari (1988, 172) argue that 'The close-up in film treats the face primarily as a landscape; that is the definition of film, black hole and white wall, screen and camera.' During the course of this paper on *Blade Runner*, it will have become clear why it is the screening of faciality and landscapity which interests us, rather than the so-called exemplification of our future-anterior condition in the pastiche city of Los Angeles, 2019. Quite simply, *Blade Runner* has nothing whatsoever to do with postmodernism, postmodernization or postmodernity. To the contrary, it proceeds through a reciprocal deterritorialization of landscapes and faces; a repeated facialization of the landscape on the one hand and a relentless landscapification of the face on the other. In short, *Blade Runner* is the landscapification of gazeless eyes on the white walls of faciality. It is nothing more and nothing less than a screening of the Eye which is always already other than what it will have been. Indeed, we would go even further and claim that the whole film is entirely consumed within the eternal recurrence of an interminable blink which severs the corporeal Eye and institutes the reign of a blind vision. In other words, the entire screening of *Blade Runner* -from the opening reflection of the cityscape in the False Mirror of an anonymous Eye, to the closing sequence in which the leading protagonists are enveloped by the contracting aperture of an elevator shaft - is crystallized in the *longue durée* of Deckard's blink at the moment of greatest intensity (the terminal breakdown of Roy: head down, face flooded and eyes sealed against the torrent of fleeing memories). Each of these three instantiations of the black holes of faciality and landscapity is structured by the asymptotic acceleration of the focal point into the vanishing points of zero and infinity: The unblinking Eye, transfixed on infinity; the closing Eye, severing itself from the gaze; and the closed Eye, isolated from vision. And it is this vertiginous transparency in which there is nothing to see which is truly fascinating. Indeed, for the duration of the screening, we are absorbed by the vacuity of the hollow and empty screen...

I no longer look into the eyes of the woman I hold in my arms but I swim through, head and arms and legs, and I see that behind the sockets of the eyes there is a region unexplored, the world of futurity, and here there is no logic whatsoever.... I have broken the wall.... My eyes are useless, for they render back only the image of the known. My whole body must become a constant beam of light, moving with an ever greater rapidity, never arrested, never looking back, never dwindling.... *Therefore I close my ears, my eyes, my mouth.*

(Miller, quoted in Deleuze and Guattari, 1988, 171)

If *Blade Runner* is simply the deterritorialization of the corporeal Eye through an inhuman transfixion, contraction and severance on the one hand, and its reterritorialization as an inhuman facialization and landscapification on the other, then the convoluted 'involuntary dilation of the iris' test for *Replicancy* becomes pivotal. After all, it would have been far simpler to test the subject's response to temperature extremes: Leon, for example, immerses its hand in liquid nitrogen, Pris plunges its into boiling water, each without damage to their skin. Similarly, Roy is able to smash its body-parts through walls and have them battered by iron bars without significant effect. And even if one wanted a less banal test in order to

resonate with the film's other technological motifs, then wouldn't it have been more logical to devise a test for the genetically encoded incept-termination date which both guarantees the possibility of distinguishing between humans and *Replicants* and prevents the latter from actually becoming human? (Such a test - of the bone marrow - is in fact used in the novel, as is another test: The Boneli Reflex Arc Test, based on the fact that the response to an electrical stimulus in the upper ganglia of the spinal column is fractionally slower in androids than in humans.) Whilst Rachael's implanted memories almost rendered it indistinguishable from every other Body, every Body's genetic code will have remained irreversible. Indeed, it is precisely when Tyrell relates this simple fact to Roy and J F Sebastian, that Roy finally abandons its quest to become human and destroys Tyrell by puncturing its eyes and crushing its face. For both Roy and Tyrell, there will have been an absolute and unbridgeable difference between human and nonhuman, nature and nurture, biology and culture, genetics and socialization, experience and memory, and production and simulation. All of the tests for *Replicancy* are intended to lead the Body back to only one terminal of this binary code. Roy can never become human, insofar as it is always and already irreversibly nonhuman. Moreover, whilst submitting the Body to extreme events would yield a definitive result, an absolute distinction between the Real (human) and the Hyperreal (the more-human-than-human), a Body can never actually pass the Voigt-Kampff test - it can only ever be a case of not-falsified-yet. Whilst conventional *Nexus 6 Replicants* require only about 20 or 30 cross-referenced questions in order to falsify their claim to be human, an experimental *Replicant* such as Rachael requires over 100. Rather than being confirmed as authentically human, every Body is in a state of radical exception, suspension and undecidability until it is confirmed as being authentically nonhuman. In short, the Voigt-Kampff test is a binarization which produces *Replicants* (the falsified) and *Undecidables* (the not-falsified-yet). However, since the test is inherently statistical, it actually engenders only undecidables with probabilistic tendencies towards either humanity or *Replicancy*. And this is why it makes no difference whether Deckard has or has not undergone the test - the status of its Body will never have been confirmed (in)authentically (in)(non)human. In short, the Voigt-Kampff apparatus conspires to render determination impossible.

'Do you know,' she [Rachael] said, 'why I really came here?....

'To observe,' he [Deckard] said. 'To detail exactly what the Nexus-6 does that gives it away on the Voigt-Kampff test.'

'On the test or otherwise. Everything that gives it a different quality. And then report back and the association makes modifications of its zygote-bath DNA factors. And we then have the Nexus-7. And when that gets caught we modify again and eventually the association has a type that can't be distinguished.'

(Dick, 197, 143)

'You realize,' Phil Resch [another blade runner] said quietly, 'what this would do. If we included androids in our range of empathetic identification, as we do animals.'

'We couldn't protect ourselves.'

'Absolutely. These Nexus-6 types... they'd roll all over us and mash us flat. You and I, all the bounty hunters - we stand between the Nexus-6 and mankind, a barrier which keeps the two distinct.'

(*ibid.* 109)

Blade Runner, then, is perplexing insofar as it insists, somewhat implausibly, that on the one

hand, *Replicants* are visibly indistinguishable from humans, even though their actions are quite clearly something other than human, whilst on the other hand, that they can only be distinguished by means of the Voigt-Kampff test, even though the commercial development of the Nexus brain unit is destined to render it obsolete. Moreover, this obsolescence will have arisen not only through the perfection of the ability of the Nexus brain structure to simulate human responses, but also through: the engendering of empathy and desire between humans and *Replicants*; the frustration of transparent communication through an enhancement of their intellectual capacity to proliferate 'semantic fog'; and the fact that the Voigt-Kampff scale is specifically designed to measure a 'flattening of affect' which is common to both Nexus 6 *Replicants*, schizophrenics and humans with an underdeveloped empathetic capacity. And whilst the Philip K. Dick novel makes much more of this blurring and short-circuiting than *Blade Runner* does, it is nevertheless indelibly inscribed within the narrative structure and technonarcissism of the film itself, with the developing relationship between Deckard and Rachael being only the most obvious example.

Conclusion: Viewing otherwise

From the above, it should be clear why the Voigt-Kampff test should be understood not as an efficient and effective device for discerning the difference between humans and *Replicants* (which it clearly isn't insofar as it only ever produces undecidables), and more as an apparatus which symbolizes the reciprocal complexification of faciality and landscapity. In and of itself, the Voigt-Kampff apparatus records the continuous variation of 'capillary dilation in the facial area' and 'fluctuations of tension within the eye muscles' as indexical signs of the Body's involuntary response to a succession of stimuli-questions. Any decision must therefore entail an arbitrary freezing, cessation and levelling of this potentially inexhaustible and inherently undecidable flow. In addition, even though the typical, human pattern of involuntary skin and eye response to 'morally shocking stimuli' is not duplicated by Nexus 6 *Replicants*, such a pattern nevertheless exists biologically, as a potential. And finally, such a test is necessarily probabilistic and therefore haunted by the creeping advancement of doubt paralysis which accompanies every refinement of the Nexus brain structure and its coupling to the indexical traits of faciality. In sum, this landscapification of the face has produced a territory upon which the Nexus brain unit and the Voigt-Kampff apparatus wage war. Whilst the former seeks to become imperceptible through the adornment of a first order simulation (consisting of a swarm of mobile facial traits which try to copy those of a real human face), the latter seeks to drill tiny holes in the wall of faciality in order to get a look at the Body behind the veil. "*The face, what a horror*. It is naturally a lunar landscape, with its pores, planes, matts, bright colors, whiteness and holes: there is no need for a close-up to make it inhuman; it is naturally a close-up, and naturally inhuman, a monstrous hood" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988, 190). And this is why, ultimately, Deleuze defines film through the frame of the close-up: a revelation of the porosity of faciality and landscapity on the one hand, and a revelation of the porosity of the screen on the other. Moreover, the use of close-up in *Blade Runner* reveals the porosity of the Eye and the vertiginous transparency of the Gaze. Faciality, Landscapity, Screen and Eye: each adsorbs rather than reflects meaning, individuation and subjectification. And this is why we will not have been seated in front of a mirror. All this, right here, it makes no sense.

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