The Dissertation Committee for Chi Hyun Park Certifies that this is the approved version of the following dissertation:

Orientalism in U. S. Cyberpunk Cinema

from *Blade Runner* to *The Matrix*

Committee:

S. Craig Watkins, Supervisor

John D. H. Downing, Co-Supervisor

Charles Ramírez Berg

Mia Carter

James Kyung-Jin Lee

Thomas G. Schatz

Orientalism in U. S. Cyberpunk Cinema
from *Blade Runner* to *The Matrix*

by

Chi Hyun Park, B.A., M.A.

Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Texas at Austin
May 2004

Dedication

For my teachers

Acknowledgements

My dissertation could not have been written without the assistance of many kind and generous people. I would like to begin by thanking my students at The University of Texas at Austin in Narrative Strategies (fall 2002 to spring 2003) and Asian American Literature and Culture (spring 2003). Their enthusiasm for this project encouraged me to keep researching and writing, and their spirited conversations in and out of the classroom gave me exciting new leads to follow. Huge props go out especially to Bobby Chu, Vanat Sermpol, Mike Cintron, Jennifer Malone, and Mike Jones.

To pursue any kind of research productively, one must eat and occasionally shop. For steady financial support, I thank the Office of Graduate Studies and the department of Radio-TV-Film at UT, which provided me with a Pre-emptive Fellowship during the summers of 2000 and 2001, teaching and research assistant positions from 1999 to 2003, and travel grants to present my work at various national and international conferences. I also want to extend heartfelt thanks to the selection committee that granted me a William T. Livingston Fellowship in 2003-2004. Without the considerable aid of this fellowship, I would not have been able to finish the dissertation as quickly as I did.

For giving shape and direction to what began as an overly ambitious mess of random ideas, I must thank my dissertation committee. I am deeply indebted to my supervisors, Craig Watkins and John Downing, who played key roles in the development

Orientalism in U. S. Cinema from *Blade Runner* to *The Matrix*

Publication No._____

Chi Hyun Park, Ph.D.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2004

Supervisors: S. Craig Watkins

John D. H. Downing

This dissertation looks at the role of "oriental" imagery in Hollywood through case studies of two Hollywood cyberpunk films: *Blade Runner* (Ridley Scott, 1982) and *The Matrix* (Larry and Andy Wachowski, 1999). Drawing from scholarship in Asian American Studies, Film and Media Studies, Postcolonial Theory, and Cultural Studies, my work explores why the futuristic *mise-en-scène* of such films looks and feels so uncannily "oriental." It considers the relationship between these East Asian-inflected settings and changing attitudes about East Asians and Asian Americans in the U. S. from the 1980s to the present. Furthermore, it situates that relationship within larger shifts in national discourses around "race" during this time period. My analyses of these films are grounded in their industrial and historical contexts: economic and aesthetic developments in Hollywood since the 1980s, the rapid growth of the Asian American community during the same period, and the recent internationalization of East Asian popular culture, particularly Hong Kong cinema and Japanese animation.

My study endeavors to show how oriental imagery in Hollywood has changed as the Asian American population has grown and as East Asian countries have entered economic First World status. In the process it poses the following questions. How does oriental imagery function in cyberpunk films? What relationship does such imagery have to past and present racial constructions of Asians and Asian Americans in the U. S.? How does this imagery rework Edward Said's notion of Orientalism? And what new analytical frameworks does it suggest for examining racial and cultural exchange, appropriation, and commodification in U. S. popular culture? My dissertation approaches these questions by looking at expressions of the contemporary "Orient" in Hollywood's celluloid projections of the future. In doing so, it attempts to make sense of the growing representations of East Asian bodies and cultures as "oriental style."

Table of Contents

Introduction

SEEING ASIAN AMERICAN ALIENS

In October 2001 I was naturalized as an American citizen after spending most of my life in the United States as a permanent resident alien. Only a month had passed since the September 11 terrorist attacks, so patriotic sentiment naturally was running quite high in the San Antonio auditorium where the ceremony was held. I don't remember much -- just standing up, sitting down, repeating certain words and phrases, smiling, and waving my miniature American flag with those around me when we were prompted to do so by the enthusiastic veteran volunteers in the aisles. These rituals did not particularly move me. What did move me was something wholly unexpected. After the ceremony was over, I walked out of the auditorium with my family into the harsh Texas sun. Suddenly I flashed back twenty four years earlier when we had immigrated to the United States, and the same sunlight had hit my four year old face. Recalling the loss and loneliness I had felt then, as I walked out of the airport into a bright, open place full of people who looked nothing like me, speaking a language I couldn't understand, my eyes filled with hot, stinging tears. I was officially a US citizen, but the memory of living and struggling as a paradoxical "resident alien" remained in my body.

The next week I was skimming the essays I had written for my comprehensive exams earlier that summer, hoping to come up with an interesting dissertation topic. I knew I wanted to write on some aspect of Asian American experience and popular media, but didn't feel much like expanding any of the papers I had already written which dealt with specific Asian American narratives, artists, and audiences. It seemed to me that other scholars already were doing very good work in this area, and I wasn't sure if or how I could make a useful contribution. Doing graduate work in Austin, Texas also posed

certain limitations in terms of accessing Asian American communities, cultural products, and academic resources. I was about to give up when, glancing through the literature on legal and popular representations of Asian Americans in the US, it struck me how many times the word "alien" appeared. While this term frequently came up, it was always interpreted metaphorically. No one had been silly enough to compare legally and culturally "alien" Asian Americans with the little green creatures from Mars or not-quite-human androids in US science fiction movies. After thinking it over briefly, I decided I would not be the first.

I changed my mind a few days later after watching the Director's Cut of the cult classic, *Brazil* (Gilliam 1985)*, on the big screen. I had gone to the screening with a friend of mine – a talented, nationally recognized filmmaker and, like myself, a science fiction fan. Later, while we were singing Gilliam's praises, I asked him what he thought about the East Asian images in the dream sequences. He looked confused so I clarified: what did he think about the huge samurai robot-monster that the protagonist keeps fighting, and the little dwarves with Buddha-like masks that pull the cage holding his love interest? My friend took a sip of his beer, looked thoughtful for a second, and said he hadn't really noticed. Not wanting to bore him with my half-spun ideological readings, I kept quiet and decided to bring up the topic later with my colleagues.

When I did, however, I almost always met with the same response. Very few seemed to have noticed this imagery, much less considered its orientalist undertones in any serious fashion. Even most of my professors, while intrigued and supportive, did not seem completely convinced that such imagery existed, and if it did, how I would manage to write an entire dissertation about it. They suggested I watch more science fiction movies to see if samurai robots and little Buddha figures appeared in more than one example. I followed their advice and rented films I had not seen since I was a child and

teenager. For the next few months, my nights were spent with lighted pen and clipboard in hand as I scoured the *mise-en-scène* of a large number of contemporary science fiction films for East Asian bodies, props, and iconography.

TRACING THE ORIENT: EXPLICIT REFERENCES TO EAST ASIA

What I discovered was nothing short of eye-opening. Science fiction films were full not only of explicit "oriental" references as in *Brazil* but also of implicit references to the "Orient" – in depictions of aliens and androids that bore a strong resemblance to historical stereotypes of Asian Americans in US popular culture. In my study, by "Orient" I mean a codified North American fantasy of East Asian cultures, places, and bodies, which plays out in and across different cultural, political, and social realms.[i] A variation on Edward Said's seminal notion of Orientalism, this particular definition of the Orient will be expanded in the next chapter.

In this section I would like to sketch some instances of explicit references in contemporary science fiction cinema to East Asian places, languages, iconography, images, costumes, and cultural references. These will be followed with examples of implicit references to East Asians and Asian Americans in the same body of films. I open my study in this way to show readers that "oriental" imagery does in fact exist and that it performs an important narrative and ideological function – not just in one science fiction film but in many. Previous studies, some of which will be addressed in the next chapter, have discussed the significant role of such imagery in Hollywood generally. I am referring here to work by Eugene Franklin Wong (1978), Gina Marchetti (1993), Matthew Bernstein and Gaylyn Studlar (1997), Traise Yamamoto (1998), Robert Lee (1999), and Christina Klein (2003).

Unlike the studies cited above, my dissertation deals specifically with contemporary US science fiction cinema. It focuses on this genre to investigate the indirect social and aesthetic connections between representations of the "Orient" and those of new technologies in Hollywood depictions of the future. In the process, my study examines contemporary perceptions of East Asia and East Asian Americans in the US popular imaginary and the place of such perceptions within the larger context of national racial attitudes and relations. I will raise those questions toward the end of the Introduction and proceed to engage with them throughout the dissertation. First, I will describe what I found in my viewings of Hollywood science fiction movies from the 1980s to the present.

To begin with, in many of these narratives, East Asian places, languages, and images have sinister and often perverse connotations. An early example occurs in a famous scene from an early non-Hollywood film, *Metropolis* (Lang 1927): the "bad" Maria, a robot facsimile of the human heroine, dances in the Yoshiwara district to a crowd of licentious male workers. There are no East Asian bodies, architecture, or other visual signifiers in sight; simply referencing the name of the famous red light district in Tokugawa Japan and adding some vaguely Asian music sets an ambience of sexual decadence and moral corruption. In the 1980s this rhetorical device was used to reference East Asian, usually Japanese transnational corporations. For instance, the evil ship, "Mother," which Ripley (Sigourney Weaver) commands in *Alien* (Scott 1979) is owned by a Japanese company as is Ash (Ian Holm), the android that later betrays the crew. As well we learn in the opening of *Videodrome* (Cronenberg 1983) that the protagonist, Max (James Woods) moonlights for a pornographic Japanese media distributor, signifying his weakened moral status.

4

Until very recently in most science fiction films, East Asian bodies, when appearing at all, have functioned largely as background much like other forms of non-human "oriental" imagery. In *Escape from New York* (Carpenter 1981) the protagonist Snake (Kurt Russell) faces a multicultural gang of convicts led by the highly vocal black leader, the Duke of New York (Isaac Hayes). Prominent in several shots during Snake's captivity is an older, unnamed Asian American member of the gang (Lonnie Wun), who never speaks and whose narrative purpose in the film therefore is never revealed. Likewise, in *Strange Days* (Bigelow 1995), a large billboard advertisement with the image of an elderly East Asian woman is displayed quite notably in the run-down parking lot where the protagonists have their first violent encounter with the corrupt Los Angeles police. Finally, both *Strange Days* and *Existenz* (Cronenberg 1999) contain extremely violent and seemingly gratuitous scenes involving East Asian men being killed brutally in Chinese restaurants suffused with red light.

Second, actors in many science fiction films wear vaguely East Asian costumes which also suggest Middle Eastern and western medieval influences to evoke the atmosphere of an exotic, otherworldly future. I am thinking here of the fantastic costumes in *Zardoz* (1973), *Dune* (Lynch 1984), the *Star Wars* trilogy and prequels (Lucas 1977-2002), *Judge Dredd* (Cannon 1995), *Demolition Man* (Brambilla 1993), *The Fifth Element* (Besson 1997), and *Equilibrium* (Wimmer 2002), among others. The silk tunics, brocaded vests, flowing robes, body armor, headgear, and various ornaments that adorn the heads and bodies of the actors and actresses strongly allude to various traditional forms of dress from China, Japan, and Korea. At the same time, none of these costumes can be pinpointed directly to the dress of a specific nation, culture, or period. In this sense, they perform a kind of hybrid Orientalism, a concept that will be fleshed out more fully as the dissertation unfolds.

5

Finally, in what I call "cyberpunk cinema," described briefly here as a subgenre of dystopic science fiction cinema centering on computer culture and bio-technologies, East Asian bodies and cultures often are associated directly with new technologies or with those who manipulate those technologies. (A longer and more detailed discussion of "cyberpunk cinema" appears in Chapter Two.) In *Dreamscape* (Ruben 1984) the bedroom of the young male antagonist, a socially maladjusted computer nerd, is plastered with posters of martial arts master, Bruce Lee. In *Johnny Mnemonic* (Long 1995) the protagonist (Keanu Reeves) flees from the evil yakuza who are trying to steal the software that has been downloaded into his brain. In *Hackers* (Softley 1995) two hip, effeminate Asian American male youth help save the day by virtually uniting all the hackers of the world through their live television broadcast. We never see these secondary characters interacting in the flesh with the principal characters but only as mediated TV images in the vein of Max Headroom.

Most recently, in *Minority Report* (Spielberg and Kubrick 2000), John Anderton (Tom Cruise) learns during a visit to the GAP that the eyes from the transplant he has received after his escape from the law originally belonged to "Mr. Yamamoto," a man of obviously Japanese descent. As Lisa Nakamura has pointed out, the racialized aspect of Anderton's new fugitive identity is important since in the futuristic society of the film, personal identity is determined by one's eyes – or more specifically, by the ability of surveillance technologies to "read" the information behind those eyes (Nakamura "'If You Could See'").

Finding explicit, visual examples of East Asian influence in science fiction cinema such as those described above was both exciting and encouraging. The next more difficult step, however, was making sense of the relationship between these

representations and more implicit references to East Asia and East Asian Americans in cyberpunk cinema.

PUTTING IT TOGETHER: IMPLICIT REFERENCES TO EAST ASIA

In *Eastern Standard Time,* a compendium of popular knowledge on Asian and Asian American cultures, the editors of *A Magazine* provide an informal list of stereotypes for Asians and Asian Americans in television and the movies. They include for women, the Lotus Blossom, Dragon Lady, Butterfly, Asian Harlot, War Bride, and Asian Broadcast Babe; and for men, the Oriental Sage, Diabolical Tyrant, Asian Sidekick, Martial Arts Killing Machine, Super Nerd, Brutal Chinese Gangster, Japanese Corporate Predator, and Rude Korean Storekeeper (Yang et. al. 111, 118-119). These signifiers are associated with both actual and fictitious people such as early screen actress Anna May Wong, pulp fiction turned serial film and television characters Fu Manchu and Charlie Chan, the character Suzie Wong, martial arts film star Bruce Lee, and anchorwoman Connie Chung.

The stereotypes fall at different points in the tenuous binary between what could be described as two *uber*-stereotypes of Asian Americans in US popular culture, the "model minority" and the "gook." The former was a term that emerged in the Civil Rights era to categorize overachieving Asian Americans but that in concept, already had existed in nineteenth century representations of the docile, hardworking coolie, laundryman and houseboy. According to Yang et. al., the term "model minority" originally appeared in the 1960s in popular press articles that extolled the strong work ethic and family values of Japanese and Chinese Americans.[ii] Political conservatives were quick to take up the Model Minority thesis in order to discredit the Civil Rights Movement (331). In the 1970s the Model Minority was associated with Southeast Asian

refugees whose arrival threatened to take jobs away from Anglo Americans, fostering white resentment. This resentment, mixed with bewildered admiration, grew in the 1970s and 1980s as Japanese auto and consumer electronic industries gained more power and as second generation "whiz kid" Asian Americans became a notable presence in higher education. Ambivalence toward the Model Minority grew in the 1990s as the label became attached to successful Asian American entrepreneurs (*Ibid*).

"Gook," a derogatory term for Filipinos, Japanese, Koreans, and Vietnamese, has two origin narratives, both based on US military presence in Asia. According to Kim Pearson, the first account traces the term to the Filipino Uprising of 1899 at which time American soldiers called the Filipinos "gugus," a play off a Tagalog word that means "tutelary spirit" ("Gook"). The second account, which may or may not be related to the first, has the word originating from a mangling of the Korean term "guk" (meaning "country") by US officers during the Korean War (*Ibid*). According to Robert Lee, these two seemingly opposite characterizations of East Asian Americans are linked since the "model minority" can at any time turn into the "gook" and occasionally, vice versa (180-191). Both stereotypes and those that emerge from them, draw an increasingly complex picture of what I will refer to throughout this dissertation as the "Oriental Other."

Lee quotes one of his students to distinguish the "Oriental" from the "Asian" thus: "Orientals are rugs, not people" (ix). As Lee goes on to note, constructions of the Orient and Asia, "Orientals" and "Asians" mutually define each other in a symbiotic relationship, which is tilted in favor of the representation rather than the bodies and histories being represented. To put it another way, orientalist discourse wittingly or unwittingly has had the effect of turning people into rugs. A similar relationship exists between media images and the groups and individuals they purport to represent. Like these media images, the Oriental Other is an easily recognizable and quickly

comprehended *type* in mass narratives that are constructed by and for members of the dominant culture. What then does this particular other look like? Drawing from the schema that Charles Ramírez Berg in *Latino Images in Film* introduces to describe the stereotyping process of Latinos in Hollywood, I culled the following five primary character traits of East Asian Americans in US popular media.

First, East Asian Americans are portrayed as *foreigners* in popular media. This trait is not surprising given the immigration history of East Asians which will be summarized in the next chapter. Until recently, almost every actor and actress of East Asian descent in film and television seemed required to speak with an East Asian accent regardless of their characters' backgrounds. The only exceptions that come to mind are the Asian American cast of the Hollywood musical, *Flower Drum Song* (Koster 1961), Pat Morita in *Happy Days* (1974-1984), Jack Soo in *Barney Miller* (1975-1982), and the Asian American family in the short-lived sitcom, *All-American Girl* (1994).

Second, East Asian Americans are linked closely with cultural and/or economic *capital.* In some instances, they embody that capital themselves. Examples include East Asian laborers in Hawaii and the US West in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and poor East Asian immigrant workers today in the garment, microchip, and custodial industries. In other instances, East Asian Americans unrightfully possess surplus capital. Examples include media depictions of Chinese businessmen buying political favors, Chinese scientists selling national secrets, and Korean entrepreneurs taking advantage of poor black and Latino clientele.

Third, East Asian Americans are *sexually perverse.* Men are constructed as effeminate, sadistic, asexual, and repressed and women as submissively masochistic and dominantly sadistic. Both women and men are infantilized and ultimately rendered androgynous through their self-conscious performance of sexuality. Unlike "normal,"

healthy sexuality, which springs from the "natural" impulse of romantic love and leads to the heteronormative reproduction of the white family, the sexuality of the Oriental Other – whether repressed or expressed – is deemed unnatural and artificial. Examples of East Asian sexual perversion abound in US film and television, ranging from asexual servile characters such as Charlie Chan and Hop Sing (*Bonanza* 1959-1973) and licentious Japanese businessmen consorting with white prostitutes in *Rising Sun* (Kaufman 1993) to the cheerful back-scrubbing "Lotus Blossom" Katsumi (Miyoshi Umeki) in *Sayonara* (Logan 1957) and the growling, business savvy "Dragon Lady" Ling (Lucy Liu) in *Ally McBeal* (1997-2002).

Fourth, East Asian Americans are *untrustworthy*. This trait can be discerned in the prevalent notion that the Japanese specifically and East Asians generally are excellent cultural imitators of the West, able to display one face while keeping the other hidden. Another example is the media emphasis on the ability of second generation East Asian Americans to exist and perform comfortably in both the private "Eastern" realm of the family and the public "Western" realm of the world outside.

Finally, East Asians and Asian Americans are *emotionally stoic* – a characteristic found in the image of the East Asian corporate drone, the narrative of female infanticide in China, and the Model Minority myth of Asian American students who study ceaselessly to enter the Ivy League and whose parents sacrifice everything for the futures of their children.

How these character traits have appeared and continue to appear in representations of East Asian Americans in Hollywood will be discussed more fully in the next chapter. What I wish to point out here is that the characteristics of East Asian stereotypes in US popular culture just summarized – i.e. foreign status, association with capital, sexual perversity, untrustworthiness, and emotional stoicism – also describe

10

representations of what I call the "Technological Other" in cyberpunk films. By Technological Other, I am referring not only to embodied, anthropomorphic forms of technology such as robots, androids, and cyborgs but also disembodied, non-anthropomorphic forms such as vehicles, weapons, tools, toys, computers, and other kinds of information machines.

Both Technological and Oriental Others perform a necessary but potentially dangerous prosthetic role vis-à-vis the protagonists, mostly white male characters who exhibit a deep ambivalence toward both technology and cultural difference.[iii] The protagonists' dependence on and fear of these Others stem from their ability to imitate, and in so doing, question what the protagonists stand for, namely the "human" body and the "human" experience. This mimetic performance deconstructs the dominant category of the "human" by rendering visible its socially constructed nature and its privileging of the white, male, heterosexual, and middle- to upper-class. Paradoxically, it is the potential for these others to *become* human – i.e. to inhabit this categorical space of privilege – that renders them non-human or only conditionally human. In much the same ways that "female" has been defined as the subordinate negation of "male," the Oriental Other is defined as everything the Human Self is not. Foreign status is equated with *not* being a citizen; association with capital with *not* being fully human; sexual perversity with *not* being a "real" adult woman or man; untrustworthiness with *not* having an original or core self; and emotional stoicism with *not* having feelings.

The Technological Other exhibits similar characteristics. For example, the "bad" Maria in *Metropolis,* the computer HAL in *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Kubrick 1968), the robotic housewives in *The Stepford Wives* (Forbes 1975), and Ash, the android in *Alien* all are defined as non-human through traits that also have defined the Oriental Other. Their emotional stoicism is conveyed through flat or carefully modulated emotional

11

performances. Their untrustworthiness is revealed when they rebel against or otherwise betray the human protagonists. Their sexual perversity, like that of East Asians, is expressed as a kind of performative androgyny. In the case of the male, androgyny takes the form of homoerotic tendencies or asexuality; in the case of the female, it takes the form of monstrous hyper-feminization. HAL and Ash respectively exemplify the former while the Stepford wives and the bad Maria exemplify the latter.

Finally, these embodied Technological Others, like the disembodied forms of technology that created and sustain them are closely associated with capital. The bad Maria is made in order to continue the status quo of Metropolis in which workers are exploited for the benefit of the elite. HAL represents the US space program and its continued exploration and exploitation of distant planets in the future. The Stepford wives reveal the gendered division of labor in the US nuclear family and the continued role of women as men's property. And Ash, as mentioned earlier, represents the heartless Japanese transnational corporation. Through their association with capital and their performance of the other characteristics described above, these Technological Others are rendered perpetually foreign – either as illegal aliens which must be destroyed, or as conditional "resident aliens" which must be closely watched and contained.

DISSERTATION SUMMARY

Such connections between East Asian Americans and new technologies in cyberpunk cinema brought up an endless stream of questions in my mind around several, interrelated issues, including racial difference and racial norms, cultural translation, homage, and appropriation, conditional citizenship and conditional humanity. All of my questions revolved around the larger issue of the representation of racial others in

Hollywood generally and in Hollywood depictions of the future specifically which, as many scholars have noted, can be read as commentaries on the present. My biggest question could be summed up thus. If, in these celluloid visions of a dark, urban, and computerized future, technology was depicted in ways similar to those in which East Asians historically have been represented, how did that signify for current and future cultural constructions of East Asians and Asian Americans in the US?

This dissertation attempts to answer that question through in-depth case studies of two Hollywood films that have come to define the cyberpunk style: *Blade Runner* (Scott 1982) and *The Matrix* (Wachowskis 1999). It looks at how these films consistently project a highly technological and multicultural future with East Asian overtones. Drawing from scholarship in Ethnic Studies, Film and Media Studies, Postcolonial Theory, and Cultural Studies, my study explores why the futuristic *mise-en-scène* in these and other cyberpunk films looks and feels so uncannily "oriental." It considers the relationship between East Asian-inflected settings in science fiction cinema and changing attitudes about East Asians and East Asian Americans in the US from the 1980s to the present.[iv] Furthermore, it situates that relationship within larger shifts in national discourses around "race" during this time period. My cultural analyses of *Blade Runner* and *The Matrix* are grounded in the industrial and historical contexts of these films, including economic and aesthetic developments in Hollywood since the 1980s, the rapid growth of the Asian American community during the same period, and the recent internationalization of East Asian popular culture, particularly Hong Kong cinema and Japanese animation.

As such, the dissertation is rooted in and addresses ongoing conversations around race and representation in Film Studies and Ethnic Studies. At the same time, it also runs along two theoretical axes, which I categorize broadly under the realms of the formal and

the sociopolitical. My study aims to shed light on the considerable overlaps that exist between these two spheres in the case of orientalist imagery in cyberpunk cinema. By showing the development of this imagery from the 1980s to the present, I connect narrative and aesthetic changes to social and ideological shifts that have occurred in how we think about, respond to, and represent racial difference. Fundamentally structuring the methodology and goals of this study then are the crucial but still often unacknowledged connections between form and ideology in analyses of popular media.

To illustrate the dynamics of this relationship, I will refer to a Hollywood science fiction "space opera" not discussed in this dissertation. In the summer of 1999 film critics, fans, and advocacy groups such as the NAACP, the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee and the Gay & Lesbian Alliance against Defamation protested what they saw as stereotypes of marginal groups in the film *Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace*. Most of the disgruntled viewers concentrated on the digital sidekick Jar Jar Binks, who was described as "a computerized Sambo," "a Rastafarian Stepin Fetchit on platform hoofs, crossed annoyingly with Butterfly McQueen," and "the stereotype of a weak and emotionally unbalanced gay man" (Seiler)**.** Producer-director George Lucas dismissed the critique by emphasizing the fantastic nature of the film, which for Lucas and his production crew divorced the stories and images from those in the so called real world. LucasFilm representative Jennie Cole stated, "Star Wars is a fantasy world … to try to associate it with anything in the real world is silly" (*Ibid*).

The plea from critical viewers for more politically considerate representations in film and the assertion by *Phantom* producers that film belongs solely to the province of the imagination both attest to the influence of popular media in shaping national and transnational tastes, attitudes and values. Ironically, however, it has been rare for members of these often opposed camps – the political and the aesthetic – to recognize

14

that the power of mass produced stories lies precisely in the relationship between reality and fantasy: the complex and intriguing ways that the two realms intersect and inform each other.

Keeping in mind then this productive tension between (narrative, aesthetic) form and (social, ideological) function, the central research questions of my dissertation are as follows:

How does oriental imagery function visually, narratively, and ideologically in US cyberpunk films?

What relationship does such imagery have to past and present racial constructions of Asians and Asian Americans in the US?

How does this imagery supplement Edward Said's notion of Orientalism and applications of his model in Asian American Studies?

What new analytical frameworks does this imagery suggest for examining processes of racial and cultural exchange, appropriation, and commodification in US popular culture?

I deploy a cultural studies approach to answer these questions, in the process putting into dialogue historical, critical, and popular narratives around racial difference, Orientalism, genre, film and media. In so doing, my dissertation links two ongoing intellectual conversations. The first, situated in Postcolonial and Ethnic Studies, revolves around orientalism and techno-orientalism. The second, in Film and Media Studies, is concerned with science fiction cinema and cyberpunk culture which I attempt to synthesize in the idea of cyberpunk cinema in Chapter Two.

In the former area of study, I rely heavily on Edward Said not just for his definition of Orientalism but also his interdisciplinary approach which is based in close, comparative textual analysis; John Tchen and Robert Lee for their documentation and

analyses of Orientalism in Asian American history; David Morley and Kevin Robins for their elaboration of the term "techno-orientalism"; and Ziauddin Sardar, Peter Feng, Lisa Nakamura, Rachel Lee and Sau-ling Wong, and Wendy Chun for their applications of this concept to explorations of Asian American presence in cyberpunk and cyberspace.

In the latter area of study, I draw chiefly from Vivian Sobchack, Brooks Landon, and Scott Bukatman for an understanding of contemporary science fiction cinema; William Gibson, Larry McCaffery, Bruce Sterling, Mike Featherstone and Roger Burrows, Andrew Ross, Nicola Nixon, and Pam Rosenthal for analyses of cyberpunk narrative, style, and ideology; and Benjamin Woolley, Donna Haraway, and N. Kathryn Hayles for general historical and theoretical frameworks on cyberspace, cyborgs, and information technologies. By reading the critical narratives of these scholars alongside the two creative narratives under examination, I hope not so much to revise the arguments and frameworks they posit but rather to acknowledge, apply, and extend them in ways their authors may not necessarily have intended.

The controversy over *The Phantom Menace* reveals the fraught associations between creative license and social responsibility, prompting us to consider how perceptions of racial and ethnic minorities which stem from the world outside the screen may influence, directly or indirectly, the mechanics of the imaginary world that appears on the screen and vice versa. Especially given the enormous popularity of science fiction films in recent years, the relationship between the contemporary realities of racial and cultural difference in the United States and how those realities are represented in and as cinematic fantasy warrants more attention than it has received so far in Ethnic Studies and Film and Media Studies.

To that end, my dissertation asks how and why *Blade Runner* and *The Matrix* allude systematically to East Asia in their constructions of a bleak, apocalyptic future and

what such allusions may mean for the direction of US popular culture. More specifically, I focus on these films for the following reasons. Both were designed as Hollywood blockbusters and, as such, targeted a global audience familiar with the Hollywood narrative paradigm and its tropes and imagery. Neither contains primary themes, characters or plotlines that overtly display alternative racial or sexual politics. Nor were they directed, written or produced by racial, ethnic or sexual minorities. Yet precisely *because* of their status as mass cultural texts which ostensibly represent the status quo, I contend that it is important to look closely at how marginal groups and cultures are conditionally present or palpably absent in these narratives of the future.

Blade Runner and *The Matrix* incorporate elements of East Asian cultures as background and spectacle to supplement their primary storylines, a form of stylistic translation and appropriation that resonates socially and politically in various ways. Put broadly, these films reproduce an orientalist *fantasy* of East Asian nations and bodies by conflating them with the *historical* roles of East Asians and East Asian Americans in US popular culture. The East Asian influences I examine in the films are divided into two related categories: *oriental tropes* and *oriental styles*. The former refers to sometimes stereotypically East Asian iconography, costumes, production design and performance. Oriental tropes draw from visual traits, metaphors and symbols that are linked with Asians and Asian Americans in the collective popular consciousness. The second refers to narrative and visual moments in the films that resemble those in East Asian feature and animated films. These definitions will be developed further in the next chapter and referred to again in subsequent chapters in discussions of *Blade Runner* and *The Matrix*.

My general argument is that as the presence of East Asian peoples in the US has increased and as East Asian countries, led primarily by Japan, have entered economic First World status, "oriental" imagery in cyberpunk cinema has changed. Oriental tropes

17

relegated to the background have been joined by less obvious oriental styles which are performed and spectacularized through non-Asian bodies in the foreground. While the transition renders racial difference more visible than in the past, it does so by representing that difference in certain commodified visual forms. My dissertation is concerned principally with the social and political ramifications of this stylized commodification.

CHAPTER BREAKDOWN

The dissertation consists of three parts. Part One, "Hollywood, Cyberpunk, and the 'Orient,'" sets the theoretical terms, methodological approach, and academic stakes of the study. It discusses how the intertextual systems of Orientalism and Hollywood negotiate the social and the aesthetic; how Orientalism plays out in media representations of Asians and Asian Americans; and how aspects of Orientalism fundamentally structure cyberpunk culture.

Chapter One, "The Hollywood Orient," locates this study within the existing body of scholarship on Orientalism, especially as it pertains to Asian American history. The chapter begins with a historical picture of East Asian presence in the US painted primarily through the ways in which immigration policies excluded and then conditionally included this group. It ends with a popular picture of East Asians in Hollywood cinema which both draws from and exists alongside the legal and social representation of East Asian Americans.

Chapter Two, "The Cyberpunk Orient" introduces the concept of "techno-orientalism" which connects the West's historical fear of and fascination with the East with its attitudes toward Japan from the 1980s onward as a kind of brave, new technological future. Drawing from recent work on race and cyberspace, this chapter

considers the significant role that techno-orientalism has played in the development of cyberpunk fiction and style. It ends with a definition of "cyberpunk cinema" as a subgenre of science fiction film that is closely related to cyberpunk fiction. Both envision the futuristic city as an interconnected network of high and low technologies, powerful corporate interests, and racially and sexually diverse subcultures.

Part Two, "Multicultural Nightmares" and Part Three, "Multiracial Dreams" employ the theoretical frameworks in Part One to look at the role of race in *Blade Runner* and *The Matrix* as cyberpunk films situated in 1980s New Hollywood and post 1980s Hollywood, respectively. More specifically, these sections consider how racial, gender, and class differences manifest in Hollywood depictions of the urban future, emphasizing the ideological function of oriental imagery within the constellation of such differences.

Chapter Three provides an analysis of the industrial and critical contexts of the film, including background on the film's adaptation from Philip Dick's novel, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, its pre-production and production, and popular reception. The chapter situates *Blade Runner* formally and politically in the 1980s New Hollywood cinema, noting the ways in which racial difference, when addressed in the high concept films of this period, often is reduced to postmodern decoration. This chapter ends by pointing out a similar attitude toward race in academic readings of *Blade Runner* and raises questions around how we can better address racial difference when it is not an explicit part of the primary narrative.

Chapter Four investigates why and how the *Blade Runner* city was imagined as predominantly East Asian, then goes on to analyze various expressions of the Oriental Other in the *mise-en-scène.* The first section examines the implicit cultural connections in the minds of the production crew between the modern East Asian city, especially Tokyo, and the vision of a foreign but not too threatening urban future which derived from

popular culture and personal experience, including in particular, representations of the Orient in film noir.

The second section locates the Oriental Other in the visual middle ground of the film where it is simultaneously visible (in relation to the invisible black bodies that haunt the film metaphorically) and conditionally visible (in relation to the hyper-visible white bodies on screen). More specifically, this section points out important connections between space, race, and power in the *mise-en-scène* by noting how different bodies are positioned in the *Blade Runner* city: white male bodies at the top and other kinds of raced and gendered bodies in varying degrees toward the bottom. The chapter ends by discussing three manifestations of the Oriental Other in the film – as human commodity in the secondary Asiatic characters; as commodified style in the mythologized Orient performed by the electronic geisha and the replicant Zhora; and as the Model Minority in the plight of the replicants who, like the orientalized city itself, straddle the middle ground between human and non-human, white and non-white.

Chapter Five introduces *The Matrix* as a film that in many ways echoes the style and themes of *Blade Runner* but receives a contrasting critical response due in large part to its successful incorporation of East Asian popular culture forms. This chapter summarizes the reception history of two such forms in the United States, Hong Kong action cinema and Japanese animation from the 1990s to the present, to provide a context for my analyses of their expression as oriental style in *The Matrix* in the following chapter.

Chapter Six discusses the ideological function of oriental styles in *The Matrix* with respect to shifts in attitudes toward racial difference since the early 1980s. It begins by noting thematic continuities between *Blade Runner* and *The Matrix,* including their questioning of the boundaries between human and object, self and other, the tension

between the pro-technological *mise-en-scène* and the anti-technological narrative, and the links in representations of technological and social others. The chapter then points out the central difference between the films which can be summed up as follows. Whereas *Blade Runner* makes over the Technological Other (embodied in the replicants) in the image of the white liberal human subject, *The Matrix* through its *mise-en-scène* and the explicitly and implicitly racialized and technologized bodies of its principal characters, questions the social construction of that subject at the purely visual, if not explicitly narrative, level.

I demonstrate this contrast through readings of Keanu Reeves's Neo as a different kind of multiracial hero that is simultaneously raced and not-raced, human and machine, *vis-à-vis* Morpheus who represents the multi-hued "real" human world and Agent Smith who represents the predominantly white technologized Matrix. Like Olmos's multiracial Gaff in *Blade Runner*, Neo embodies the orientalized *mise-en-scène* of *The Matrix*. Unlike Gaff, however, Neo is able to pass as mostly white and assumes a principal role in the narrative. This chapter considers the larger shifts in attitudes toward racial and Oriental Others that are suggested by the changes in the representation of oriental imagery, technology, and raced and not-raced bodies in *The Matrix*.

The Conclusion attempts to answer the central research questions of the dissertation by summing up the dominant patterns and themes that emerge in these case studies around cyberpunk cinema, Orientalism, and racial dynamics in the United States. It poses new questions for future scholarship and suggests some strategies for mapping new research approaches to Orientalism, race, and popular media in Asian American Studies, Ethnic Studies, and Film and Media Studies.

Chapter One

The Hollywood Orient

East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet,
Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God's great Judgment Seat.

      -- Rudyard Kipling[v]

I'm turning Japanese
I think I'm turning Japanese
I really think so.

      -- The Vapors[vi]

INTRODUCTION

Hollywood is full of visual references to East Asia as the Orient and to East Asians and Asian Americans as "Orientals." We could begin with silent cinema and three striking images of such Orientals, all set in lush, decadent *mise-en-scène*. *The Cheat* (De Mille 1915) opens with a close-up of the Thai merchant, Haka Araku (Sessue Hayakawa), his face underlit in sinister fashion. Araku, who appears in the following scene looking modern and civilized in a sporty white tennis outfit, here strokes his brander and lasciviously appraises his collection of luxury items. In *Broken Blossoms* (Griffith 1919) the white child Lucy Burrows (Lillian Gish) lies, innocent and helpless, amid the *chinoiserie* of the fawning, potentially pedophilic Chinese merchant, Cheng Huan (Richard Barthelmess in yellowface), who lurks in the margins of the frame. Finally, in *The Thief of Baghdad* (Walsh 1924) the evil Mongol slave girl (Anna May

22

Wong) glances furtively left and right as she brews up trouble for the white protagonists. Her sinewy profile dances with evil, erotic intent in the expressive chiaroscuro lighting.

Moving on to the talkies, the treachery of Elsa Bannister (Rita Hayworth), the Chinese speaking femme fatale, is revealed in the dark, disorienting alleys of Chinatown in the final scene of *The Lady from Shanghai* (Welles 1947). In *The World of Suzie Wong* (Quine 1960) down and out artist Robert Lomax (William Holden) watches the childlike prostitute Suzie (Nancy Kwan) dance provocatively for American sailors in a run-down Hong Kong brothel-hotel. Finally, *Chinatown* (Polanski 1972) ends tragically in the night streets of Chinatown which are filled with silent and expressionless East Asian faces. Jake, the hard-boiled protagonist (Jack Nicholson) realizes he is unable to fight the political, moral, and sexual corruption of the Los Angeles elite (John Huston) when one of his operatives cryptically advises, "Forget it, Jake. It's Chinatown."

Some contemporary oriental images in Hollywood include nerdy, technologically gifted kid, Data (Jonathan Ke Quan) jabbering in pidgin English as his Anglo-American friends watch with bemused expressions in *The Goonies* (Donner 1985); Chinese American anchorwoman Tracy Tzu (Ariane) apparently enjoying being forced to have sex with the bigoted Polish American cop Stanley White (Mickey Rourke) in *Year of the Dragon* (Cimino 1985); blue-collar autoworkers in *Gung Ho* (Howard 1986) doing morning exercises under the direction of their new white-collar Japanese bosses; Alex, the Asian American angel (Lucy Liu), in corporate dominatrix gear disciplining a class of computer nerds in *Charlie's Angels* (McG 2000); and the North Korean villain, Colonel Moon (Will Yun Lee) in *Die Another Day* (Tamahori 2002) performing an inversion of yellowface when he transforms himself into a white power broker through racial plastic surgery.

This chapter references Said's notion of orientalism to begin investigating where these Hollywood representations of East Asia and East Asians come from and why they continue to be reproduced in various forms. It examines expressions of Orientalism in two interconnected spheres: the history of East Asian immigration to the US and that of East Asian depictions in Hollywood. In the process, the chapter provides some historical contexts for the representation of East Asians in the US These contexts help ground the discussion of techno-orientalism and cyberpunk cinema in the next chapter and the analyses of oriental imagery in *Blade Runner* and *The Matrix* that follow in Parts Two and Three.

ORIENTALISM

In many ways, my project is both an extension and an application of Edward Said's seminal study of Orientalism which he summed up thus:

> I study Orientalism as a dynamic exchange between individual authors and the large political concerns shaped by the three great empires – British, French, American – in whose intellectual and imaginative territory the writing was produced. … My principal methodological devices for studying authority here are what can be called *strategic location,* which is a way of describing the author's position in a text with regard to the Oriental material he writes about, and *strategic formation,* which is a way of analyzing the relationship between texts and the way in which groups of texts, types of texts, even textual genres, acquire mass, density, and referential power among themselves and thereafter in the culture at large (15, 20).

Said draws from Michel Foucualt's notion of discourse and Antonio Gramsci's elaboration of hegemony to show that the power of Orientalism derives precisely from its *productiveness* as a cultural discourse (14). As a textualized inventory of Western representations of the East, Orientalism continues to appear in and influence how

Western and increasingly Eastern cultures view Asia. Said then was concerned primarily with the following question: how do the broad ideological forces underlying Orientalism manage to reproduce themselves from one period to another?

My study continues Said's investigation but does so along four different axes. First, I analyze the cultural production of popular visual media, specifically Hollywood science fiction films, rather than that of literary and philosophical texts such as those by Flaubert, Marx, and other European authors. Second, I consider the sociopolitical context of the US in the so-called Era of Globalization rather than those of Britain and France in the Age of Empire. Third, I focus on representations of the East Asian Orient – predominantly China and Japan – rather than those of the Middle Eastern Orient which ground Said's study. Finally, unlike Said, who uses a large number of diverse narrative and visual texts to build and reinforce his thesis, I choose to center on two contemporary US films. Rather than limiting my exploration of oriental imagery, this approach provides fresh insight into the increasingly intertextual nature of Hollywood films with regards to their incorporation of racial, cultural, and national difference. Close readings of *Blade Runner* and *The Matrix* from multiple theoretical and disciplinary angles reveal a wide *field* of new oriental imagery not only in US cinema but also in international popular media culture where one finds various permutations of the "Orient" which simultaneously are influenced by and exert influence on popular trends in North America.

To these various axes, I attempt to apply Said's theoretical model and those of other scholars who have drawn from his work to discuss East Asian Orientalism in the context of Asian American studies. I am thinking in particular here of *Orientals* by Robert Lee, *New York before Chinatown* by John Tchen, and *Thinking Orientals* by Henry Yu. Like these studies, my research generates questions around Orientalism in the US context, and more specifically in the realm of contemporary popular media.

Before those questions can be posed, one needs to have some idea of what is meant by the term, "Orientalism." Below is Said's definition:

> A *distribution* of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts … a certain *will* or *intention* to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even to incorporate, what is a manifestly different (or alternative and novel) world; it is, above all, a discourse that is by no means in direct, corresponding relationship with political power in the raw, but rather is produced and exists in an uneven exchange with various kinds of power (12).

Rather than confining Orientalism to a particular group of texts or field of interest, Said treats it as a set of political and cultural strategies that the West has used to simplify and subordinate the East as its mythic, feminized other. This simplification and subordination is achieved through a double movement. On the one hand, Orientalism lumps different ethnicities, nations, and cultures from the widely diverse Asian continent into one category, "the Orient," as Said shows through various literary and historical examples in *Orientalism* (49-53, 207). On the other hand, it fragments this "Orient" into what Lisa Lowe has called "manageable parts" (*Critical Terrains* 3, Said 72, 119-123). In both instances, the recorded and lived histories of the cultures and peoples being represented are decontextualized and re-ordered for the gaze and use of the West.

These two sides of Orientalism are exemplified in my formulation of oriental tropes and styles. As I noted in the Introduction, oriental tropes are new variations on old stereotypes, a superficial mode of appropriating Asian difference which is treated as faceless, monolithic and interchangeable. In that sense, these tropes can be seen as representing the first homogenizing movement of Orientalism. Examples of oriental tropes include treacherous Dragon Ladies, subservient geishas and the whore with a heart of gold; smoky opium dens in quaint Chinatowns, surreal, war-torn urban jungles, spare

dojos, and neon-lit alleyways; the childlike coolie, the kamikaze pilot, the Model Minority, the Tong, the Yakuza, and the martial arts killing machine.

At the same time, oriental styles, the multiple reiterations of specific aesthetic acts by individual filmmakers and artists, represent the enumerative and fragmented aspect of Orientalism. One recognizes the frozen side-profile of the double-gunned action hero less as an overarching trope of some generic Asian culture than as the distinct cinematic signature of the Hong Kong director John Woo. The trademark is as easy to spot in the performance of Chow Yun Fat as that of Tom Cruise, and discernible in the work of filmmakers Quentin Tarantino, the Wachowski brothers and McG. As Woo's stylistic flourishes have been accepted by and incorporated into western filmmaking circles, they have become "culturally deodorized" to borrow a recent turn of phrase form Koichi Iwabuchi which will appear again in Chapter Five (Iwabuchi 24-35). To put it simply, oriental styles appear to be associated more with an auteur than his ethnic, racial or national background. At the same time, however, such supposedly individual styles usually become representative of the region from which the artist hails, if the artist happens to be non-Western.

What one finds in the production and circulation of both oriental tropes and oriental styles then is not simply an unadulterated practice of white racism but patterns of white privilege that exist in conjunction with and embedded within the process of homage among filmmakers. The line between homage and appropriation blurs in the current hierarchy of power where Hollywood movies still dominate the international film market (Elsassaer 16-17, Miller et. al. 3-8, Prince 3-4). Additionally, subcultural styles that manage to cross over successfully into the Hollywood paradigm usually focus on visual and visceral elements which are considered the least relevant to character development and viewer identification.

I argue that we should not simply interpret the oriental tropes that pervade the *mise-en-scène* in these films as quaint background and the oriental styles in the foreground as moments of rupture that are always contained by the primary narrative. Such pat interpretations fail to recognize the significant role of the more subtle visual narratives in the *mise-en-scène* that sometimes support and at other times contradict the plot. A counterpoint to that kind of reading, this study endeavors to examine oriental tropes and styles critically – as formal conventions that draw from and affect social perceptions of East Asian peoples and cultures. My premise here is that US films display particular elements of East Asian popular cultures for a global audience that possesses familiarity with the Hollywood narrative paradigm and those tropes and imagery. Rising from that premise is the following question: where and how does that familiarity originate and continue to be reproduced? The next two sections try to answer that question by looking at legal and cultural manifestations of Orientalism in the United States.

EAST ASIAN IMMIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES

In American legal and popular discourse, people of East Asian descent consistently have been regarded as agents of the Yellow Peril, a fear of Asians taking over Western civilization that dates back to Genghis Khan's invasions of Europe in thirteenth century. William Wu elaborates on the Yellow Peril thus:

> The fear of this threat focuses on specific issues, including possible military invasion from Asia, perceived competition to the white labor force from Asian workers, the alleged moral degeneracy of Asian people, and the potential genetic mixing of Anglo-Saxons with Asians, who were considered a biologically inferior race by some intellectuals of the nineteenth century (1).

Richard Thompson traces the modern notion of the Yellow Peril to an illustration of Asian hordes destroying various signifiers of Western civilization, which Kaiser William II commissioned in 1895 and sent as gifts to European royalty and President McKinley. Around this time Social Darwinism, Malthusian population studies, anxieties around the sustainability of imperialism and social panics concerning Chinese immigration were coalescing in the United States to produce an American version of the Yellow Peril. Individuals like Brooks Adams, Charles Pearson, Madison Grant and Lothrop Stoddard hypothesized that given limited natural resources, population growth in Asian countries, and the "natural" inclinations for the "primitive" races to dominate the more recessive and "superior" Nordic race, an unchecked Asia could initiate a world war which would pit people of color against Anglo-Saxons (1-62).

The exclusionary laws that denied most Asian immigrants citizenship until 1965 demonstrate the material consequences of this xenophobia. Allowed conditional admission to the country as cheap, temporary labor and then denied admission altogether, Chinese Americans – and later, by extension, other East Asian and South Asian immigrants were physically and psychically dehumanized – stripped not only of their legal and economic rights but their individual humanity as well. The shared immigration history among various East Asian, South Asian, and Southeast Asian groups provides one of the few common bases upon which the Asian American community was and continues to be produced as a social, cultural, and political entity in the US. The following section reviews this immigration history, focusing on East Asians, to give a sociopolitical context for representations of this group in US popular culture.

Before 1965

In *New York before Chinatown,* John Tchen describes national attitudes toward China before the mid nineteenth century as a mythologized and somewhat reverent one, characterized by American desire for Chinese luxury goods. According to Tchen, such goods played an important role in helping to define the figure of the post-revolution bourgeois individual in the new nation: "Increasingly, budding capitalists were able to pursue individual wealth in the marketplace, unfettered by the customary obligations to lord or monarch. Possessing luxuries from 'the Orient' was one means by which well-being came to be measure. Hence, the pursuit of 'life, liberty, and happiness' in this middle-class nation also became the pursuit of consumable luxuries" (xvii). Tchen's study discusses specific historical events and developments in the Chinese American community in New York City between 1776 (the founding of the US) and 1882 (the institution of the Chinese Exclusion Acts). During this period, attitudes toward East Asia shifted from an admiration of oriental goods to a hatred of oriental bodies as substantial numbers of Chinese laborers began to immigrate to the West Coast (xv).

The first large wave of Asian immigrants to arrive in the mainland United States consisted of male Chinese merchants, tradesmen, skilled laborers, and farmers. Like European immigrants, they came to strike it rich in the Gold Rush of 1849. By 1853 approximately 22,000 Chinese had arrived in California. The number of immigrants decreased in the early 1850s as the appeal of the Gold Rush dwindled and stayed level until the 1860s when the next wave of immigrants arrived at San Francisco's Angel Island to work as farmers and railroad laborers in California and other parts of the Southwest (Lee 22).

At the time California represented the last vestiges of the American Frontier and its associations with physical, economic and legal freedoms. As more ethnic immigrants,

30

particularly the Chinese, started settling in California, and as the country entered the era of industrial capitalism, white nativists began to express anti-Asian sentiments in rhetoric nostalgically invoking the lost frontier. Rather than being allowed to share in the immigrants' American dream, the Chinese were elided with the new technologies that characterized machine-run labor. In this way, they became popular physical markers of the mass industrialization that threatened the livelihoods and lifestyles of a white, male working-class. Robert Lee sums up the process as follows:

> Identified with the entering wedge of industrial capitalism, the Chinese came to embody all of the dislocations of Western settlement. The coming of the Chinese became a symbol for the break between a pastoral past and the commercial future … Chinese immigration became a metonym for the collapse of time and space produced by the transition to industrial capitalism, a collapse that constituted a boundary crisis within the symbolic or ideological structure of the American society (31-32).

To put it another way, the influx of Chinese immigrants brought Asia, which hitherto had been the stuff of fantasy, into the quotidian lives of white Americans. What had been charming from a distance suddenly became dangerous – the Yellow Peril embodied – when it landed in one's home and workplace.

In his history of Asian settlement in America, Ronald Takaki notes how the government tried to contain the perceived threat by denying the racialized Chinese immigrants a legitimate place in the national social and political body:

> [The Chinese] would be in effect a unique, transnational industrial reserve army of migrant laborers forced to be foreigners forever … Unlike white immigrants such as the Irish, Italians, and Poles, the Chinese would be a politically proscribed group. Part of America's process of production, they would not be allowed to become part of her body politic (99).

31

The United States government passed a number of laws beginning in the late nineteenth century prohibiting admission to the Chinese and other Asian ethnic groups. Those that managed to enter the country were denied basic human rights such as the right to vote and to own property. Meanwhile, American companies exploited the immigrants' labor and used them as strikebreaker "coolies" to maintain existing class and race hegemonies. Doing so, of course, alienated the Chinese immigrants even further from white ethnic laborers.

Popular national hatred of Asians culminated in the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 which prohibited the immigration of Chinese laborers and denied naturalization to those already living in the country. In 1888 the Act was broadened to include Chinese of all occupations and was extended four years later for another fourteen years. Subsequent exclusionary legislation was passed against South Asians in 1917, Koreans and Japanese in 1924, and Filipinos in 1934 (Lowe, *Immigrant* 7). The Exclusion Acts are climatic points on a long timeline of legal actions designed to deny Asian and other immigrants of color inclusion in the American "melting pot." This was in sharp contrast to their white ethnic counterparts, who were able to assimilate in the fullest sense, if not in the first generation, then in the second or third. Shared physiognomic characteristics with the descendents of the Founding Fathers helped white ethnics to pass racially and reinvent themselves as part of the dominant culture.

Such racial passing was impossible for most Asians immigrants as it was for people of African and Latin American descent for two reasons. First, people of color in the United States historically have been treated as second-class citizens, if citizens at all. Overwhelmingly denied access to economic, cultural and political capital, they have had to form their own subcultural networks to survive. Second, legal and cultural taboos have surrounded, and to some extent, continue to surround the social and sexual mixing of

32

non-whites with whites. The first antimiscegenation law was passed in Maryland in 1661, and California passed its antimiscegenation laws in 1880, not too long before the Chinese Exclusion Acts. On the national level, the Cable Act, passed in 1922 stated that any female citizen of the United States who married a foreign national would lose her citizenship (Chan 59-61, 106, Lowe, *Immigrant* 187).

In 1870 Congress passed the Page Act which prohibited the entrance of "Chinese, Japanese and Mongolian women" on the pretext of eliminating the Asian prostitution trade. However, instead of curtailing the illegal traffic in women (which had been exaggerated to begin with in the popular press), the Act made it even more difficult for Chinese wives to reunite with their husbands in the United States. The Page Act served to keep the Chinese population disproportionately male and single, thus perpetuating the Chinese bachelor societies and precluding the development of stable and permanent Chinese American communities. Lacking Chinese women and denied access to white women, Chinese men were forced to assume a state of arrested social and sexual development (Chan 54). They became "eunuchs" in the popular perception. This legacy continues in a perceived absence or repression of masculinity, which is often associated with East Asian men in the United States (Mura 17). Meanwhile Asian women, due to their scarcity and perceived passivity, remained "exotic." According to Lee, he majority of the Chinese women in the country at the time were prostitutes (89-90).

The situation changed during World War II and the Cold War which brought US troops to South Korea (1950-1953) and Vietnam (1965-1973). This period saw the passage of the so called Repealer Acts: the Magnuson Act (1943), the War Brides Act (1945) and the McCarran Walters Act (1952). The Magnuson Act finally made Chinese immigrants and residents eligible for citizenship by repealing the Exclusion Act of 1882. It was followed by exclusion repeal acts for Filipinos and South Asians in 1946, the same

year that the Philippines won national independence from its US protectorate. The Magnuson Act granted Chinese Americans naturalization rights but continued to limit the number of visas issued to Asians at 105 annually. On the surface the Act appeared to mark a shift in national attitudes toward Asian immigrants. However, its passage was due mostly to the government's need to woo China as a wartime ally. Exclusionary laws against the Chinese severely undercut the liberal image that the US wanted to present to the world. Consequently, what changed during World War II was not so much the paradigm of racial discrimination against Asians but rather, in the specific ethnic group that was targeted, from the Chinese to the Japanese.

The War Brides Act which gave nonquota status to foreign wives of American military personnel was amended in 1947 to include wives from Japan and China. While it was in effect from 1946 to 1952, 6,000 Chinese and 45,000 Japanese wives of American servicemen entered the country. They were followed by the majority of Korean and Filipino military wives after 1952. The gender ratio of Asians in the United States was inverted in the 1960s and 1970s as the number of female immigrants superseded those of male immigrants (Lee 162). Finally, the McCarran-Walter Act extended naturalization rights to all Asian groups (Lowe, *Immigrant* 20). However, it placed quotas on Asian immigration, restricting to 2000 the number of annual visas for immigrants from the Asian continent and the Pacific Islands, an area formerly known as the Asiatic Barred Zone and renamed the Asia Pacific Triangle (Hing 37-38).

After 1965

Presidents Truman and Eisenhower both opposed the quota system in the McCarran Walter Act because it exposed a crack in the image of the United States as a racially liberal nation-state qualified to lead the capitalist world against the "Red

Menace" of communism. According to Paul Ong and John Liu, the following three factors facilitated the passage of the 1965 Immigration Act: a robust domestic economy (unemployment was only at 4.5 percent); the Civil Rights movement which had helped to pass the Civil Rights Act (1964) and the Voting Rights Act (1965); and the perception that the elimination of the Asia Pacific Triangle would not lead to significant immigration from Asia (159). The dramatic increase in the number of Asian immigrants that followed the passage of the Act quickly disproved this prediction: the Asian American population grew from 1.4 million in 1970 to 8.8 million in 1994 (Lee 187-188).

The Act issued 20,000 visas to all non-Western countries regardless of the size of the host nation. It highly favored family reunification – reserving 80 percent of the visas for relatives of citizens and permanent residents, and conferring nonquota status to the parents of citizens. It also encouraged immigration by the professional middle class (PMC) through the third and sixth categories which were reserved for qualified professionals with bachelors and advanced degrees in certain fields (particularly engineering and health) and other skilled and unskilled workers (Hing 38-41). Finally, the seventh category covered immigrants who were refugees fleeing Communist regimes. Dislocated Southeast Asians dominated this category from 1981 to 1988 when 70 percent of 867,000 refugees arrived from Cambodia and South Vietnam (Ong and Liu 160).

Post-1965 Asian immigration to the US has differed from preceding immigration waves in terms of class, national and gender composition. The third and sixth categories of the Act reflect the national demand in 1965 for foreign labor to fill positions in engineering, science and health. The US needed topnotch researchers in science and technology to win the international arms race while privatization of health care at home required more doctors and nurses. However, in the late 1960s and 1970s, few citizens were qualified to fill these positions due to government cuts in education. The possibility

of educating those from the working class to work in these fields was ignored in favor of hiring foreign-trained immigrants – mostly from India, China and the Newly Industrialized Countries (NICs) of East Asia – Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore and South Korea. Unlike earlier Asian immigrants of whom the majority had been working class, this new group of PMC immigrants arrived with considerable economic and cultural capital. Its members constituted the "brain drain" that occurred in developing, non-western countries during the 1970s (Ong, Bonacich, and Cheng 8-16).

These "pull" factors for PMC immigration were supplemented by "push" factors or social and economic forces in the host country that made America an attractive immigration option. For the most part, the PMC already had been exposed to US culture and ideology in their home countries through the presence of American transnational corporations, military forces and mass media. They were familiar with and often desirous of the individualist consumer lifestyle associated with American culture. Many had also participated in educational programs in the US and found their newly acquired western ideas and methods to be useless in the homeland. Finally, North America offered more economic opportunities than did their still developing home countries (Ong, Bonacich, and Cheng 26-29).

By the 1980s, when the second generation of the PMC was entering the upper echelons of the American educational system, working class, immigrant women – mostly from Latin America and Asia – replaced the PMC as the primary entering group. Proletarianized female laborers comprise the majority of new immigrants from Asia today. Once here, these women are hired in the garment, custodial and high tech industries to perform menial labor, often in subhuman conditions for minimal pay (Lowe, *Immigrant* 14-16). Their labor is crucial in the new economy of "flexible accumulation" that has accompanied the shift from a production-focused economy to a service-oriented

one (Watkins 17-24). The demand for cheap immigrant labor has led to resurgence in anti-immigrant nativism and spurred the passage of laws restricting immigration such as the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act, the 1990 Immigration Act, California's Proposition 186 in 1994 and Proposition 209 in 1997. Lisa Lowe notes the similarities in contemporary situation of these subaltern immigrant women and that of Chinese male immigrants ("coolie labor") in the mid 1880s:

> If the nineteenth-century racialized and gendered formation of Chinese male immigrants as laborers sublated the contradictions between the imperatives of capitalism and the state, then these contradictions reemerge in the demographic composition of the post-1965 Asian immigrant group, a group still racialized and exploited yet complicated by class and gender stratification (*Immigrant* 16).

The diversity that has always characterized Asian immigrant groups has proliferated in the early twenty-first century. At present Asian Americans run the gamut in terms of class, gender, sexuality, national background, political affiliation, and educational level. These divisions are evident even within a single ethnic group. For example, Korean Americans define themselves differently according to generation, region, and class. Aside from country of origin and some phenotypic similarities, a second generation Korean American female working as a management consultant in New York would appear to have little in common with a first generation Korean military wife in Texas, a Korean international graduate student in Indiana, or a second generation Korean American liquor store owner in Los Angeles.

When one tries to draw links between different Asian ethnic groups, the picture grows even more complicated. Unlike African Americans who have a longer and shared history of oppression in this country and Latinos who speak the same language (albeit with different dialects and accents), Asian Americans have little in common except for

the similar ways that they have been perceived and treated by the dominant culture. Indeed, the same ethnic groups that may bond under the umbrella of an imagined Asian American community in the United States sometimes have long histories of conflict in their home countries. The classic example here is the national antagonism between Japan and Korea which reaches back to General Hideyoshi's invasion of Korea in the 16th century and extends to the Japanese Occupation of Korea from 1910 to 1945. Furthermore, Chinese and Southeast Asian minorities currently are considered secondary citizens in Korea while Korean minorities assume that role in Japan.

Yet when members of these ethnic groups arrive in the United States, they all fall under the same racial category of "Asian." The dichotomy here is interesting. Sociopolitically, Asian America is a collective identity that is neither clearly defined nor easily recognizable. Culturally, however, certain popular stereotypes continue to reproduce and perpetuate a monolithic image of Asian Americans as for instance, East Asian (rather than South Asian or Middle Eastern), foreign, wealthy, and highly educated. In the Introduction I identified a few of the stereotypes that have been imposed on East Asian Americans in US popular media; in the following section, I will draw from theories on stereotyping to discuss how and why these stereotypes were produced and continue to be disseminated.

HOLLYWOOD AND STEREOTYPES

In "The Other Question" Homi Bhabha defines the stereotype as "a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always 'in place,' already known and something that must be anxiously repeated" (66). This vacillation allows the stereotype to be reproduced in different social and historical contexts. According to

Bhabha, the constant *repetition* of the "common sense" knowledge which is fixed and embodied in the stereotype reifies that knowledge as truth (75).

Charles Ramírez Berg describes how this process plays out in Hollywood cinema:

> It could be argued that Hollywood rarely claims that the characters in its films are meant to be taken literally (and therefore seriously), or ever meant to be representative of entire social groups. Rather, this line of argument goes, Hollywood is simply telling stories, and the characters within its films serve a narrational function, not a representational one (10).

He goes on to note that ethnic stereotypes like the *Bandido*, the Mammy, or the Dragon Lady become shorthand narratives for the group with which the stereotype is identified. The danger here lies in the emptying and invention of a people's past by people in the entertainment industry who want to save time and make money. What remains are shriveled, one-dimensional representations of that people and their history, frequently amounting to physical and cultural caricatures which in turn, affect how members of the group are perceived and treated in the social sphere. As Ella Shohat notes, these ideological representations have material consequences, especially in a world interconnected through the virtual exchange of texts and images:

> It is a commonplace to say that the media in the postmodern era play a fundamental role in shaping one's identifications and affiliations. By experiencing their bond to people never actually seen, consumers of electronic media can be affected by traditions to which they have no ancestral connection. Thus the media can play a role not only in exoticizing other cultures but also in normalizing them (168).

Building on Shohat's observation, one might ask how a marginal culture becomes normalized and to what extent an exoticizing tendency remains in the normalization

39

process. Here Foucault's notion of the normalizing gaze proves useful in that it helps to explain the double movement of exoticization and naturalization in the reproduction of stereotypes. In *Discipline and Punish* Foucault introduces the notion of the normalizing gaze as the authoritative gaze of the subject which objectifies the other in order to know and control its difference: "the normalizing gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify and to punish. It establishes over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates and judges them" (25). In *Justice and the Politics of Difference* Iris Marion Young provides the following excellent description of the integral role that this concept plays in cultural imperialism:

> Cultural imperialism consists in a group's being invisible at the same time that it is marked out and stereotyped. Culturally imperialist groups project their own values, experience, and perspective as normative and universal. Victims of cultural imperialism are thereby rendered invisible as subjects, as persons with their own perspective and group-specific experience and interests. At the same time they are marked out, frozen into a being marked as Other, deviant in relation to the dominant norm. The dominant groups need not notice their own group being at all; they occupy an unmarked, neutral, apparently universal position. But victims of cultural imperialism cannot forget their group identity because the behavior and reactions of others call them back to it (123).

This dehumanizing gaze also distances the subject/self not only from the object/other but also from potential traits of the other *within itself* which the subject wishes to disown and expel. The necessity of the stereotype as a meaning-making device hinges on this last point. According to Young, Bhabha, and others, what accounts for the contradictions in the construction and deployment of stereotypes is the repressed truth that the self and the other may actually be quite similar. To illustrate this point, Young draws from Julia Kristeva's concept of the abject as the "moment of separation, the border between the 'I' and the other, before an 'I' is formed" (143). In Kristeva's

formulation the "abject" is figured as the unrepresentable, maternal body that the infant is hesitant to leave but from which it must separate to become a subject in the symbolic realm. According to Young, the mixture of aversion and fascination that the infant feels toward the abject (i.e. the alien yet familiar body of its mother) also characterize the feelings of the representing subject toward its projection of the Other. In the case of xenophobia, the abject can be read as the fragile border between the Self and the Other which must be policed constantly to keep the identity of the former intact:

> The expelled self turns into a loathsome menace because it threatens to reenter, to obliterate the obrder established between it and the separated self. The separation is tenuous, the subject feels it as a loss and yearns for, while rejecting, a reenclosure by the Other. The defense of the separated self, the means of keeping the border firm, is aversion from the Other, repulsion, for fear of disintegration (Young 144).

Likewise, in her analysis of *Flower Drum Song* Ann Cheng observes, "the intended disgust (of the dominant norm for its marginal other) comes not from the fixity of the stereotype but from the dissolution of the boundary effected by the stereotype" (40).

Hollywood has a long history of trying to enforce the tenuous boundaries between dominant and marginal groups. Derogatory representations of people of color in early Hollywood films were shaped by industrial measures such as the Production Code (1934-1965); casting practices like blackface and yellowface where white actors played black and Asian characters, respectively, or putting actors of one ethnic group in the roles of another; and stories that consistently killed off or assimilated the racial other to ensure the neat closure required by the classical Hollywood paradigm. At the same time, the stereotypes that became institutionalized and thus normalized came from social

41

perceptions of an ethnic group which were grounded in specific political, economic and historical events and developments.

East Asian faces and bodies only recently have started to appear with some regularity on the big and small screens. One obvious reason for this dearth of representation is that very few Asian people lived in the United States for most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries due to strict legal restrictions aimed at immigrants from Asia. Exclusion laws described in the previous section kept the Asian American population tiny: Asian Americans comprised only 0.3 percent of the total population in 1900 and 0.7 percent in 1970. The situation changed dramatically between 1971 and 1995 when 17.1 million immigrants, 90% from Asia and Latin America, entered the United States. The number of immigrants from this period almost equals that of those who arrived at the peak of US immigration during the first quarter of the last century: 17.2 million, mostly from Europe. Consequently, people identifying as Asian now comprise approximately 4% of the total US population (Zhou and Gatewood 13-14). Numerically, Asian Americans are joining rapidly the ranks of Latinos and African Americans as a viable voting bloc and desirable consumer market.

The growing number of Asian Americans, like those of Latinos, suggests the need, in the political, popular and academic spheres, to rethink the binaristic framing of racial relations in the United States. As Michael Omi and Harold Winant have noted, the dominant paradigm for race and ethnicity in America has elided race with blackness and ethnicity with whiteness (14-24). With roots in the ideology of liberal humanism, this paradigm has assumed that, whether biologically or culturally based, difference is marked, fixed, quantifiable and therefore, categorizable. At the same time, liberal humanism likens equality to similitude, positing that since Blacks and Whites, women

42

and men, homosexuals and heterosexuals essentially are the same (i.e. "human"), they should have the same access to various forms of institutional power.

While this logic has contributed to important legal gains for marginal groups in the United States, members of these groups continue to experience a nebulous and pervasive kind of discrimination that exists at the more visceral level of lived experience. As Iris Marion Young states, "rhetorical commitment to the sameness of persons makes it impossible even to name how those differences presently structure privilege and oppression" (164). Furthermore, that rhetorical commitment implicitly continues to define the "norm" or the "standard" through the terms of the Enlightenment -- as male, white, bourgeois, and able-bodied heterosexuals.

Young and other scholars such as Kobena Mercer (1994), Lauren Berlant (1997), and Michael Warner (1999) have argued that the assumed existence of a fixed standard of "humanness" leads to a disregard for the differences between and within the members of both marginal and dominant groups. A marginal group that does not acknowledge its differences within and without its borders risks permitting the power structure to reproduce the colonial legacy of "divide-and-conquer." Such a group also risks alienating those members that do not conform totally to its standards of "authenticity." At the same time, the dominant group retains its invisible and central position as the norm. To sum up, by emphasizing a static, monolithic notion of the self, classical liberal humanism fails to acknowledge the multiplicities and contradictions within marginal *and* dominant groups.

In this light, the growing Asian American community can be considered a sort of experimental work-in-progress. In "Heterogeneity, Hybridity, Multiplicity," Lisa Lowe proposes that recognition of the diversity in Asian America can provide an identity position for Asian Americans that is ethnically specific and, at the same time, open enough for members to identify with other groups. Her theoretical model challenges the

binary of nationalism and assimilation in earlier Asian American activism and scholarship. It does so by suggesting that we embrace elements of Asian American identity and experience which have been denigrated as "non-human" such as fragmentation, division, contradiction, multiplicity, adaptability, and that we use them instead to conceptualize differently terms such as "American" and "human," "community" and "solidarity" (680-685). Rather than relying on *vertical* modes of community formation which are built on a unified notion of self that is tied to others through fixed, genealogical ties, Lowe imagines Asian America as a *horizontal* network of multiple, constantly changing selves.

Recently, Rachel Lee and Sau-ling Wong have drawn a provocative parallel between this conceptualization of Asian America and the Internet as an imagined community. Their analogy will be explored in the following chapter. Before moving toward the future of Asian America, on and offline, however, it is important first to take some account of its past.

EAST ASIAN IMAGES

In her one-woman show and independent film, *I'm the One that I Want*, comedian Margaret Cho makes the following quip about the lack of Asian faces on television during her formative years in the 1970s and 1980s.

> When I was growing up, I never saw Asian people on television. Oh, except on *M*A*S*H* sometimes. Every once in a while on *M*A*S*H,* sometimes you would see an Asian person in the background unloading a truck. Then there was *Kung Fu.* But that doesn't really count because David Carradine, the star of *Kung Fu,* was not Chinese. So that show should not have been called *Kung Fu.* It should have been called *Hey, That Guy's Not Chinese*! (Coleman 2000)

44

At Cho's Austin and Los Angeles shows in 1999 and 2000, these lines never failed to elicit roars of laughter. With her usual deadpan humor, Cho had stated something obvious to everyone in the audience: until quite recently, East Asian Americans have been invisible in US popular media. When they have appeared, it usually has been as gross caricatures played by white actors in yellowface or as flat, marginal characters with stock traits such as poor or accented English which mark them as permanent foreigners.

Scholars in Asian American studies such as Eugene Wong (1978), Gina Marchetti (1993), Darrell Hamamoto (1994), and Robert Lee (1999) have tended to treat these characters as ideological barometers for popular perceptions of Asians and Asian Americans in the United States. By pointing out the presence and continuation of Asian stereotypes in mainstream cinema, analyses of this sort perform a valuable academic and political role. At the same time, most of this scholarship is concerned primarily with exposing moments of overtly racist stereotyping in Hollywood films. Unfortunately, this approach sometimes precludes a more subtle examination of the contradictory and ambivalent ways that these films deal with racial, cultural, and national difference.

Another strand of inquiry in Asian American film studies has focused on the production and reception of Asian American independent cinema from the 1960s to the present. This approach is exemplified in studies by Russell Leong (1991), Jun Xing (1998), and Peter Feng (2002). The majority of this scholarship has centered on documentaries, shorts, and art house features, reflecting the dominant genres in Asian American cinema. Again, such studies perform a crucial political and intellectual function by illuminating alternative images and stories of Asian Pacific Americans. However, this scholarship is limited in two ways. First, the audience for Asian American independent cinema – like those for African American and Latino independent films – woefully continues to be a small one, consisting primarily of artists, activists,

45

intellectuals, and students fortunate enough to take an Asian American or ethnic studies class. Second, while recent scholarship has started to investigate the diasporic ties between Asian American communities and their home countries in Asia, it continues for the most part to stress the "American" over the "Asian" part of Asian America. This tendency fails to take into account the growing number of recent "Asian Americans" who consider themselves transnational – equally comfortable in the US and Taiwan, India, the Philippines, Vietnam, Japan, Hong Kong, or Korea.

Both approaches to the representation of East Asians and East Asian Americans in cinema have not addressed a socially and aesthetically *embedded* mode of depicting Asiatic peoples, places, and cultures on the silver screen. Again, I am referring here to the positioning of primarily East Asian-looking bodies, props, costumes, and architecture within and as the background in a broad spectrum of Hollywood films – from the screwball musical, *Thoroughly Modern Millie* (Hill 1967), to the neo-noir classic, *Chinatown*, to the videogame-based action movie, *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider* (West 2001).

While this orientalist imagery and iconography has existed in Hollywood since its incipiency, it has become increasingly visible in the past few years. Even as the number of Asiatic faces and bodies, primarily as "window dressing," grows on various screens, disembodied and decontextualized forms of East Asian culture such as martial arts choreography, aesthetic styles derived from *anime* and videogames, and East Asian influenced fashion have become prominent in popular culture. These two forms of representation – East Asia as bodies and East Asia as style – more and more are collapsed in the US popular imaginary. In order to map the multiple causes and consequences of this development, it is important to look at how East Asian bodies and spaces have been represented in Hollywood historically. To that end, this chapter ends with a broad review of East Asian images in Hollywood from silent cinema to the present.

1910s – 1940s

In one of the earliest studies on the representation of Asians in film, Eugene Franklin Wong looks at depictions of Asians in US silent film and World War II propaganda films. His readings link dehumanizing portrayals of generic "oriental" characters to events that triggered the Yellow Peril response in Hollywood, primarily anti-Chinese attitudes at home and concern over imperial Japan after its defeat of China in 1895 and Russia in 1905 (56-72). Yellow Peril sentiment is also apparent in the two feature films that Asian American film scholars most often cite from this period: *Broken Blossoms* and *The Cheat*. Along with Wong, Gina Marchetti and Robert Lee read these films as attempts to contain American anxieties of Asian domination by effeminizing, castrating and punishing the Asian male protagonist through death and/or the law.

According to Lee, "*The Cheat* and *Broken Blossoms* brought together the nation's extended threat, the Yellow Peril, and the nation's domestic threat, the emergence of the New Woman" (120). Marchetti categorizes the two films as "rape narratives," which enact the Yellow Peril virtually through the trope of potential miscegenation (2-3). Both Lee and Marchetti note the mirroring that occurs between the white women (Edith and Lucy) and the Asian men (Tori and Cheng Huan) in their desire for and consumption of luxury commodities which represent the threat of consumer capitalism and Asian access to the new global capital (Marchetti 27-32, Lee 120-124). The symbolic rape (Tori branding Edith, Cheng Huan kissing Lucy's sleeve) reveals the dangerous masculinity of the not totally effeminate Asian man while the woman's "natural" disgust and the punishment meted to the rapist reinforce hegemonic boundaries of whiteness and appropriate femininity. In other words, both films keep the Asian male and the bourgeois white female in their respective positions in the power hierarchy *vis-à-vis* the capitalist white male.

A gap exists between the 1930s and the late 1950s in Asian American scholarship on Hollywood films featuring Asian characters and themes. Marchetti discusses *The Bitter Tea of General Yen* (Capra 1933) and *Shanghai Express* (von Sternberg 1932) as versions of the captivity tale that deal with the threat of miscegenation. In the former, the contagious agent is General Yen (Nils Asther in yellowface), a Chinese warlord who takes as captive Megan, an American missionary (Barbara Stanwyck); in the latter, it is both Chang (Warner Oland in yellowface) and Hui Fei (Anna May Wong) who threaten the racial and sexual purity of Shanghai Lily (Marlene Dietrich). The Dragon Lady (evil seductress) and Butterfly (self-sacrificing geisha) stereotypes figure prominently in this period for women, while representations of men split into two extreme character types: the dangerous war lord and the harmless servant. In *War Without Mercy* and *The Deathly Embrace*, John Dower and Sheng Mei Ma respectively refer to the popular Fu Manchu and Charlie Chan serials as examples of this split in US popular culture.

Charlie Chan was a passive and loyal Chinese American detective in a film serial from the 1920s to the 1970s (as well as a 1950s television series) who used his nonlinear "oriental" logic to solve difficult mysteries for the white establishment. Charlie's evil counterparts, Fu Manchu and Ming the Merciless, also serialized Chinese characters, were bent instead on conquering the world and destroying the establishment that Charlie served. Fu Manchu, in particular, was the consummate Asian villain, threatening naturalized constructions of Anglo-American heterosexual masculinity. Charlie Chan and Fu Manchu are both dehumanized – the former through emasculation and conditional acceptance, and the latter through perversion and alienation. Charlie Chan, like the war brides of the 1950s, is a precursor to the model minority stereotype of the 1970s while Fu Manchu and Ming the Merciless foreshadow the techno-oriental "gook" stereotype of the 1980s (Dower 157-159, 163, Ma 3-20).

48

1950s – 1970s

In 1945 Japan was subjugated, and through the 1950s the armed forces were in Korea attempting to contain the new specter of Communism. As more East Asian war brides arrived in the US, films starring Asian female characters began to appear on the silver screen. They included *Teahouse of the August Moon* (Mann 1956)*, Sayonara*, *The World of Suzie Wong, Love is a Many-Splendored Thing* (King 1955), *Japanese War Bride* (Vidor 1952) and *Bridge to the Sun* (Perier 1961). The two most often cited by Asian American film scholars are *Sayonara* and *The World of Suzie Wong*. The female Oriental Other in both films is presented in slightly more complex ways than their Butterfly and Dragon Lady predecessors. Rather than death, the protagonist here is contained and assimilated through *domestication* which results from her blinding love for a white male savior. The Dragon Ladies in these movies become Lotus Blossoms and potential future mothers of the nation by renouncing their homes, nations and careers for Anglo American men. Three major patterns are worth noting in films of this type.

First, clothing and costume changes are integral to the racial and sexual construction of the Asian woman as an object of desire. Changes in costume demonstrate the dangerous, performative quality of Asian identity. Racial difference (also read as sexual deviance) is eliminated by authenticating the hyper-feminine, docile image of the Asian woman. For example, in *The World of Suzie Wong* Robert denounces his prostitute/model girlfriend, Suzie as a "cheap European streetwalker" when she appears in western clothing. He returns her to her "true" Chinese self by dressing her in a traditional Chinese wedding gown (Marchetti 121; Feng 43). Similarly, in *Sayonara* Lloyd Gruver (Marlon Brando) falls in love with Hana Ogi (Miko Taka) only after she stops wearing western male clothing and dons the traditional kimono (Yamamoto 34-40).

49

Second, the Asian woman functions as a metaphor for her post-war, American-occupied Asian country: Traise Yamamoto identifies the primary rhetorical move in these films as "reciprocity through metonymic substitution. ... Through the construction of the Japanese [read: East Asian] woman as the individual representative or her country, the power relation between nations is privatized and annulled by the discourse of romantic love. … What falls out in this equation is the mechanism of power and domination" (34).

Finally, in *Sayonara* and *Suzie Wong,* the white woman's "unnatural masculinity" contributes to the loss of her boyfriend or husband to the Asian woman. According to Yamamoto, the racial difference of the Asian female ceases to be threatening in these films once it is reframed in terms of docile, childlike sexuality. The hyper-femininity of the Asian female then becomes a "restorative to white American male hegemony and an implicit criticism of white American womanhood" (40).

The kind of East Asian women that are celebrated in these films anticipates the development of the Model Minority during the politically radical 1960s and 1970s. Epitomized in stereotypes of the Asian nerd, female newscaster, and loyal sidekick, the quiet, passive model minority works tirelessly for the dominant powers and never complains about institutional inequities. Model Minorities do this to achieve the ultimate American Dream: Anglo American, bourgeois status. Their "success" demonstrates to other racial minorities and non-white people everywhere that the United States is a land where one can transcend race and gender boundaries if only one works very hard. According to Nancy Abelmann and John Lie, along with upholding a neoconservative individualist ethos by keeping other less model minorities in their place, the Model Minority myth elides the diversity among Asian Americans and underemphasizes the persistence of anti-Asian racism in the US (165-170).

Recalling Robert Lee's binary of the Model Minority and the Gook, we might note here that, according to Lee, the term "gook" has proven to be an elastic term, referring to whatever Asian national or ethnic power happens to pose the biggest threat to the US at a given point in time (182-191). Lee uses this word to describe negative representations of Asian Americans in the 1990s, including Korean American entrepreneurs defending their stores during the Los Angeles Uprising and Chinese American lobbyists seeking policy favors with large contributions to the Clinton campaign. According to Lee, these examples show that popular media continues to depict Asian Americans as expendable potential scapegoats (the Model Minority) or treacherous threats to the nation that must be destroyed (the Gook). While I remain somewhat skeptical about Lee's claims regarding the current usage of the racial slur, "gook," I do find his idea of a connection between stereotypes of Asian Americans as dangerous threats and as productive overachievers useful for examining representations of Asian Americans in US popular culture.

According to Lee, the Model Minority/Gook stereotype that emerged in action films of the 1980s consolidated Charlie Chan and Fu Manchu, Lotus Blossom and Dragon Lady into a double-faced Asian Other for the New Hollywood era. Not surprisingly, then, the first wave of blockbuster films about the Vietnam War also came out during this period, including *Deer Hunter* (Cimino 1978), *Apocalypse Now* (Coppola 1979), *First Blood* (Kotcheff 1982), *Rambo: First Blood Part II* (Costmatos 1985), *Platoon* (Stone 1986), and *Full Metal Jacket* (Kubrick 1987).

The 1980s and 1990s

The Year of the Dragon and *Rising Sun* appear most often in the scholarship of Asian-themed Hollywood films in the 1980s and 1990s. Films that tackle similar issues

from this period include *Big Trouble in Little China* (Carpenter 1986), *China Girl* (Ferrara 1987) and *Black Rain* (Scott 1989) among others. *The Year of the Dragon* is an imperialist text that replays the Vietnam War in a 1980s New York Chinatown overrun by Chinese gangs. Stanley White, a working class Polish cop and his villainous double, Joey Tai (John Lone), a cosmopolitan Chinese American gang boss vie for the role of legitimate citizen -- White through race and Tai through economic capital. Tracy Tzu is a television news reporter whose relationship with White provides the film's necessary heterosexual, Eurocentric closure (Marchetti 215). *Rising Sun* locates the Model Minority/Gook in the growing presence of Japanese corporations in America. The movie is based on Michael Crichton's book of the same title and features Sean Connery and Wesley Snipes as an interracial police team that cracks down on the vaguely evil actions of the Nakamoto Company. As Dorinne Kondo notes, the theme consists of black and white protagonists bonding over a high tech corporate yellow threat. Protested widely by Asian American advocacy groups, *Rising Sun* was the last big budget movie to bank overtly on the Model Minority/Gook stereotype (240-251).

The early 1990s proved a pivotal moment for Asian-themed films in Hollywood. Along with the growing number of Asian American media producers and consumers, the high visibility of such films during this period was due in large part to the increased economic prominence of Japan in the US at the time -- a prominence which I desribe in more detail in the next chapter and which perhaps was most spectacularly demonstrated by the emergence of Sony and Matsushita as Hollywood studio owners in 1989-1990. The same year that *Rising Sun* premiered, *The Joy Luck Club* (Wang), the first Hollywood film about Asian Americans produced by Asian Americans for a wide audience, had a successful run at the box office. A few years later, *Mulan* (Bancroft and Cook 1998), an animated interpretation of the Chinese myth of woman warrior, Fa

Mulan, appeared as part of a wave of multicultural Disney narratives, including *Aladdin* (Clement and Musker 1992)*, The Lion King* (Allers and Minkoff 1994)*,* and *Pocahontas* (Gabriel and Goldberg 1995)*.*

This period also saw a surge of interest in art films from China and Taiwan, including Zhang Yimou's *Raise the Red Lantern* (1991), Chen Kaige's *Farewell My Concubine* (1993), Ang Lee's *The Wedding Banquet* (1993), and Wang Kar Wai's *Chungking Express* (1994). Around the same time, Hong Kong action films by directors John Woo and Stanley Tong starring actors such as Jackie Chan, Jet Li, Tony Leung and Chow Yun Fat began to amass a following in the US, especially after they were endorsed by Quentin Tarantino in the mid 1990s. In *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon* (2000) Ang Lee melded the gorgeous cinematography of the Fifth Generation art film with the spectacular kinetics of the Hong Kong action flick. Like *The Matrix*, his film quickly entered the pop culture lexicon: in the years following its release, *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon* was referenced in everything from a 7UP commercial in which two Chinese women fight over a can of soda using martial arts swordplay to Yoda's CGI posturing in George Lucas's *Star Wars II: Attack of the Clones* (2002).

CONCLUSION

In the early twenty-first century, the Asian American community continues to grow. According to the 2000 US Census Report, Asian Americans comprised 4 percent of the total US population in 2000 (up from .7 percent in 1970 and 3 percent in 1990) and are projected to become 9 percent of the population by 2050, more than tripling their numbers by mid century. Unlike their predecessors before the 1970s, most Asian Americans were born outside the US -- six out of ten in 1997. Most are also young: Asian

Americans under the age of 18 comprised 29 percent of the group in 2000 ("Census Bureau Facts for Features").

Perhaps not coincidentally, representations of East Asia in US popular culture tend to be youth-oriented. By this, I do not mean simply that the East Asian and Asian American bodies on screens tend to be or to look young. The trend toward youthful faces and bodies is one that cuts across racial and cultural boundaries in US media and increasingly, media around the world. Rather, I mean narratives, styles, and trends in the US that are associated with East Asia tend to be geared toward youth – from the Japanese animated cartoons on television such as *Pokemon* (1998 to present) and *Yu-Gi-Oh* (1998 to present) which target young children to the more adult-themed *anime,* East Asian fashions, and videogames which target older children, adolescents, and twenty-somethings. In large part this association of East Asian things with youth, futurity, and cutting edge technology stems from the present dominance of Japanese entertainment hardware (VCRs, televisions, walkmans, and stereos) and software (videogames, OVA *anime*) in the industrial world – a development that Iwabuchi traces to Japanese business strategies in the 1970s and 1980s and especially the marketing practices of the consumer electronics company, Sony (23-50).

As East Asian presence in US popular culture has entered the arena of culturally specific software in the 1990s, representations of East Asians and Asian Americans have multiplied and become more complex. With the popularity of *anime*, cheongsam dresses, Sony Playstation2, Hello Kitty, Thai cuisine, and karaoke, Asian-themed products appear to have found cultural cachet among the younger and presumably hipper set in the early twenty-first century. For instance, many of my undergraduate students at UT Austin – non-Asian American and Asian American alike – often cited such developments as proof that Asian Americans finally are being accepted in dominant culture. Those students

might have a point. The nature of East Asian stereotypes *does* appear to be changing as US consumers, especially youth, grow more familiar with mediated representations of East Asian bodies and spaces.

At the same time, however, hate crimes against Asian Americans have not disappeared, Asian Americans continue to face glass ceilings at work, and appalling stereotypes of Asians still appear in the media alongside more ostensibly celebratory and flattering representations. In what ways then, might contemporary Hollywood representations reflect these mixed attitudes of and actions toward East Asia and Asian America in the US?

Most current representations of Asiatic bodies, cultures, and places suggest a connection between East Asia and the future. Explicitly, this link appears in the association of East Asian bodies and spaces with new technologies – a pattern that can be found, for example, in the roles of Jet Li in *Romeo Must Die* (Bartkowiak 2000) and *The One*, Lucy Liu in *Charlie's Angels,* and Kelly Hu in *X2* (Singer 2003). Emphasized in all of these films are the East Asian actors' sleek, cyborgian bodies expertly performing mechanical martial arts moves in minimalist, digital settings. My study is concerned chiefly with these explicit representations of the technologized Oriental Other.

Somewhat complicating the Hollywood trend toward the technologized Orient is a more implicit association of Asian America with a multicultural future, which can be found in examples of better developed Asian American characters in television and independent film. For instance, the Asian American female characters Lane Kim (Keiko Agena) in the television series *The Gilmore Girls* (2000 to present) and Janet Yang (Sara Tanaka) in *Rushmore* (Anderson 1998)*,* and the male Asian American characters in *Better Luck Tomorrow* (Lin 2003), provide welcome depictions of Asian American characters that actively break oriental stereotypes. It is worth noting here, however, that

these more rounded characters are all young, adolescent Asian Americans whose parents are stereotyped or noticeably absent.

The two identities of East Asia and Asian America that emerge from these representations are connected in that both rely on orientalist stereotypes for self-definition. The first, through its explicit association of East Asian bodies with techno-oriental styles, *accepts and performs* those stereotypes to establish the radical alterity of the "Orient." The second, through its implicit association of Asian American bodies with a kind of surface multiculturalism, self-consciously *reacts against* the stereotypes to establish the humanity of the young Asian American characters. The point is that neither representation is able to imagine or show East Asian and Asian American cultural difference without recourse to historical oriental stereotypes. In this sense, the stereotypes that were discussed in the Introduction still function as the most easily representable and thus recognizable manifestations of that cultural difference. As such, these stereotypes continue to constitute the Oriental Other in twenty-first century representations of East Asia and Asian America.

The literature reviews in this chapter on the histories of East Asian immigration and Hollywood representation demonstrate the ways in which character traits that have become reified as East Asian stereotypes emerged from and continue to be shaped in the legal, social, and cultural arenas. Again, these stereotypes include the following: literal or metaphoric foreign-status, association with transnational capital, sexual perversity or deviance, and inscrutability. Such stereotypes, in turn, suggest a lack of originality, emotion, and individualism on the part of the Oriental Other -- qualities that have distinguished the human from the non-human in western discourse since the Early Modern period. In the next chapter, I provide some background on the crucial role of techno-orientalism in cyberpunk culture to begin considering the complex and often

disturbing ways in which such qualities link the Oriental Other to the Technological Other.

Chapter Two

The Cyberpunk Orient

Anything that can be done to a rat can be done to a human being. And we can do most anything to rats. This is a hard thing to think about, but it's the truth. It won't go away because we cover our eyes. *This* is cyberpunk.

-- Bruce Sterling[vii]

INTRODUCTION

In a 2001 *Time International* article, novelist William Gibson made the following observation about cyberpunk science fiction and Japan:

> In the '80s when I became known for a species of SF that journalists called cyberpunk, Japan was already, somehow, the de facto spiritual home of that influence, that particular flavor of popular culture. It was not that there was a cyberpunk movement in Japan or a native literature akin to cyberpunk, but that modern Japan simply *was* cyberpunk. The Japanese themselves knew it and delighted in it. I remember my first glimpse of Shibuya, when one of the young Tokyo journalists who had taken me there, his face drenched with the light of a thousand media-suns – all that towering, animated crawl of commercial information – said, "You see? You see? It is Blade Runner town." And it was. It so evidently was (48).

Gibson draws a link here between a constructed cyberpunk sensibility in contemporary Western literature and a "spiritual" cyberpunk essence in the Tokyo urbanscape – a connection that is crystallized in a reference to the Hollywood science fiction film *Blade Runner*. He specifically mentions Shibuya, a fashionable shopping and entertainment district in Tokyo where evanescent popular trends are displayed on

electronic billboards and paraded on the bodies of the nation's most image-conscious youth. Upon this highly consumerist and mediated East Asian space, Gibson projects the futuristic oriental urban environments of his now classic cyberpunk novels, including *Neuromancer, Burning Chrome*, *Mona Lisa Overdrive*, and *Idoru.*

Gibson obscures his primary role in this projection process by displacing his recognition of the seemingly implicit connection between cyberpunk and Japan onto the Japanese themselves. Representing the Japanese in this instance is the enthusiastic journalist who seems to have been charged with showing the writer the more spectacular sights of Tokyo. The journalist becomes a mouthpiece for Gibson's own thoughts when he points out the distinctly "cyberpunk" look of the city, proudly selling this culturally and technologically mediated image of home to the impressed US-born Canadian as "Blade Runner town."

Many years earlier in a 1986 interview with Takayuki Tatsumi, Gibson, using a mixture of irony and naiveté, made it clear that his vision of Japan was his own personal Western fantasy. After confessing that he had not known the actual geographic location of Chiba when he decided to use the name of the Japanese city in his first novel*,* the writer described his relationship to Japan thus:

> Japan interests me more and more, but I'm starting to get embarrassed about having done this thing (referring to Japan in his work) without really knowing anything about it. It's just a fantasy. I think in that way it has a weird kind of power. It's like 19th Century Orientalia (Tatsumi 13).

This chapter considers the ideological dimension of the powerful cyberpunk fantasies of Japan specifically and East Asia generally to which Gibson refers in the fascinating quote above. Gibson's fiction – along with those of Bruce Sterling, John Shirley, Rudy Rucker,

Lewis Shiner, Greg Bear, Lucius Shepard, and more recently, Neal Stephenson, along with several others – has been grouped in the now passé literary genre known as cyberpunk science fiction. Gibson became the de facto representative of cyberpunk after the publication of *Neuromancer* which contains the first popular definition of "cyberspace" as a "consensual hallucination" (4-5). As many have noted, it is a bit ironic that Gibson wrote the novel that predicted the rise of cyber-culture on a vintage 1937 Hermes portable typewriter (Gibson "Since 1948").

Before it died as a specific "movement" in the early 1990s, cyberpunk fiction managed to spark a self-consciously "hip" techno-punk style that continues in the present in various forms of popular media, including Hollywood cinema. That style, which invokes film noir, independent comics, computer culture, and popular culture, is expressed in a particular burnt-out vision of the future – as a gritty, crowded, transnational, urban scene defined by high and low forms of technology, multicultural mixings, and ubiquitous corporate presence. Cyberpunk as a subgenre of both science fiction literature and film will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

For now, I would like to note simply that modern East Asian cities epitomized in the image of present day Tokyo and their high-tech inhabitants play a prominent visual role in cyberpunk narratives. I am defining "cyberpunk narrative" broadly here, including under this label not only those stories that define themselves as such but also those that possess characteristics of the style described above. When the orientalized characters and other people of color in such stories have a narrative function, it is usually that of playing the villains and sidekicks of the almost always young, white (or mostly white) male protagonists. This pattern seems to be changing slightly in the work of second generation cyberpunks such as Stephenson and the Wachowskis even as the visual Orientalism remains – a development I will examine in Part Three.

The consistency of oriental imagery in cyberpunk narratives elicits several questions, among them the following. Why does this common fantasy of East Asia as the technologized future appear so regularly in cyberpunk? What social, political, and aesthetic purposes does it serve for the primarily Western authors of these stories and their target audiences, who for the most part, are interpellated as Western through specific narrative and visual cues? And, in what ways does this fantasy of East Asia as the future continue to be reproduced on the silver screen through films such as *Blade Runner* and *The Matrix* as well as a number of 1980s and 1990s Hollywood movies which center on cybernetic technologies and display a cyberpunk sensibility?

Those questions are addressed throughout the following chapter which is divided into two sections. The first section introduces David Morley and Kevin Robins's concept of techno-orientalism to examine the elision of East Asian places and bodies with new technologies and an imagined future ruled by such technologies. This leads to a discussion of recent applications in Asian American Studies of Morley and Robins's concept to the continued presence of oriental imagery and orientalist attitudes in cyberspace.

The second section takes a step back, to give some background on the cyberpunk movement and to delineate the major points of its critics. It then proceeds to discuss how elements of cyberpunk fiction have become incorporated in dominant culture, specifically Hollywood. The chapter ends with a description of "cyberpunk cinema" as a subgenre of science fiction film that displays many of the defining characteristics of cyberpunk fiction and style. Examples of films from the 1980s and 1990s that qualify as "cyberpunk" lead to the analyses in Part Two of *Blade Runner,* one of the first and arguably most influential cyberpunk films in Hollywood.

TECHNO-ORIENTALISM

In *Spaces of Identity* David Morley and Kevin Robins target a new kind of anti-Asian racism that emerged in the 1980s, which they call "techno-orientalism" and describe as follows:

> Postmodern technologies have become structured into the discourse of Orientalism. Through these new technologies, the contradictory stereotypes of Japaneseness have assumed new forms; the new technologies have become associated with the sense of Japanese identity and ethnicity (169).

Morley and Robins discuss the ways in which historical stereotypes of East Asians based on orientalist thinking have become conflated with "postmodern" technologies in the West, which include various ongoing developments in the realms of electronics and cybernetics. According to the authors, Japan and other NICs such as Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan are correlated with these technologies in Western popular media in two ways: first, through the exoticized aestheticization of Tokyo as the quintessential modern, decentered metropolis (this is exemplified in Gibson's description of Tokyo which opened the chapter) and second, through the notion that the Japanese possess the very characteristics of the dangerous technologies they produce and consume.

To illustrate the second representative strategy, Morley and Robins refer to *otaku,* a slang term for a subculture of Japanese youth that are obsessed with information technologies and popular culture of which more will be said in Chapters Four and Five. Morley and Robins articulate the ambivalence of techno-orientalism through the figure of the *otaku,* which becomes representative of the thoroughly technologized Japanese: "The Japanese are unfeeling aliens; they are cyborgs and replicants. But there is also the sense that these mutants (the *otaku*) are now better adapted to survive in the future" (170).

62

Incidentally, a similar sentiment was expressed toward North American youth a few decades earlier by Marshall MacLuhan. In an article that he presented in 1966 at the Texas-Stanford seminar, "The Meaning of Commercial Television," MacLuhan argued that television viewing had ushered in a new way of seeing and experiencing the world – from the linear space of print media to the non-linear "all-at-once simultaneous" space of electronic media (89). MacLuhan associates the former with Western culture and the latter with the "oriental world." To wit:

> The western world organizes itself visually by connective, uniform, and continuous space. The oriental world, antithetically, organizes everything by spaces, by distances between sounds and objects, not by connection. … The oriental works by interval, not by connection, and that is why we think he is inscrutable. … We are orientalizing ourselves at a furious clip (91).

A little later, he expands on the idea that North Americans (again, assumed of European descent) are becoming more and more like Asians. This melding of East and West into a virtual global village culminates in MacLuhan's orientalized figure of the television-viewing American child:

> The television form of experience is profoundly and subliminally introverting, an inward depth, meditative, oriental. The television child is a profoundly orientalized being. And he will not accept goals as objects in the world to pursue. He will accept a role, but he will not accept a goal. He goes inward. No greater revolution has ever occurred to western man or any other society in so short a time (93).

The troubling cultural reductions in MacLuhan's theorizing aside, the ambivalence expressed in his prediction that Anglo-American youth would become more Eastern through increased media use in the 1960s is mirrored in US popular perceptions

of the Japanese as both "mutants" and future humans in the 1990s as per Morley and Robins's observations. A similar kind of ambivalence can be found in more recent techno-orientalist depictions of East Asia and East Asians, in films such as *Blade* (Norrington 1998), *The Matrix* trilogy (1999, 2003) *The One* (Wong 2001)*, Blade II* (del Toro 2002), and *Equilibrium*. The complicated mixed feelings that such representations suggest toward the Oriental Other will be dealt with more fully in Part Three.

Morley and Robins devote a section of their chapter on techno-orientalism to a discussion of the growing "honorary white" status of the Japanese in the United States, which they equate historically with that of the Jews (154-158). Examples of Westerners' acceptance or identification with the Oriental Other such as the "whitened" status of the Japanese in the US and ambivalent feelings around the *otaku* begin to touch on the increased complexity of US attitudes toward East Asia since the transformation of Japan and the NICs into first world nations.

However, Morley and Robins do not linger on this more ambiguous aspect of techno-orientalism. Instead they focus on the Yellow Perilist elements implicit in technologized images of Japan and the Japanese in the US during the late 1980s and early 1990s. The authors' argument is based on their map of technological, economic, and political shifts in power from England in the nineteenth century to the US in the twentieth-century, and to Japan in the early twenty-first century. The argument can be summed up thus: the West resents the East for its ability to appropriate and improve on Western technology – to beat the West at its own game, as it were. The Japanese as non-white appropriators of Western technology subsequently become associated with traits that derive from the possession of this technology, including rationality, development, and progress.

John Dower (1986), Ronald Takaki (1989), and George Lipsitz (1998) have recorded a similar attitude in Europe and the US toward Japan after it defeated Russia in 1905 and became a formidable non-white Axis power during World War II. Western antagonism toward Japan in that period was a response to Japan's subversive role as producers and products of Western military technology; along a similar vein, contemporary fears of Japan, according to Morley and Robins, derive from the strong association of Japan with the hardware and increasingly software of "new" communication technologies. The authors state that in both cases, the West's resentment of Japan reflects the unconscious hatred that it has of these qualities in itself. In this sense then techno-orientalism retains the fundamental organizing principle of classical Orientalism, i.e. the necessary role of the East as a distorted mirror for the West.

Japan's success at producing and manipulating technology destabilizes the rational foundations of modern Western culture by revealing that the power associated with technology is culturally and racially transferable. Morley and Robins explain this process of destabilization in the following way:

> Japan has now become modern to the degree of seeming postmodern, and it is its future that seems to be the current measure for all cultures. And, thereby, the basis of Western identity is called into question. … Japan has come to exist within the Western political and cultural unconscious as a figure of danger, and it has done so because it has destabilized the neat correlation between West/East and modern/pre-modern. If the West is modern, Japan should be pre-modern, or at least non-modern. … The fact that Japan no longer fits throws the established historico-geographical schema into confusion, creating a panic of disorientation (if not yet, to be sure, of dis-Orientalism) (153, 160).

As noted earlier, the reiteration of Yellow Peril sentiments in and as techno-orientalism peaked in the late 1980s and early 1990s when Japanese corporations began to invest in important symbols of American culture. Such investments included Sony's purchase of

CBS Records for $26 billion in 1988 and Columbia Pictures for $3.4 billion in 1989, Matsushita's purchase of MCA/Universal for $6 billion in 1990, the sale of the Rockefeller Center to a Japanese real estate firm, and JVC's $100 million investment in Largo Entertainment (Morley and Robins, 149). Nicola Nixon contextualizes the prevalence of the Japanese family mega-corporations or *zaibatsu* in Gibson's work within the cultural and sociopolitical trends of the United States in the 1980s, a period when "(Japanese) corporate practice presented the most substantial threat to American-style capitalism America had yet experienced" (224).

Since the publication of Morley and Robins' book in 1995 and the economic recession in East Asia shortly thereafter, the panic specifically around Japan appears to have died down a bit. However, a more subtle and pervasive form of techno-orientalism continues to exert a strong influence in US popular culture. This is made apparent in recent scholarship in Asian American Studies, which points to the overwhelming presence of techno-orientalist tendencies in cyberspace and its fictional counterpart and predecessor, cyberpunk.

Techno-Orientalism and Asian America

In the previous chapter I referred briefly to an analogy that Rachel Lee and Sau-Ling Wong recently drew between Internet communities and Lisa Lowe's idea of Asian America as an imagined community whose members are defined by common goals and interests rather than strict genealogical or cultural ties. In this section, I will unpack that analogy within the context of techno-orientalism in US cyber-culture and popular media. Lee and Wong point out the parallels between the Asian American community and cyberspace thus:

> The notion of a panethnic identity is … an invention, one performed into being and maintained by continued acts of political and cultural intervention, yet under constant challenge from internal heterogeneity and pressures to assimilate. The arrival of Internet technology only intensifies the contestations about the concept of 'Asian American community'… As another kind of 'consensual hallucination' then, the 'Asian American community' exhibits some interesting affinities with the Internet (xviii).

According to Lee and Wong, the virtual community and the Asian American community share the following characteristics: both are geographically decentered with fluid, constantly changing borders, and both are held together by networks of information.

The implicit "virtuality" of Asian America has become more pronounced in recent years due to several factors. First, as noted in the previous chapter, the definition of "Asian American" has changed and continues to change, reflecting the arrival of more immigrants from Southeast Asia since 1975 and the increased visibility of subgroups such as South Asian and Filipino Americans. Second, with the widespread use of the Internet, satellite and cable television, and advanced telecommunications systems, the ties of first generation Asian Americans to their countries of origin can be maintained in ways that simply were not possible in earlier periods. Meanwhile, Asian Americans born in the US have more opportunities to forge new ties with the countries of their parents and grandparents through the same media, as documented in various studies on Asian American consumption of Asian media.[viii] As Lee and Wong suggest, the political and rhetorical power of cultural nationalism, which played a significant role in constructions of Asian American identity during the 1960s and 1970s, seems to be fading in the midst of such developments (xviii).

Finally, since the mid 1990s, Asian Americans of the PMC have entered the "forefront of the technological revolution" even as their working-class counterparts continue to assemble microchips in California and Malaysia. Lee and Wong cite a 2002

report by the National Telecommunications and the Information Administration and the Economics and Statistics Administration, which provides the following statistics on Internet use by different racial groups. In September 2001 computer use rates were highest for Asian Americans at 71.2 percent, followed by Whites at 70 percent, Blacks at 55.7 percent, and Latinos at 48.8 percent. In 2001 Internet use among Whites and Asian Americans was equal at 60% compared to use rates for Blacks at 39.8 percent and Hispanics at 31.6 percent (xv).

As these statistics show, Asian Americans have a different relationship to the Internet than other non-white groups; rather than being underrepresented in the so called technological revolution, they clearly are overrepresented. In this capacity Asian Americans do not fit the role typically assigned to Blacks, Latinos, and American Indians in media studies discourse as victims of the Digital Divide. At the same time, as Lisa Nakamura has pointed out, Asians and Asian Americans are not free of racism online. To the contrary, in cyberspace Asiatic men are depicted through various forms of yellowface, as emasculated "geeks" or non-human fighting machines and Asiatic women as infantilized, hyper-sexualized commodities (35-46).

According to Lee and Wong, both kinds of representations – the "high tech" Orientalism of the cyber-geek and the "low tech" Orientalism of Asian female porn and Asian Internet mail-order brides – are connected to a general techno-orientalist attitude, which is common in Internet culture and the virtual technologies associated with it:

> high-tech orientalism may have oblique articulations alongside low-tech, residual forms of racism. For instance, fears of being taken over by Asiatic geek guys (anxiety over high-tech dominance) may have a relation to the preponderance of Asian female flesh for sale in the formerly low-tech industry of pornography in its recombinant high-tech form: cyberporn. Because Sony is taking over the world, buy America online; better yet, buy Asian women online (xvii).

68

In "Orienting Orientalism, or How to Map Cyberspace" Wendy Chun presents a compelling analysis of this gendered, virtual form of techno-orientalism through her readings of Gibson's novel, *Neuromancer* and Mamoru Oshii's animated film, *Ghost in the Shell* (1995). Before engaging with Chun's article, it is important to provide some background on "cyberpunk" as a literary movement as well as the criticism that accompanied it, especially since her analysis builds on several of these critiques.

CYBERPUNK: AN INTRODUCTION

What is cyberpunk? Where did it come from? And is it still around? A 1989 article in the *Whole Earth Review* gives the following vivid description of cyberpunk fiction around the peak of its popularity:

> Bill Gibson and other cyberpunk allies … spin out distinctive scenarios about gritty, not-too-distant futures made of washed-up computer cowboys, Pacific Rim mafias, ganja-smoking software hustlers, genetic surgeons, multinational corporations located in dilapidated city-states, rampant guerilla information undergrounds, contraband brain implants. … Undergirding everything are massive computer networks that keep commerce humming. … These worlds are dense, flashy, and texturally vibrant – more like movies than books … this science fiction draws less from either science or other fiction than it does from rock and roll, heavy-metal comic books, and skateboard mags (78).

The term, "cyberpunk," first appeared in a short story by Bruce Bethke entitled "Cyberpunk" in 1983 (Featherstone and Burrows 7). Soon thereafter the label began to be used to refer to a specific group of SF writers who wrote about loner hackers struggling to survive in a computerized and corporation dominated future.[ix] Cyberpunk fiction became associated closely with the development of the Internet after the publication of

69

Neuromancer in 1984. The novel opens with the following oft-quoted description of "cyberspace" as a "consensual hallucination" constructed from a "matrix" of data:

> A year here and he still dreamed of cyberspace, hope fading nightly. All the speed he took, all the turns he'd taken and the corners he'd cut in Night City, and still he'd see the matrix in his sleep, bright lattices of logic unfolding across that colorless void. … The Sprawl was a long strange way home over the Pacific now, and he was no console man, no cyberspace cowboy. Just another hustler, trying to make it through. But the dreams came on in the Japanese night like livewire voodoo. … Case was twenty-four. At twenty-two, he'd been a cowboy, a rustler, one of the best in the Sprawl. … He'd operated on an almost permanent adrenaline high, a byproduct of youth and proficiency, jacked into a custom cyberspace deck that projected his disembodied consciousness into the consensual hallucination that was the matrix (Gibson *Neuromancer,* 4-5).

As many scholars have discussed, this definition of cyberspace became the popular blueprint for Internet culture and developments in communications technology in the 1990s. Brooks Landon sums up the relationship when he states that Gibson's representation of cyberspace in a fictional future "went beyond creating a *compelling* fictional world to compelling us to shape our world to its fiction" (119).

Bruce Sterling, a participant and to a large extent, engineer of, the cyberpunk "movement," listed as its literary influences 1960s and 1970s New Wave writers such as Harlan Ellison, Samuel Delany, Michael Moorcock, and J.G. Ballard as well as the preceding "hard" SF tradition exemplified by H.G. Wells, Larry Niven, Olaf Stapledon, and others (viii). According to Sterling, cyberpunk fiction is a mixture of SF literary traditions, 1970s punk sensibility, and 1980s popular media culture:

The cyberpunks are perhaps the first SF generation to grow up not only within the literary tradition of science fiction but in a truly science-fictional world. … Thus, "cyberpunk" … captures something crucial to the work of these writers, something crucial to the decade as a whole: a new kind of integration. The overlapping of worlds that were formerly separate: the realm of high tech, and the modern pop underground (viii-ix).

From the mid 1980s to approximately mid 1990s the "cyberpunks" (most of whom eschewed the label)[x] told speculative stories about a post-apocalyptic future society, which registered in an eerily familiar way to their readers. In Pam Rosenthal's words, "The future in the cyberpunk world, no matter how astonishing its technological detailing, is always shockingly recognizable – it is our world, gotten worse, gotten more uncomfortable, inhospitable, dangerous, and thrilling" (85). This future is characterized by the mechanization – and subsequent social and emotional alienation – of human beings from themselves, others, and their environment. The goal of the cyberpunk hero is to survive within the huge electronic, multinational network that the world has become without losing his (or more rarely, her) fundamental sense of self.

Thematically cyberpunk fiction is concerned with what makes human beings "human." It considers various aspects of this question, including how we differ from the higher forms of artificial intelligence that increasingly are becoming a part of our daily lives; how we distinguish real objects, places and experiences from their copies; and how the boundaries between human and machine, real and virtual, other and self are being redrawn. These themes are expressed as much through the formal elements of cyberpunk as its narrative arcs, and sometimes more so.

Stylistically, cyberpunk fiction draws from the bricolage impulse of British punk culture, piecing together various genres, historical periods, and cultures to create denaturalized worlds that feel uncannily old and new, familiar and foreign. Cyberpunk's

allusions to and imitation of popular media eventually led to its demise as a literary enterprise. As Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, Jr. put it, "[An] interesting question is exactly what cyberpunk literature can offer that video games, hip-hop, and Rejection Front rock cannot" (183). The answer apparently was not much more. Yet the same tendencies that made cyberpunk fiction an untenable paradox by the mid 1990s were precisely what made its style so conducive to expression in visual media, from video and performance art to comics, television, and film. In this sense, the cyberpunk movement fit perfectly into the paradigm of postmodernism, which was beginning to gain popular and academic cache at the time.[xi]

For instance, in *Storming the Reality Studio,* an anthology of cyberpunk fiction and theory, Larry McCaffery links cyberpunk writers such as Gibson, Sterling, and G.A. Effinger with their contemporaries in postmodern fiction such as Mark Leyner, Kathy Acker, and Don Delillo. All the authors are concerned with the alienation of the human subject in a post-capitalist, morally relativist world. According to McCaffery, this survivalist sense of alienation finds its highest form of expression in the technologically mediated environments of cyberpunk and contemporary postmodern writing. Like Sterling, he notes that this generation of writers grew up within the popular media culture they hyperbolize. In essence, they are the grown-up versions of the "orientalized" television-watching children that MacLuhan described in the 1960s:

> The cyberpunks were the first generation of artists for whom the technologies of satellite dishes, video and audio players and recorders, computers and video games … digital watches, and MTV were not exoticisms, but part of a daily "reality matrix." They were also the first generation of writers who were reading Thomas Pynchon, Ballard, and Burroughs as teenagers, who had grown up immersed in technology but also in pop culture, in the values and aesthetics of the counterculture associated with the drug culture, punk rock, video games, *Heavy Metal* comic books, and the gore-and-spatter SF/horror films of George Romero, David Cronenberg, and Ridley Scott (10).

Cyberpunk was fiction that imitated and aspired toward images and trends in popular culture. It celebrated formal and cultural hybridity and attempted to erase the divisions between "high" and "low" cultures, white and non-white spaces. This tendency toward paradoxical mixture was reflected in the term "cyberpunk" itself, which yoked two cultural phenomena that on the surface seemed to have little in common.

Cybernetics

As its name suggests, cyberpunk is a fusion of "cybernetics" from the realm of hard science and "punk music" from that of popular culture. The word "cybernetics," derived from the Greek *kubernētēs*, meaning "governor," is "the theoretical study of communication and control processes in biological, mechanical, and electronic systems, especially the comparison of these processes in biological and artificial systems" (Dictionary.com). The term was coined by Norbert Wiener in 1948 to refer to the actions and reactions of elements in various forms of artificial systems (Hayles 7). In *How We Became Posthuman* N. Kathryn Hayles describes three general "waves" of cybernetics which I will summarize briefly here.[xii]

The first phase (1945 to 1960) laid the groundwork for the field of study from research presented at the Macy Conferences on Cybernetics (1943-1952). Developments such as Claude Shannon's theory of information, Warren McCulloch's model of neurons as information systems, John von Neumann's application of biological functions to computer systems, and Norbert Wiener's general articulation of cybernetics shaped "a new way of looking at human beings … henceforth … to be seen primarily as information-processing entities who are *essentially* similar to intelligent machines" (7). According to Hayles, the central theme of this first phase of cybernetics was homeostasis or "the ability of living organisms to maintain steady states when they are buffeted by

fickle environments" through feedback loops (8); cyberneticists applied the notion of homeostasis to computers, thereby linking the organic with the inorganic.

The second phase (1960-1980) centered on the concept of reflexivity or "the movement whereby that which has been used to generate a system is made, through a changed perspective, to become part of the system it generates" (8). Whereas the first phase still privileged the human being over the computer through the traditional scientific perspective, which placed observers *outside* the system being observed, the boundaries between inside and outside, object and subject, computer and human, began to blur in the second phase. As Hayles puts it, "The objectivist view sees information flowing from the system to the observers, but feedback can also loop *through* the observers, drawing them in to become part of the system being observed" (9).

Scientists in this period redefined Wiener's paradigm by taking into consideration the role of the observer as participant. The result was "autopoiesis," a model proposed by Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela in 1980, which maintained that "systems are informationally closed," i.e. the functions and goals of biological and synthetic organisms are not related to their environment but rather only to the reproduction of their own internal structures (10). Hayles sums up the central idea of autopoeisis thus: "no information crosses the boundary separating the system from its environment. We do not see a world 'out there' that exists apart from us. Rather, we see only what our systemic organization allows us to see" (11).

Finally, the third phase of cybernetics (1980s to present) draws from emergentism, which states that organisms are capable of self-evolution, in order to develop the notion of virtuality. Virtuality extends the autopoietic premise that the aim of systems is to reproduce their internal structures by proposing that systems also change and grow, much like living organisms. According to Hayles, the emphasis on virtual

organisms and experiences appeared "when self-organization began to be understood not merely as the (re)production of internal organization but as the springboard to emergence. … The intent is to evolve the *capacity* to evolve" (11).

The paradigm of cybernetics associated with the third phase has led to controversial contemporary debates around the nature of "life" itself. As Hayles notes, researchers have argued that information systems can be considered "life forms" since they are capable not only of reproducing themselves but of evolving and producing new systems (11). Concepts such as "cyberspace," "artificial intelligence" and "virtual reality" are related to this current phase of cybernetics. They delineate a possible future (and for some such as Sandy Stone, Jean Baudrillard, and Stelarc, an immediate present) in which our lives have become so mediated that simulations of experiences cannot be distinguished from the original experiences themselves.

Punk

Punk, the second part of the term "cyberpunk," was a musical form, style, and culture that originated in the early 1970s among New York bands such as the New York Dolls, the Velvet Underground, and The Stooges. Dave Laing in *One Chord Wonders* states that these groups were linked musically in their stress on "directness and repetition (to use more than three chords was self-indulgence) at the expense of technical virtuosity" (12). The term "punk" first appeared in music fanzines; punks borrowed the form from science fiction fans who first made and circulated fanzines in the 1950s (14). A few years later, punk emerged in England among working class urban youth, who idolized bands such as the Sex Pistols, The Clash, and Joy Division. According to Laing, US and British versions of punk had in common their antagonism toward the status quo in popular music, which at the time, consisted of pop and progressive rock – both,

musical genres that required access to expensive equipment and recording studios. While US punks limited their activities to circulating fanzines, their British counterparts went further as Laing describes below:

> Schematically, its (British punk's) hostility to the mainstream in the music scene took three major forms: the 'do it yourself' attitude which refused to rely on the institutions of the established music industry, whether record companies or music press; a challenge to the orthodoxy of 'artistic excellence' in punk's choice of musical style; and the aggressive injection of new subject-matter into the lyrics of popular songs, some of which broke existing taboos (14).

Dick Hebdige discusses the punk "do it yourself" attitude in *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* as a form of cultural bricolage. According to Hebdige, punks redeployed signifiers from popular culture to critique consumer capitalism and the values of dominant culture. Underlying this critique was the punks' appropriation of black musics and cultures, specifically West Indian reggae and the Rastafarian culture associated with reggae (151). As Asian American scholars have begun to observe and as this project endeavors to show, cyberpunk likewise draws heavily from non-western cultures to construct its urban backdrops.

Like punk, cyberpunk was (and continues to be) characterized by an adolescent, primarily masculine posturing, which self-consciously articulates a defiant attitude toward established social institutions.[xiii] In the case of punk, that stylized defiance had roots in the political discontent of a marginal group, namely working class and unemployed British youth. Once punk was incorporated into dominant culture – and metamorphosed into "New Wave" – its initial political messages were lost or reinterpreted by the very audiences that had been the object of its critique. One finds a similar development in the trajectory of hip hop from its roots as a musical subculture

begun by poor black and Latino youth in 1970s Bronx to a global media enterprise in the present as Tricia Rose (1994), William Eric Perkins (1996), and S. Craig Watkins (1998) have discussed.

In contrast to these musical subcultures, cyberpunk did not emerge from within a marginalized or oppressed group. Rather, using already commodified punk aesthetics and attitudes, cyberpunk repackaged and sold hitherto stigmatized "computer nerd" culture as glamorous hacker subculture to disenchanted, mostly white North American adolescent males. The political thrust of cyberpunk was similar to that of the pioneer Internet community prior to the birth of the commercial World Wide Web in 1994: both communities consisted primarily of privileged white liberals who were optimistic about the potential for new technologies to build "freer" communities. In this sense, they hearkened back to past youth movements, especially the countercultural movement which fetishized psychedelic drugs as a means for stretching social and mental boundaries. According to Timothy Leary, a leading figure of 1960s drug culture who later became active in the cybernetics community, both movements had similar philosophies and goals, with the computer assuming the role in the 1980s and 1990s that LSD had played in the 1960s ("Personal Computers/Personal Freedom").

Critiques of Cyberpunk

Along with inspiring almost religious fervor in certain quarters, the cyberpunk movement also inevitably brought its share of criticism. For most critics, this fiction reiterated and glorified middle-class, white masculinist attitudes. For instance, in *Strange Weather* Andrew Ross discusses the racial and class privilege of cyberpunks. He argues that both commodified punk music and cyberpunk fiction appropriate non-white cultures, specifically images of the black inner city, to delineate an exciting and dangerous future

for white suburban male youth. For Ross, the political impulse behind this appropriation reproduces the values of dominant culture that punk and cyberpunk supposedly oppose:

> In the wake of punk culture's brilliant anti-utopian influence … the entropic, post-apocalyptic, ragtrade look … had its moment in high art-fashion, before coming to prevail over hundreds of heavy metal music videos that cast predominantly white rock stars as rebel survivors in trashed-out urban backdrops. These backdrops were presented as futuristic, although their existing prototype could be found in any inner-city environment, populated for the most part by non-whites This urban fantasy, however countercultural its claims and potential effects, shared the dominant, white middle-class conception of inner-city life. In this respect, the suburban romance of punk, and, subsequently of cyberpunk, fashioned a culture of alienation out of their parents' worst fears about life on the mean streets (144, 146).

Likewise Darko Suvin considers the demographics of cyberpunk producers and fans in his commentary on the political reach and potential duration of the movement, which he correctly predicted would be brief:

> Based on both external and internal evidence, I would speculate that cyberpunk sf is representative for the structure of feeling of an important but certainly not all-inclusive international social group … this is some fractions of the youth culture in the affluent North of our globe. More particularly, cyberpunk is correlative to the technicians and artists associated with the new communication media, and to the young who aspire to such a status. … Now this group is widespread, international, and significant beyond its numbers as cutting edge. However, it is certainly a small, single-digit percentage even of the youth of 15-30 years' age group, even in the affluent North (49).

Building on these critiques, Nicola Nixon provides an astute analysis of the gender dynamics in cyberpunk, focusing on the relationship between the constructed masculinity of the console cowboys and the feminized spaces of cyberspace or the "matrix," which they try to penetrate. Nixon sees cyberpunk fiction as a conservative

reaction by young male writers to 1970s radical feminist SF fiction by authors such as Ursula Le Guin, Joanna Russ, and Suzy McKee Charnas. This fiction, in its depiction of all-female utopias, in turn had been responding to the sexist undertones of previous "hard" SF in which women are reduced to the role of Madonna or whore – a dichotomous pattern both boring and frightening in its persistence. In the 1980s utopic feminist SF gave way to work by women writers such as Margaret Atwood, Zoë Fairbairns, and Pamela Sargent. While this fiction also critiqued the male-dominated worlds of science fiction, it did so through representations of horrifying female dystopias (219-220).

Nixon points out that writers and commentators of cyberpunk fiction omit both utopic 1970s and dystopic 1980s women-centered science fiction in their reconstructions of the SF canon (220). She sees the omission as part of a general dismissal of independent female presence in cyberpunk fiction and as the Oedipal desire of male cyberpunk writers to overthrow their predecessors in the genre, the SF "fathers" of the 1970s New Wave (220). According to Nixon, the "revolutionary" impulse behind cyberpunk stems not so much from a political critique of technology and post-industrial capitalism as it does from a need on the part of a new generation of male SF writers to distinguish themselves from the previous generation.

The technical proficiency of the protagonists in cyberpunk plays an important role in marking that distinction. This proficiency is based on the uneven power relationship between the individual, masculinized West represented by the cyberpunk cowboy, and the collective feminized East represented by the Japanese. Nixon describes the relationship thus:

> Cyberpunk's fascination with and energetic figuration of technology represents
> the American cowboy as simultaneously embattled and empowered. … In effect,
> the exceptionally talented, very masculine hero of cyberpunk, with specially
> modified (Americanized) Japanese equipment, can beat the Japanese at their own
> game, pitting his powerful individualism against the collective, domesticated,
> feminized, and therefore impenetrable and almost unassailable Japanese "family"
> corporations (225).

At this point, I would like to return to Wendy Chun's analysis of Orientalism in cyberpunk to which I referred in the previous section. Chun connects and extends Nixon's points when she takes into account the racialization of cyberspace. She draws a brilliant link between cyberspace and the Orient when she notes that both are "a literary invention" (9). Similar to the ways in which written orientalist texts have authorized as truth Western fantasies and myths about Asian cultures and peoples, cyberspace and cyberpunk fictions of cyberspace project a virtual futuristic fantasy of Asia for Western readers and computer users. Like Nixon, Chun sees cyberspace as feminized. At the same time, she also sees it as distinctly orientalized:

> Cyberspace in *Neuromancer* is not a US frontier and good old American cowboys
> cannot survive without things Japanese. First, cowboys cannot access cyberspace
> without Japanese equipment. Second, cyberspace is still marked by Asian
> trademarks and corporations. However, cyberspace – unlike the physical
> landscape – can be conquered and made to submit: entering cyberspace is
> analogous to opening up the Orient (14)

However, as Sharon Stockton suggests, the relationship between the console cowboy and orientalized cyberspace is not simply one between rapist and raped, subject and object. According to Stockton, "the problem for the cyberhero is potentially that the binary between knower and known might break down and that this instability might disintegrate the powerful status of the identity constructed through mythologized

projection into the virgin – or at least passive – plane of cyberspace" (592).   Chun likewise points to the complexity of the protagonist's relationship to cyberspace when she states, "high-tech orientalism allows one to *enjoy* anxieties about Western impotence. It allows one, as Gibson puts it, "to try to *come* to terms with the awe and terror inspired in me by the world in which we live. That is, ecstasy does not obliterate impotence, but rather allows one to make do with it" (15).

In the above passage Chun describes the potential for the matrix to overwhelm the protagonist in terms that are not wholly negative. However, she does not explore further the dynamics of the cyberhero's willing submersion into the simultaneously terrifying and exciting otherness of cyberspace. What Chun leaves unexamined is the relationship between the western male desire for an orientalized cyberspace and a less explicit, though perhaps more perverse and unthinkable desire on the part of the white male hacker to *become part of* that space. That desire -- which stems as much from fascination and the potential for connection with the Other as from fear and the need to distance from it -- appears *alongside* orientalist paranoia of East Asia. It is expressed abstractly in fiction through language and more concretely in cinema through images. Here then I will turn to the last section of this chapter, which outlines a general framework for what I have been calling "cyberpunk cinema."

"CYBERPUNK CINEMA"

In his last article for *Interzone* in 1991, Bruce Sterling announced the demise of the cyberpunk movement, which by then had become thoroughly commodified:

> Today it must be admitted that the cyberpunks – sf veterans in or near their forties, patiently refining their craft and cashing their royalty checks – are no longer a Bohemian underground. … Respectability does not merely beckon: it actively envelops … the issues at stake become something horribly akin to the standard concerns of middle-aged responsibility. And this may be splendid but it is not war. … Cyberpunk is simply not there anymore (40-41).

Sterling made it clear, however, that while cyberpunk as a specific literary movement might have come to an end, the notion of "cybernetic Bohemia" that had suffused the movement predated it and would continue in the future (41). In fact he closes the article with a kind of "call of arms" to the future cyberpunks of the 1990s – a call that on the literary front was answered in 1992 by Neal Stephenson with *Snow Crash* and on the cinematic one in 1999 by the Wachowski brothers.

A year after Sterling's article, Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, Jr. in a similar vein, suggested looking at cyberpunk not as a specific, period-based literary movement but rather as a general aesthetic or style of which that movement was a part. I quote Csicsery-Ronay's proposal below since it provides the base for my definition of cyberpunk cinema:

> I suggest, then, that we think of cyberpunk not as a movement in the US and Japanese SF trade, but as a more encompassing aesthetic – as it is embodied by Gibson and certain other postmodern artists. Viewed like this, cyberpunk is a legitimate international artistic style, with profound philosophical and aesthetic premises. It has already produced a body of significant work in literature (Gibson's novels) and especially in film: Ridley Scott's *Alien* (1979) and *Blade Runner* (1982), *Robocop* (1987), and Cronenberg's *Videodrome* (1983) (185).

In 1992 Brooks Landon also noted cyberpunk elements in certain SF films from the early 1980s to the present. Specifically, he draws stylistic ties between *Neuromancer* and two Hollywood films that were released before the novel: *Blade Runner* and *Tron*

(Lisberger), which both bowed in 1982. Landon points out that the vision of the future in these films and in cyberpunk fiction looks quite similar. He describes the relationship in the following way: "While the future presented in most cyberpunk stories may not be directly derived from or influenced by contemporary SF film, many of its distinctive elements have been anticipated by film and video alike" (122).

Along with *Tron* and *Blade Runner,* Landon includes the following SF films in a list of visual media, which he sees as having thematic and stylistic affinities with cyberpunk fiction: *A Clockwork Orange* (Kubrick 1971), the *Mad Max* films (Miller 1979, 1981, 1985), *Scanners* (Cronenberg 1981), *Escape from New York, Liquid Sky* (Tsukerman 1982), *Repo Man* (Cox 1984), *Brazil* (1985), *Running Man* (Glaser 1987), and the *Terminator* movies (Cameron 1984, 1991). Many of these films such as *Liquid Sky* and *Repo Man* were small, low-budget features that became underground cult classics through alternate viewing venues and practices, namely late night and cable television and videotape rentals. Drawing from Csicsery-Ronay Jr.'s notion of cyberpunk as an international aesthetic, I use the modifer "cyberpunk" to describe the films listed by Landon and other SF film that have similar themes and motifs. Earlier in my Introduction I defined cyberpunk cinema as a subgenre of dystopic science fiction film. I will expand on that definition here.

Vivian Sobchack opens *Screening Space*, her seminal study of US science fiction cinema, by discussing the difficulties in establishing a definition for the science fiction genre. She notes that defining the SF film is more difficult than defining SF fiction since the former has been held in generally low esteem by purist SF critics. According to Sobchack, such critics historically have looked down on the majority of SF films, from 1950s low-budget B films to 1980s blockbusters, for the following reasons: their explicitly commodified nature, their targeting of children and adolescents as primary

audiences, and their popular translation of SF concepts into spectacular and sometimes reductive forms for the cinematic medium (17-26).

Somewhat defensively, Sobchack emphasizes that the release of *2001: A Space Odyssey* and subsequent "serious" SF films proved the ability of this film genre to address adult as well as youth audiences (26). She then goes on to discuss at length the differences and similarities between horror and science fiction films, focusing on the "creature" SF films of the 1950s, which have proven hard to categorize in either genre. In the end, she contends that the very elements which make SF cinema difficult to pin down as a genre are precisely what give it its continued appeal (63).

In "A Semantic/Syntactic Approach to Film Genre" Rick Altman suggests a way to look at film genres that takes into account their hybridity and mutability—traits posited by Sobchack as both precluding a fixed definition of the SF film and giving the genre its continued cultural currency. Altman begins by noting the contradictions in existing genre theory and then goes on to show how a synthesis of historical and formal approaches can begin to address those contradictions. According to Altman, different canons have formed based on different ways of defining a genre. The first is the "inclusive" or semantic approach, which categorizes films as part of a genre based on common characteristics such as camera shots, sets, and props. The second is the "exclusive" or syntactic approach, which does the same based on how well certain films express those characteristics in representing that genre. From these methodologies, two seemingly opposed approaches to film genre emerged in the 1970s. The first was the "ritual approach," exemplified by John Cawelti, Michael Wood, Frank McConnell, and Tom Schatz, which centered on how genres expressed the societal desires of changing audiences. The second was the "ideological approach," exemplified by work in the journals, *Cahiers du Cinema*, *Screen*, and *Jump Cut,* which took a Frankfurt School

stance toward popular media in its assumption of audiences as passive dupes of Hollywood (26-30).

Altman's approach to the study of film genres stresses the points of intersection between these superficially opposed critical modes by showing how Hollywood genres function as sites of *negotiation* between the changing social desires of the audience and the ideological needs and constraints of Hollywood:

> If it takes a long time to establish a generic syntax and if many seemingly promising formulas or successful films never spawn a genre, it is because only certain types of structure, within a particular semantic environment, are suited to the special bilingualism required of a durable genre. ... Hollywood does not simply lend its voice to the public's desires, nor does it simply manipulate the audience. On the contrary, most genres go through a period of accommodation during which the public's desires are fitted to Hollywood's priorities (and vice-versa). Because the public doesn't want to know that it is being manipulated, the successful ritual/ideological "fit" is almost always one that disguises Hollywood's potential for manipulation while playing up its capacity for entertainment. Whenever a lasting fit is obtained … it is because a common ground has been found, a region where the audience's ritual values coincide with Hollywood's ideological ones (36).

My contention is that since the early 1980s, cyberpunk films have emerged as a viable subgenre of SF cinema in that they embody this "fit" between ritual (social) and ideological (industrial) needs. Before going on to describe this subgenre, I would like to make it clear that while issues of genre and aesthetics structure this dissertation, I am not interested in making an argument for the importance of cyberpunk cinema along prominently formal lines. Scott Bukatman already has done this in *Terminal Identity*, his comprehensive study of cyberpunk influence in film and video. Unlike Bukatman, I focus not so much on the general aesthetic and narrative characteristics of these films as on the specific ways in which their oriental tropes and imagery relate to social and cultural

representations of East Asia and Asian America in the United States. As far as I am aware, the phrase "cyberpunk cinema" has not been used as a descriptive generic term in Film and Media Studies. However, this does not mean that the concept of cyberpunk cinema is new or original. Previous studies of SF cinema – again by Bukatman, Landon, and Sobchack – have addressed the formal characteristics of films that I am calling cyberpunk. What I present here is a consolidated list of some of these characteristics as a necessary starting point for my analyses of oriental imagery in *Blade Runner* and *The Matrix,* which follow in the next several chapters.

Under the cyberpunk film subgenre then, I include futuristic SF films from the 1980s to the present that emphasize the darker and often more ambivalent aspects of cybernetics technologies – films such as *Blade Runner, Videodrome, The Matrix, eXistenZ,* and *Artificial Intelligence: AI* (Spielberg 2001). I do not include in this category all movies that showcase computers, robotics, or virtual technologies. For example, I do not consider films such as *Short Circuit* (Badham 1986)*, Jurassic Park* (Spielberg 1993)*, The Net* (Winkler 1995)*,* and *The Truman Show* (Weir 1998) "cyberpunk" in this study. While they deal with some themes of cybernetics, these films neither contain nor reference tropes associated specifically with cyberpunk culture such as the hacker underground and the technologized city. Furthermore, they do not exhibit the dark, sometimes playfully ironic and at other times rather oppressive, tone characteristic of cyberpunk cinema, which derives largely from the film noir and to some extent, horror genres.

Part Two looks at the relationship between film noir and cyberpunk cinema in more detail. I have not chosen to discuss the connections between horror and cyberpunk for the following reasons. Horror has some affinities with cyberpunk specifically and science fiction generally. In particular, SF films such as the *Alien* series, *Dreamscape,*

The Lawnmower Man (Leonard 1992)*,* and *28 Days Later* (Boyle 2003) contain many characteristic traits of the horror genre from narrative timing, editing, and music to the representation of the alien, cyborg, or other human-technology hybrid as the monster figure. *Blade Runner* and *The Matrix* also contain elements of horror, most notably in the dark, rainy settings, pacing, and camera work in certain scenes: for example, the climatic sequence in *Blade Runner* beginning with Roy Batty's murder of Tyrell to his pursuit of Deckard and in *The Matrix* the sequence beginning with Neo being taken to meet Morpheus to his awakening in the Matrix. However, for the most part, neither of these films continues to display those elements consistently throughout their narratives.

Furthermore, the central films of this study do not display, except as cosmetic accents, the Gothic influences that characterize some cyberpunk films and that constitute the roots of the horror genre in literature and film (Bunnell 79-100). Instead *Blade Runner* and *The Matrix,* like most cyberpunk films, fall more closely under the category of traditional SF. Whereas horror seeks to elicit strong visceral and emotional responses from the audience such as pity, fear, and/or disgust toward the Other, the Other of cyberpunk cinema functions more often as an object to be observed with curious, intellectual detachment. The shock never wears off in horror films because the camera keeps us empathizing with the creature's victims or the creature itself, whereas in cyberpunk films, the shock wears off quickly. It is primarily this sense of audience detachment, reinforced by distanced camera movement and character treatment that distinguishes science fiction from horror according to Sobchack (32-43).

Along with the visual tropes and the tone described by Csicsery-Ronay and Landon, films that I am calling "cyberpunk cinema" possess the following formal and narrative characteristics. To begin with, they are set in a futuristic city in which new and old technologies play a vital role in human navigation, interaction, and survival. They

feature an often cynical young, male anti-hero who feels vaguely discontent and dislocated in this environment but finds himself trapped within it. The *mise-en-scène* of cyberpunk films contains a large number of mirrors and screens which constantly force the viewer and the characters to contemplate, both consciously and unconsciously, the relationship between appearance and reality. The reproduction of simulacra that results from these reflective surfaces intensifies the feeling of entrapment within the mediated space of the cyberpunk city. This image saturation also renders almost impossible one's ability to distinguish the original from its copy or copies – the real from the artificial, the human from the machine.

Given this confusing state of affairs, the antagonists in cyberpunk cinema are hard to locate and identify. Rather than aliens coming from outer space, they are usually creatures that have been constructed by human beings and have emerged from within our own heavily technologized societies and bodies. Indeed what makes the "other" in cyberpunk cinema so terrifying and dangerous is its ability to pass as human, an ability which puts into question our own humanity – a point to which I will return throughout the dissertation. Finally, cyberpunk films strike a paradoxical and highly ambivalent pose with regards to the relationship between technology and human beings. At the same time that human beings rely on and to a large extent, already possess many qualities that are characteristic of the machines in these films, technology consistently is represented as the necessary, othered object to the human subject.

CYBERPUNK CINEMA AND POSTMODERN HOLLYWOOD

Cyberpunk cinema, as described above, falls under the "postfuturist" category of SF cinema which Sobchack describes as a shift from a cultural preoccupation with *outer* space to an obsession with *inner* space (254). According to Sobchack, earlier SF films in

which the boundaries between the alien other and the human protagonist were clearly delineated gave way to films in which those boundaries became more blurred, following the release of *Star Wars* in 1977. She states that unlike previous SF movies which emphasize the "newness" of technology, contemporary ones instead celebrate its familiarity:

> the contemporary SF film's predominant emphasis is on mapping not the fearsome and awesome 'newness' of the new technology, but rather its awesome and wondrous familiarity. The films no longer symbolically figure the alien-nation generated by a 'whole new economic world system' but rather our *incorporation* of that new system and our *absorption* by it (252).

This blurring of inside and outside has become even more pronounced in cyberpunk cinema from the mid 1990s to the present as Hollywood cinema generally has grown more explicitly "postmodern," reflecting the increasingly mediated landscape of US culture and the incorporation of new digital technologies in film production. Films of this period, including *Pulp Fiction* (Tarantino 1994), *Memento* (Nolan 2000)*, Shrek* (Adamson 2001), and *Moulin Rouge* (Luhrmann 2001), aggressively exhibit the following traits which define the postmodern aesthetic, namely the breakdown of the classical Aristotelian narrative, the privileging of style and spectacle over content, and a collapse of time and space that results from the relentless scavenging and recombination of cultural signifiers following Fredric Jameson and others.

Cyberpunk cinema has always foregrounded those traits. Given its inherently "postmodern" nature, along with social and industrial developments such as the incorporation of the Internet and the success of the film series, *Robocop* and *Terminator,* it is not surprising that cyberpunk styles and themes began appearing regularly in high budget Hollywood films during the 1990s. By the mid 1990s such films had earned a new

label in the popular press: "cyber cinema." Like their 1980s counterparts, many of these films strongly resembled cyberpunk fiction. For example, Christopher Sharrett's description of "cyber cinema" in a 1995 *USA Today* article presents an image of the future that could have been lifted from the pages of *Neuromancer*:

> the new techno dystopia often is intended to be not dissimilar to the world we now inhabit. … The centrality of the computer to a film's action has become rather passC (sic), taking a back seat to motion pictures' larger preoccupation with virtual reality and the all-encompassing aspect of cyberspace. In many respects, this theme is directly adjacent to the portrayal of the city as corporate citadel surrounded by slums and miles of blighted wasteland, saturated with a media circus that blends fact and fantasy into a phantasmagorical sandwich (86).

While certain traits remain consistent in cyberpunk cinema from the 1980s to the present as Sharrett's description suggests, other elements of these films have changed along with their social, cultural, and industrial contexts. A brief comparison, for instance, of *Brazil* and *Minority Report* demonstrates this point. Both films follow the cyberpunk subgenre formula as outlined above: they are set in futuristic societies replete with technology; the protagonists are trapped in an overwhelming bureaucratic network of which they grow to realize they are an insignificant and expendable part; and in the end, both protagonists escape that system – the first through fantasy and death and the second through legal justice.

While the narrative arcs are somewhat similar, however, the films *look* extraordinarily different, a difference related to the changing function of and attitudes toward technology in US society and cinema. Like many 1980s cyberpunk films, *Brazil* exhibits an analog mode of technology with its display of older typewriters, televisions, battered cars and tanks, and sundry mechanical gadgets. This is in stark contrast to *Minority Report* which, like most contemporary cyberpunk films, sports a slicker, digital

look thanks to the now almost mandatory use of CGI effects and digital editing in the SF and fantasy genres specifically and Hollywood blockbusters generally. Cyberpunk films from the early to mid 1990s such as *The Lawnmower Man* (Leonard 1992) and *Johnny Mnemonic* (Longo 1995) presaged this development in the analog special effects that they used to represent virtual spaces. Such effects were striving for the technologically "cool" feel of computer graphics which became possible only with the advent of digital film and editing.

Ironically, however, since the shift to more digitally rendered spaces and bodies in cyberpunk cinema, the major thematic preoccupation of cyberpunk – namely the ambiguous relationship between the real and the image – has, in many ways, ceased to surprise or provoke. The question of what is real or not has become moot; when it arises in the narrative, it is undermined the visuals. The screen actualization of the technical possibilities toward which 1980s cyberpunk strived appears to have moved this SF subgenre from the realm of futuristic fantasy into that of the almost quotidien.

CONCLUSION

As dismal futuristic visions become more and more indistinguishable from the present world, categories of race and ethnicity are being redefined in ways that emphasize some histories while erasing others. In this chapter I discussed the significant role that a white liberal penchant for multicultural images has played in the development of the cyberpunk aesthetic. From the consistent presence of Japanese language, bodies, and architecture in Gibson's novels to the exhibition of non-white bodies and spaces in films such as *Alien, Demolition Man*, *Hackers,* and *Judge Dredd,* racial others have provided the necessary backdrop for visions of a technologized future in which traditional social boundaries have dissolved or always are on the verge of dissolving. In particular oriental

tropes became a fixed characteristic of cyberpunk narratives during the formative period of cyberpunk cinema from the early 1980s to the mid 1990s.

Since approximately 1995, however, one can see a distinct shift in cyberpunk cinema, not only visually, in the sleeker, digital look of the films, but also ideologically, in its increased incorporation of non-white bodies and styles in the primary narratives and the foreground. Whereas most protagonists in 1980s cyberpunk films were male and white, a few protagonists since the mid 1990s have begun to expand this description of the technologically proficient hero. For instance, men of color play central roles in the cyberpunk films *Johnny Mnemonic, Blade* (Norrington 1998), and *The One* (Wong 2001) and white women in *Tank Girl* (Talalay 1995), *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider*, and *Resident Evil* (Anderson 2002).

Amidst these developments, oriental tropes (Asian things and bodies as background separate from the primary narrative) have been joined by oriental styles (Asian things and bodies as foreground connected to the primary narrative). In the past ten years, as cyberpunk attitudes and aesthetics became more socially entrenched in the US, Asian along with other "ethnic" images and products gained more cultural cache. In particular, as I will discuss in Chapter Five, Japanese animation and martial arts films developed strong US youth followings in dominant popular culture during this period. According to Darrell Hamamoto, the growing visibility of oriental styles in American popular culture continues the imperialist legacy of Orientalism:

> The fetishization of all things Asian in popular culture – owing in part to the rise of Hong Kong cinema … the ubiquity of female Asian American television-news anchors and fashion models … Asian food fadism … and the acceptance by young people of such imports as *anime* – seemingly has neutralized the more virulent manifestations of Asiaphobia. Whereas 'Orientalist' discourse in cinema once helped mobilize and sustain support for US and European imperium in the Near East and Asia, Asiaphilia is a deceptively benign ideological construct that naturalizes and justifies the systematic appropriation of cultural property and expressive forms created by Yellow people (12).

92

Hamamoto defines Asiaphilia incontrovertibly here as a form of cultural appropriation. While this is true in some cases, it is not true in all. What is currently happening with regards to the popularity of East Asian cultural forms in the US cannot be explained as just another form of cultural imperialism. That is simply too easy. This kind of interpretation fails to acknowledge the points of connections that inevitably are forged between East and West through the mutual production and consumption of oriental tropes and styles. More importantly, Hamamoto's view and others like it do not take into account the fact that cultural identities and communities constantly are being negotiated and reconstructed, nor do they acknowledge the significant role that popular media play in our continued reformulations of self and other.

At the same time, the specter of cultural appropriation cannot help but haunt the techno-orientalist imagery of Hollywood cyberpunk cinema since US cinema continues to dominate the world market, economically and ideologically. How then can we address cultural appropriation even as we stay open to the possibility of cultural appreciation and collaboration in the continued production of these images? In the following chapters, I grapple with this question in my readings of *Blade Runner* and *The Matrix,* two films that for most US viewers define cyberpunk cinema from the 1980s and 1990s, respectively. By analyzing differences and similarities in the oriental imagery of these films, I hope to show how techno-orientalism in cyberpunk cinema has influenced and continues to influence the ambivalent ways in which we regard racial and cultural difference, especially as such difference is expressed in the Oriental and Technological Other.

Chapter Three

Blade Runner and the Beginnings of Hollywood Cyberpunk

The film is a tongue-in-cheek idea of what could actually happen if the replicant industry becomes a large conglomerate, a monopoly. … To do a film like this you can choose to go in one of two directions. You can choose to do a film which is about genetics and genetic engineering, which is a very serious subject. … But we decided not to do that kind of movie.

> -- Ridley Scott[xiv]

INTRODUCTION

It begins in a hazy blue interrogation room, faint streaks of light entering through Venetian blinds. The examiner smokes a cigarette as he throws psychological questions at his wide-eyed but otherwise inexpressive subject. The subject grows noticeably more nervous. His responses become shorter and jerkier until he is asked to talk about his mother, at which point he stands up and shoots the interrogator. The blast from the bullet violently hurls the still seated interrogator against the wall.

The camera cuts to a bird's eye view of a futuristic city at night which bellows smoke and glitters with neon lights. Futuristic flying cars shoot out at us while otherworldly Eastern music, accented with Tayo drums and chimes, plays in the background. After displaying a translucent image of an oversized, unblinking eye, the camera hones in on two spectacular displays – the first, a golden corporate pyramid which resembles an ancient Mayan temple, and the second, a large electronic billboard which alternates the image of a seductively smiling geisha with that of a Coca Cola bottle.

This evocative opening of *Blade Runner* has been cited widely as the quintessential vision of the urban future since its appearance in the 1980s. Its juxtaposition of film noir elements, the not-quite-human subject, and lush, techno-orientalist imagery also introduce the terms for my own critical narrative on *Blade Runner* which unfolds in this chapter and the next.

My discussion of the relationship between the representation of racial and gendered others and the depiction of urban dystopia in this seminal cyberpunk film begins with an overview of its industrial and critical history, specifically with an outline of the adaptation, pre-production, and production processes involved in the making of the film. I take this point of departure because while many academics have written exhaustively about *Blade Runner,* few have examined its industrial background which contains some crucial keys for understanding how the film operates as a cultural product.[xv] Next, I consider the connections between the initial negative reception of the film and its later revised status in academic and art circles as a vanguard, so-called "postmodern" work. The chapter ends with a look at how scholars have handled the film's treatment of racial difference generally and East Asian difference specifically. In addressing these various production and reception contexts, this chapter provides the industrial, historical, and critical groundwork for my analysis in the next chapter which centers on the question of why East Asian imagery looms so largely in the city spaces of *Blade Runner*.

ADAPTATION

Since its release in theaters over twenty years ago, Ridley Scott's film has become a Hollywood staple and a cult classic, not just among science fiction fans but among many members of the North American intelligentsia as well. The film has spawned a

huge fandom as shown by a recent search for websites on *Blade Runner* material, which returned approximately 290,000 hits.[xvi] Crafted by art-school trained director Scott, industrial designer Syd Mead, production designer Lawrence Paull, and special effects expert Douglas Trumbull, the "look" of *Blade Runner* has been adopted as the template for the futuristic city in Hollywood cinema, Japanese animation, videogames, cyberpunk fiction, and underground comics. Along with the film's aesthetic influences, its cybernetic themes – like those of William Gibson's novel *Neuromancer* – often are cited to show how science fiction more and more is helping to shape science fact.

The film was based roughly on the 1968 novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* by Philip K. Dick. Cited as a major influence by contemporary cyberpunk writers, Philip Dick's work can be seen as proto-cyberpunk in its futuristic delineation of twentieth century phenomena such as the rise of commodity culture, the depletion of natural resources, overpopulation, and the increasing class divide. Dick critiques these current social problems through the gritty futuristic stories of alienated male protagonists who try, often in vain, to distinguish reality from fantasy as they sludge along in harsh, neon-suffused cities.

The paranoia experienced by these characters was not unfamiliar to the writer, who in the 1960s, tore through three marriages and consumed vast amounts of amphetamines to increase his literary output. The drug regimen worked up to a point. In total Dick produced thirty three novels, several of which since have been optioned or produced as Hollywood films, including *Blade Runner, Total Recall* (Verhoeven 1990), *Screamers* (Duguay 1995), *Impostor* (Fleder 2002), *Minority Report*, and *Paycheck* (Woo 2004).[xvii] Along the way, he garnered much praise from the science fiction world, winning the prestigious Hugo Award in 1962 for *The Man in the High Castle* and the John W. Campbell Memorial Award in 1974 for *Flow My Tears, the Policeman Said*. He

also gained a strong fan base in the American counterculture during the late 1960s and 1970s with psychedelic novels such as *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* and *Ubik*.

However, Dick's speed habit eventually took a toll on his mental health. Frequent nervous breakdowns, deteriorating physical health and abandonment by his fourth wife in 1970 plunged the writer into a drug and alcohol low from which he did not recover until 1974 when he allegedly began experiencing mystical visions. Convinced he had been touched by God, Dick earnestly began to study religion and philosophy and cleaned up his personal life. At the time of his death in 1982 (right before the opening of *Blade Runner*), Dick's work was heavily acclaimed throughout the US and Europe (Hayles 160-163). Since then his fame has increased with the rapid integration of cyberpunk sensibilities in popular culture. In the past few years, retrospectives of Dick's life and work have appeared in *The New York Times* and *The New Republic*; his autobiography *Valis* has been turned into an opera; and high end publishers Ballantine Books and Gollancz have reissued his books. Once relegated to the pulp shelves, Dick's work is now being taught as part of the American literary canon. Indeed, *Maus* author Art Spiegelman has summed up the extent of Dick's posthumous influence thus: "What Franz Kafka was to the first half of the 20th century Philip Dick is to the second half" (Corliss 63).

The strong relevance of Dick's idiosyncratic vision in the 21st century is best demonstrated by his continued popularity in Hollywood. Since the release of *Blade Runner*, his work has become a favorite for those seeking material to adapt into the SF action genre (Bzdek). Along with the aforementioned adaptations, two of Dick's stories are in development at the time of this writing: "A Scanner Darkly" (Richard Linklater with Warner Bros. and Section Eight) and "King of the Elves" (Wally Wolodarsky with Disney) (Bloom). One wonders how the man who once said "You would have to kill me

and prop me up in the seat of my car with a smile painted on my face to get me to go near Hollywood" would respond to this turn of events were he still alive (Sammon 20).

Paul Sammon, who wrote the definitive book on the making of *Blade Runner,* observes ironically of Dick's first optioned novel that "what began as a militantly antiestablishment literary protest ultimately became a thoroughly capitalistic Hollywood production" (20). The adaptation of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* (hereafter *Android*) into *Blade Runner* took two American screenwriters, an international team of artists and a British director with a relentless perfectionist streak. This motley crew transformed Dick's social commentary on artificial intelligence into a slick noirish tale, moving the action from a deserted San Francisco wasteland into a crowded Los Angeles that looks like a surreal mixture of New York and Tokyo.

Set in 1992, *Android* centers on the exploits of bounty hunter Rick Deckard after he accepts an assignment from his boss, Inspector Harry Bryant, to kill six androids ("andys") recently escaped from a Martian colony. Deckard takes the job to buy his heart's desire, a non-electric pet sheep. Along the way he falls in love with one of his targets, a female android named Rachel, who betrays him in classic femme fatale fashion. The world Deckard inhabits is coated with radioactive dust, nuclear residue from World War Terminus, which has killed the majority of life on earth and rendered most of the human survivors sterile or mentally defective ("chickenheads"). Those with means have left the planet to make their homes on distant, unpolluted worlds. Those remaining raise animals as status symbols, with biologically natural beasts outranking mechanical ones on the socioeconomic scale of value. Like the radioactive dust that has turned the planet into an environmental wasteland, the "andys" are carryovers from and reminders of the war. Created initially as war weapons, these former "Synthetic Freedom Fighters" in peacetime are used as slave labor to develop colonies on neighboring planets.

Dick was inspired to write the novel while doing research at the University of California at Berkeley for *The Man in the High Castle,* a novel set in an alternate version of the United States in which the Axes powers have won World War II. Among Gestapo documents, Dick came across the following sentence in the diary of an SS official in Poland: "We are kept awake at night by the cries of starving children." In an interview with Sammon, Dick explained how that sentence became the thematic kernel for *Android:*

> With the Nazis, what we were essentially dealing with was a defective group mind, a mind so emotionally defective that the word 'human' could not be applied to them. … This deficiency could be picked up by people anywhere, at any time. You see, I wrote *Android* right in the middle of the Vietnam War, and at the time I was revolutionary enough and existential enough to believe that these android personalities were so lethal, so dangerous to human beings, that it ultimately might become necessary to fight them. The problem in this killing then would be, "Could we not become like the androids, in our very effort to wipe them out?" (16-17).

Dick does not clarify which group or groups of people involved in the Vietnam War qualify as "androids" or "android personalities." For the writer, the concept of the android functions universally, as a "metaphor for people who are physiologically human but behaving in a nonhuman way (Sammon 16). According to Dick, anyone could be or become an android. The human differed from the android only in his or her ability to have and express emotions, especially empathy for other living beings. At the same time, *Android* critiques the lines drawn between humans and non-humans by suggesting that empathy might be a commodifiable product rather than an innate trait. This idea becomes most explicit when Deckard learns that the founder of the religion Mercerism, which preaches empathy through a virtual reality program, is himself a media fabrication – a washed-up talk show host playing a bit role. (In the film, this notion is encapsulated in

99

the Voigt-Kampf test, which measures the empathy quotient of a subject to determine its human or non-human status.) If empathy is an acquired trait, and humanness is determined by the amount of empathy present in a body, then it would follow that the concept of the human, too, might be a social and technological construct (Hayles 164-191). Thus, in Dick's universe, humans could become more android-like with the diminishment of their capacity to feel emotion for others (or more precisely, *as* others), while androids could become more human-like through the development of that capacity. Along with *Blade Runner,* many SF films have explored this idea of a thing *becoming* human through the narrative device of romantic love between a human male and a not-quite-human female. Examples include *Solaris* (Tarkovsky 1972), *Alphaville* (Godard 1968), and most recently the Japanese animated film *Metropolis* (Rin 2001).[xviii]

According to Robin Wood, the final adaptation of *Android* rendered *Blade Runner* an "autonomous work":

> Gone or played down are most of the novel's major structuring premises: the nuclear war that has rendered the earth unsafe for the support of life and health; the use of animals as rare, expensive, coveted status symbols; the pseudo religion of "Mercerism." One might define the fundamental difference thus: the concerns of the novel are predominantly metaphysical, those of the film predominantly social (182-183).

While mostly concurring with Wood, I find the division he draws here between the "metaphysical" approach of the novel and the "social" one of the film a bit facile. Most books on film adaptation begin with the premise that stories necessarily must be told differently in different media. For example, throughout *Making a Good Script Great*, Linda Seger repeatedly stresses the biggest difference between a text-based medium like the novel and a visual one like the cinema, namely that the former "tells" while the latter

"shows" (Seger 81). Regardless, basic themes and tones from a novel to a film (and nowadays, film to novel, film to videogame, or videogame to film) can and occasionally do carry over. To put it another way, the "social" can be used to elucidate the "metaphysical" and vice versa: showing can tell (images create mental word-based text) just as telling can show (words create mental images). Indeed this is what happens in a successful film. The filmmaker relates a socially-grounded experience in such a way that viewers are temporarily transported out of their respective realities and compelled to regard the familiar from a new and different angle.

Many critics and fans believe such a process occurs in *Blade Runner* – perhaps because, like the book, the film investigates a common contemporary reality: the social and psychological impact of the emotional distancing required of citizens in a post-capitalist labor economy – a distancing that leads not only to the dehumanization of others but of oneself as well. Unlike the book, however, the film engages with this theme through a combination of the Hollywood SF and hardboiled detective genres. As a result, the focus is less on the relationships between the main characters and more on the visual and visceral spaces where they meet and interact. This shift to narrating the story primarily through visual and haptic strategies rather than textual ones has the effect of embodying and performing the themes of Dick's novel.

The adaptation of novel to screen began officially in 1975 when actor and filmmaker, Hampton Fancher, interviewed Philip Dick with a mind to option *Android*.[xix] According to Fancher, the interview was not successful (Abbot). Two years later his friend, fellow actor and soon to be producer Brian Kelly tried again, and was able to persuade Dick to option his book for $2000. Kelly took the idea to British producer Michael Deeley, best known for his later work on *Deer Hunter* (Cimino 1978). Deeley told the team he would consider producing *Android* only if they wrote the screenplay.

After acquiring executive producer credits, Fancher reluctantly undertook the task. A year later, he was rewarded when the script, tentatively titled "Android," met with Deeley's approval. According to Sammon, Deeley was intrigued by Fancher's combination of thriller and romance, which to him suggested elements of a captivating "concentration camp movie": "If you were to cast it in another genre and time period, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Android* could almost have been something like a World War II concentration camp movie with a heartless Nazi commandant falling in love with his beautiful Jewish prisoner" (34).

For the most part, Fancher's initial adaptation was consistent with the principle plot and themes of the book. It developed Dick's ecological critique, depicted Deckard as a harried petty bureaucrat, and kept most of the action in deserted buildings. Changes included reducing the role of Iran, Deckard's wife in *Android,* expanding that of Rachel, and moving the action to Los Angeles. According to Fancher, his first draft was visually and economically modest, a "small drama" that played up Deckard's disillusionment with the moral and physical pollution around him (Sammon 36). In contrast to the incongruous happy ending of the 1982 Domestic Cut and the ambiguous one of the 1992 Director's Cut, Fancher's original screenplay ended with a clear moral message. Rachel has killed herself, and a devastated Deckard is wandering the desert. He drops from exhaustion then notices an overturned turtle struggling to right itself. When it finally succeeds, Deckard takes heart, rises and begins walking back to town. The last shot encapsulated the theme of environmental interconnectedness that Fancher was keen to express in the film:

> It was a long pullback. It began by receding from Deckard until he was just a tiny dot, then you saw a satellite photo of the lush, beautifully blue planet that is Earth. And then you pulled back from that until you were lost in the cosmos. Fadeout. Everyone loved that ending. We all cried over it (Sammon 37).

PRODUCTION

Shortly after Deeley's approval of Fancher's script, pre-production went into full swing with the addition of producers Katherine Haber and Ivor Powell. For a year, the team scouted potential financiers, directors, and principles, trying out among other companies and persons, CBS Films, Robert Mulligan and Dustin Hoffman (Sammon 38-42). After passing initially on the project, Ridley Scott officially signed on as director for $15 million in February 1980, and a few months later, Filmways Pictures, a small, independent outfit, pledged $13 million to the film. Estimated production cost was set at $20 million. In May 1980 the production team moved into offices at Sunset-Gower studios under the newly formed aegis of Brighton Productions (Sammon 49-52). After several attempts at a title, including "Mechanismo" and "Dangerous Days," they settled on the working title "Blade Runner" before principle photography began in February 1981. The title was taken from a SF action thriller called *Blade Runner* by Alan Nourse and a screenplay by William Burroughs based on Nourse's book titled *Blade Runner: (A Movie)* (Instrell 162-163). Neither bore any narrative resemblance to Dick's novel or the film.

Scott's arrival to the project led to crucial changes in the script, which brought filmmaker David Peoples into the fold as primary screenwriter and moved the film closer to the action thriller genre. In "On the Edge," a Channel Four documentary on the making of the film, Deeley points out Scott's cache at the time as a director known for the "visual quality and scale" of his work, which had been demonstrated in his first SF film *Alien*: "Ridley … has the best eye of *anybody* directing film I know about, and if you want to make a picture that looks *stunning*, as this picture had to do, then the best person you could get is Ridley" (Abbot). Scott's inclination toward the visual aspects of filmmaking stemmed from his training at the Royal College of Art in London and his experience as a

set designer and director at the British Broadcasting Company (BBC). After directing programs at the BBC such as *The Informer* and *Z-Cars*, Scott left television to form an advertising company with his brother Tony. Together they founded Ridley Scott Associates in 1967 and went on to produce more than two thousand commercials, many of which won prestigious awards in the field.

Ten years later, Scott released his first film, *The Duelists* based on the novella by Joseph Conrad, which won the Grand Prix at the 1977 Cannes Film Festival and was marketed subsequently as an art film. Dissatisfied with the financial return of *The Duelists,* Scott set out to make a more commercially lucrative film (Sammon 43-46). The result was *Alien,* cited by film scholars alongside movies such as *Jaws* (Spielberg 1975) and *Star Wars* as a prime example of the New Hollywood style. Nominated for Best Art Direction and winner of Best Visual Effects at the 1979 Academy Awards, *Alien* grossed more than $100 million at the box office, securing Scott's position as a powerful new contender in Hollywood (*Imdb*).

How Scott went about constructing a futuristic social context for Fancher's script is covered in more detail in the following chapter. For now it is enough to note that he opened up the story visually, providing a world outside the interior spaces where most of the events till then had taken place. Screenwriter Hampton Fancher was enthusiastic about Scott externalizing his script, but he was not as pleased about other revisions the director made, especially the elimination of the ecological theme and the Rachel's diminished role in the narrative. According to Deeley and Haber, Fancher saw the film as a "romantic morality play" while Scott wanted more of a "detective thriller" (Sammon 57). Unable to compromise, Fancher quit, and Scott and Deeley took the script to David Peoples, who had won an Academy Award for his documentary film, *The Day After Trinity* (Else 1980) (*Imdb*).

In late December 1980 Peoples submitted his revisions which further developed the detective elements of the film, including the plot points that lead Deckard to Chinatown where he finds and kills the female replicant Zhora. Peoples was also responsible for renaming the androids "replicants," a contribution from his daughter who was studying biochemistry at the time.[xx] When Fancher's original script, Peoples' revisions, and revisions by Scott and the producers were cobbled together into a shooting script on December 22, 1980, everything seemed ready to go. The sets had been built, and shooting was slated to start in less than two months.

Then disaster struck. Philip Dick heard about the film through outside sources and was furious that the producers had not bothered to consult with him on the screenplay. Dick found a copy of Fancher's script and called the studio to express his dissatisfaction with the adaptation. He elaborated in an interview with Sammon:

> Fancher had overrelied [sic] on the old cliché-ridden Chandleresque figure. … And the ending had this awful thing where Rachael mercifully, for everyone's sake, does herself in. At which point Deckard grows in stature from the experience. 'Grows in stature' is just a sobriquet for the fact that he's really grown infinitely more cynical, which is apparently how these Hollywood people mature (Sammon 57).

When the producers failed to answer his calls, Dick publicly voiced his ire in an article he sent to the now defunct magazine *Select TV Guide* (*Ibid*). Fortunately, Peoples' rewrites and a screening of the opening sequence of the film managed to placate Dick, who was impressed enough with the special effects to drop his complaints (Abbot).

At the same time, Filmways pulled out of the project, forcing Deeley to find a new financial sponsor at breakneck speed. He came through, landing three backers before the new year: The Ladd Company, an independent production house run by Alan

Ladd, Jr. (Ladd had produced SF blockbusters, *Star Wars* and *Alien*); The Shaw Brothers, a large East Asian film unit run by Singaporean mogul, Sir Run-Run Shaw; and Tandem Productions, known for its television productions, run by writer-producers Bud Yorkin, Jerry Perenchio and Norman Lear.   The Ladd Company and the Shaw Brothers contributed $7.5 million each, and Yorkin and Perenchio as completion bond guarantors added another $7 million for a total production budget of $21.5 million (Sammon 66-67), Warner Bros., partial financier for the Ladd Company from 1979 to 1984, acquired domestic distribution rights to the film (Slide 191); the Shaw Brothers foreign rights; and Yorkin and Perenchio ancillary (television and video) rights (Sammon 67).   This three-way international deal, along with the popularization of the VCR and the growth of the youth fan base in the 1980s, eventually led to the film's slow and steady success, which crystallized in the theatrical release of the Director's Cut in 1992 (King 112).

In 1982, however, *Blade Runner* met with dismal returns at the box office and mixed response from the critics. After a production experience that went over schedule and over budget, a rough cut – later known as the Director's Cut, with its unclear ending and without Deckard's voiceover – was shown to focus groups in Dallas and Denver. Frightened by negative audience response (several Harrison Ford fans allegedly threw objects at the screen), executives ordered a recut of the film to make it more intelligible to the American public. Released on June 25, 1982, the resulting Domestic Cut featured Ford's monotone voiceover and a happy ending in which Deckard and Rachel escaped to a countryside composed of outtakes from *The Shining* (Kubrick 1980)*.*   Unfortunately, these cosmetic changes failed to bolster the film's popularity and sales. Despite heavy promotion of *Android* as a tie-in to the movie's release*, Blade Runner* opening box office gross was $6,150,000; by the end of its first week it had grossed only $9.5 million. Meanwhile, another more optimistic and kid-friendly science fiction film had become the

106

summer hit. Shot for $10,500,000, Steven Spielberg's *E.T.: The Extraterrestrial* bowed on June 11 and made back its budget in the opening weekend with a gross of $11,011,430 (*Imdb*). Unable to compete, Warner Bros. withdrew *Blade Runner* from theatrical distribution and released it on television through its cable affiliate, the Movie Channel, and on video through its Home Video outlets (Instrell 164). It was through these ancillary channels, which were more conducive to repeated viewings and which emphasized the rich set design that the film achieved its cult status.

The multiple cuts of *Blade Runner* in circulation, any one of which could be claimed as the definitive text, demonstrate the postmodern nature of the film at the extradiegetic level Along with the 1982 Original Domestic Theatrical Cut -- released only on Embassy Laserdisc and the version to which this study refers unless noted otherwise -- several other versions of the film exist. The 1992 Director's Cut which is also referenced occasionally differs from the Domestic Cut in the following ways: it contains no voiceover, no happy ending, and an ambiguous scene in which Deckard dreams of a unicorn. The 1982 European Theatrical Cut, like the Domestic Cut, contains the voiceover along with added scenes of violence in the climax which were censored in US theaters. This cut, incidentally, was the first version to be released on video in the US and continues to the most common video version. In addition to these official cuts are prints that do not exist on video, including the "San Diego Sneak" and the "Workprint." A Special Edition DVD is rumored to be in the works, which would include one of the original versions, the Director's Cut, and a new, expanded version containing hitherto unreleased prints such as the ones above.[xxi]

MIXED REVIEWS

Most critics who wrote about the film immediately after its release failed to foresee what would be hailed later as its groundbreaking contribution to science fiction filmmaking, namely, the *complementary* relationship between its ambivalent themes and characters and its rich, textured sets. Richard Meyers summed up the popular opinion of the time when he elevated the latter over the former: "*Blade Runner* was a collection of film sets in search of a movie" (242-244). The comments below from reviews in *The New Yorker, The Chicago Sun-Times,* and *The Los Angeles Times*, follow Meyers in their disparagement of narrative and character development in the film:

> If anybody comes around with a test to detect humanoids, maybe Ridley Scott and his associates should hide. With all the smoke in this movie, you feel as if everyone connected with it needs to have his flue cleaned (Kael 35).
>
> The movie's weakness ... is that it allows the special effects technology to overwhelm its story. ... The movie has the same trouble as the replicants: Instead of flesh and blood its dreams are of mechanical men (Ebert 31).
>
> If the story is frail and unhelpful, to put it politely, it is certainly drenched in atmosphere. *Blade Runner* may attract two and three-timers to savor its inventions ... but that this much craft and dedication is at the service of such a wafer-thin story is sad. Their magic deserves more than a close examination of people who cannot feel anything – by birth or by design (Benson 21).

A few critics recognized that it was precisely in the unconventional narrative and acting that the look and theme of the film converged: "Somehow there were *many* critics who failed to comprehend that it was by intention that the replicants came across as more human than Deckard and that, in fact, *this* was the missing theme they were looking for" (Peary 46).

Generally, however, praise was restricted to the technical sophistication and creative expression of the set design. Critics compared *Blade Runner* to other "adult" (read: arthouse) science fiction films such as *Metropolis* and *2001: A Space Odyssey*. In particular they emphasized the credibility of its depiction of the future US city: "The *Blade Runner* setting fascinates because it is plausible. Los Angeles 40 years from now could easily look much like it does in this movie" (Miller 43). And as Douglas Pratt notes, it was the *style* in which that urban vision was rendered that lent the movie to repeated viewings: "Why is the film so popular on home video? ... It is drenched in action and special effects, but more importantly, it drips with style, and viewers, desperate for anything which is unique and imaginative, lap it up" (47).

Ironically, Scott had not marketed the film toward these "arty" fans. Rather he had hoped to attract the male adolescent market by incorporating the visual style of adult comic books in the film's set design, especially that of Jean "Moebius" Giraud's work in *Metal Hurlant* (translated in the US as *Heavy Metal*) (*Variety* 50).

> This film is not a warning in any sense of the word. … This film is, hopefully, good fun. The films that have fascinated me the most in the last couple of years tend to have been films which are derived from comic strips. I've chosen to go in that direction, and therefore there is a lot of broad strokes, fast bold action, and colorful characters (Lightman and Patterson 687, 715).

Scott's description of his idea for the movie fits the model of the New Hollywood blockbuster, which had been the template for his previous hit film. With a production design bearing the artistic marks of H.R. Giger and Moebius and technological villains in the form of the "Mother" ship and the traitorous android Ash, *Alien* certainly appears to qualify as cyberpunk. However, its generic mixture of horror with classic science fiction helped assimilate the film to the classic Hollywood style: *Alien,* even with its dystopic

look and themes, has a distinct Three-Act structure, a protagonist with whom the audience identifies, and clearly delineated goals and themes.

On the other hand, the cyberpunk qualities of *Blade Runner* – namely, its cultural pastiche of film noir, popular culture, and SF, its ambivalent stance toward technology, and its lack of a clear narrative resolution – proved incompatible with the classical narrative requisites of the New Hollywood blockbuster and consequently, those of the box office. Such elements led Franklin Bruce to herald *Blade Runner* rather presciently as the forerunner of cyberpunk cinema: "The new films – drawing on the common urban experience of much of their audience, drawing on a dystopian consensus, if you will – don't have to explain themselves. ... *Blade Runner* ... is one of the first films to avail itself of this new consensus (32). I would qualify Bruce's statement by noting that the "common urban experience" to which he alludes was just as often a common white suburban fantasy of the non-white inner city (Ross 137-167). In any case, early 1980s cyberpunk films such as *Liquid Sky, Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the 8th Dimension* (Richter 1984)*,* and *Repo Man*, like *Blade Runner,* were by and large, confined to a small cult and/or arthouse audience. Part Three explores how and why cyberpunk grew more assimilable in Hollywood in the late 1980s and 1990s. To map this development, however, one needs to begin with a definition and history of the New Hollywood blockbuster.

THE NEW HOLLYWOOD

As Geoff King observes in *The New Hollywood Cinema: An Introduction*, the New Hollywood has come to describe two seemingly different kinds of filmmaking and product. The first, experimental and auteur-focused, was aligned with the Hollywood Renaissance and included films such as *Bonnie and Clyde* (Penn 1967)*, The Graduate*

(Nichols 1967), *Easy Rider* (Hopper 1969), *MASH* (Altman 1970), and *The Godfather* (Coppola 1972). The second model, which followed, was more explicitly commercial and spectacle-focused, typified by films such as *Jaws, Star Wars*, *Jurassic Park*, and *Titanic* (Cameron 1997).

The Hollywood Renaissance

At first glance, the two strains of the New Hollywood seem widely divergent. However, on closer inspection, certain commonalities can be discerned. To begin with, both were and continue to be closely associated with the so called Hollywood Brat Pack – the first generation of film school educated American directors who incorporated avant-garde elements of foreign and American B-films into the Hollywood feature. The group was comprised of Steven Spielberg, George Lucas, Francis Coppola, Martin Scorsese, and Robert Altman among others. Both forms of New Hollywood cinema also were responses to structural shifts in the 1960s when the US film industry found itself in serious financial trouble. Several factors had contributed to the decline of Hollywood after World War II, of which the most notable were the following:

- The 1948 *Paramount* decree, which ended the practice of vertical integration that had characterized the studio system

- The steady erosion and eventual abolishment of the 1930 Production Code

- Suburbanization and the establishment of television as an entertainment alternative

- A better-educated, more politically progressive youth market (the "baby boomers")

- The growing US market for foreign films and art cinema

With the disintegration of the studio system, independent film production became the norm rather than the exception. Studios scaled down operations and found alternative sources of funding by merging with better diversified companies. As a result, producers and agents acquired more power, and movie production generally grew cheaper, allowing for more creative freedom and experimentation on the part of the mostly young filmmakers. Meanwhile, the audience (as constructed by the media) also grew more fragmented during the late 1960s, a trend that had begun in the previous decade with the emergence of the teen market. Audience fragmentation was accompanied by revisions to the Production Code, which led to the ratings system replacing the Code in 1968. Films that followed often featured explicit depictions of sexuality and violence and dealt with morally ambiguous topics in ways that precluded easy audience identification – a trend apparent in movies such as *The Exorcist* (Friedkin 1973), *Shampoo* (Ashby 1976), and *Taxi Driver* (Scorsese 1976).

These films, like many from the Hollywood Renaissance, drew a great deal from the work of auteurs associated with non-US cinema, especially Jean-Luc Godard, Francois Truffaut, and Alain Resnais in France, Sergio Leone, Vittoria De Sica, and Michelangelo Antonioni in Italy, and Akira Kurosawa and Yasujiro Ozu in Japan. Common devices that young American filmmakers borrowed from these directors included violations of continuity editing and the 180 degree rule through devices such as jump cuts, flashbacks, flash forwards, and the zoom lens (King 11-48). According to Thomas Schatz in *Old Hollywood/New Hollywood*, such "directorial winks," along with opaque characters and difficult, unclear endings, broadly situate the earlier New Hollywood cinema in the modernist camp. While modernist tendencies had existed previously in Hollywood, particularly in the detective and musical genres, they had

remained ornamental to or been subsumed by the "invisible narration" frame typical of the classical Hollywood film described below:

> A "good" classical film – that is, one with well-developed characters with whom viewers identify and whose conflicting goals, stakes, and capacities generate a series of causally-related events that build to a crisis and necessary resolution – this good film is one which seems to flow effortlessly from shot to shot, from scene to scene, carrying its audience along as steadily as the film winds through the projector. A good classical story *seems to tell itself* (218).

In contrast Schatz defines the modernist style as a preoccupation with "the *how* over the *what* ... a realization that in certain texts the how actually *is* the what" (236). Whereas classical films, which "universalize" the narrative by rendering invisible the aesthetic and rhetorical techniques used in storytelling, modernist films expose the cinematic apparatus, in the process denaturalizing the story. Bertolt Brecht's notion of *Verfremudungs effekt* ("alienation effect") maintains that showing the *process* of narrative construction could have radical political results if it succeeds in defamiliarizing social attitudes and behaviors which the viewer had hitherto normalized and accepted, as well as exposing the processes and conventions of representation. The political potential of modernism lies mostly in the belief (or hope) that this shift in perspective will shock viewers into critiquing their former attitudes and behaviors so that they will engage in actions toward progressive social change. To put it simply, modernists believe it is possible to "make a difference" through Art.

Of course nothing like that happened in the New Hollywood, at least not on a wide scale. One need only watch the latest special effects-drenched blockbuster or flip through a couple of articles in *Variety* and the *Hollywood Reporter* from the past twenty years to see that quite the opposite has occurred. According to Scott Bukatman,

113

The proliferation of special-effects films in the 1990s was accompanied by a related reduction in narrative sophistication. ... To me, this reduction, combined with the emphasis on effects-centered films, speaks to an anxiety about the very status of narrative as an explanatory system. Narrative implies history, depth, purpose. So, while Hollywood cinema continued to revel in the sensational, sensual realm of visual, auditory, and kinesthetic effects, the devaluation of narrative was hidden within a desperate overvaluation of overly explicit storytelling; a denial of its own undeniable supersession ("Zooming Out" 265).

The career trajectories of Spielberg and Lucas, the most successful members of the "Brat Pack" demonstrate that the use of innovative style (as epitomized by the digital special effects technologies described above) is not equivalent to the formation or dissemination of an innovative politics. The two have gone from imaginative young artists to savvy middle-aged moguls churning out rather conventional stories with tremendously high production values. These stories uphold intrinsically conservative -- though ironically, now often coded "liberal" -- national tropes and themes which are tried and true at the almighty box office: the (white, heteronormative) American family, the (bourgeois, consumer capitalist) American Dream, and the (always innocent) American child, which stands in for the oblivious but still lovable American subject.

That Lucas and Spielberg are the most dominant reminders and remainders of the Hollywood Renaissance is not surprising when one takes into account King's observation that even the most radical films of the late 1960s and early 1970s, while stylistically and political extreme compared to mainstream US movies, still conformed a great deal to the rules of classical cinema. To wit, "Departures from the norm ... are unlikely to upset the entire edifice [i.e. the classical mode]. They may appear bold and innovative at one moment. Soon, however, they can become just another part of the repertoire" (King 45).

This description of the evolution of Hollywood styles as simultaneously static and dynamic recalls the notion of "difference in sameness" which underlies various strands of

114

film genre theory propounded by Rick Altman (1995), Thomas Schatz (1981), and Steven Neale (2000). These theories revolve around the concept of generic evolution which posits that genres change over time in response to various social, cultural, and industrial factors. To sum up, the genre film adheres to the following general pattern, from *birth* (when different stylistic and narrative patterns are experimented) to *peak* (usually the "golden age" of the genre when specific conventions are established), to *decay* (the "baroque" period, when the conventions have become so familiar that the genre can indulge in self-parody) and eventually, to *death* (themes, attitudes, and styles characteristic of that genre no longer resonate for the audience – at least until it is resurrected for a future generation). The point is that how and how long a genre film – which describes most Hollywood product – gets made depends largely on the extent to which the themes and tropes associated with that genre continue to satisfy changing audience tastes. By tastes, I mean the results of the constant interplay between visual and narrative trends that derive from social, cultural, and political shifts and those engineered by the entertainment industry.

Because Hollywood is driven so explicitly by commercial needs and desires, and because so many slippages and overlaps exist among historical and formal categories such as the Old and New Hollywood and the classical, modernist, and postmodernist styles, it makes more sense to examine when and how certain modes of filmmaking – like genres – fall in and out of popular favor. The emergence of the New Hollywood blockbuster in the 1980s demonstrates that in popular entertainment, as in fashion, everything eventually comes back, though always with a slightly new twist. This includes classical filmmaking which never really went away in the first place.

The New Hollywood Blockbuster

Justin Wyatt's description of the New Hollywood blockbuster in *High Concept* fleshes out the trend that Bukatman evokes toward style over narrative. *Jaws* and *Star Wars* grew to define the blockbuster film from the late 1970s to the present.[xxii] The assumption behind the production of such movies is that spectacular vehicles such as fast-paced action sequences and cutting edge special effects – rather than character development and complex storylines – will sell films more effectively at the box office. If not (and even if so), profits can be reaped by re-packaging and selling these non-narrative elements after, and now concurrent with, the release of the film. For example, viewers can experience a film over and over again by consuming various ancillary products derived from it, including the soundtrack, videogame, fiction, comics, toys, and websites. If this isn't enough, devoted fans can make the pilgrimage to amusement parks such as Universal Studios, Disneyworld, and Disneyland where they can go on rides bearing the film's trademark and learn more about the making of the film at exhibits (Wyatt 8-20).

The reception practices thus encouraged by the production, marketing, and distribution practices of the high concept film fit Fredric Jameson's idea of the postmodern text. The film-viewing experience is "fragmented" in the sense that the primary narrative is explicitly commodified and obsessively repeated in various related forms, along the lines of a "variations on a theme."[xxiii] Likewise, the word "postmodern" appears quite a bit in industrial analyses of the New Hollywood to describe changes in production practices from the 1980s onward. These changes can be summed up as a shift from the studio system of the Old Hollywood in which the film was conceived and experienced as a finished, unified *product* to the "horizontal" financing strategies of the New Hollywood in which the film functions as a media event – one *process* of experience within a larger constellation of commodified experiences.

116

By the 1980s the structural experimentation of the Hollywood Renaissance had coalesced into the hybrid system of the current Hollywood where independent films are systematically incorporated, economically and stylistically by the studios in what amounts to a profitable symbiotic relationship. The former get a wider audience while the latter get much needed new product. In this sense, the move from an emphasis on vertical production to one on horizontal consumption through audience targeting actually demonstrates the increased power of media corporations and echoes the larger socioeconomic shift that David Harvey illuminated in *The Condition of Postmodernity*. This was, of course, the movement from a Fordist (managerial, human-production oriented) to a post-Fordist (entrepreneurial, batch-production oriented) system, which introduced the notion of flexible accumulation in the late 1970s:

> Flexible accumulation is characterized by the emergence of entirely new sectors of production, new ways of providing financial services, new markets, and, above all, greatly intensified rates of commercial, technological, and organizational innovation. It has entrained rapid shifts in the patterning of uneven development, both between sectors and between geographical regions, giving rise ... to a vast surge in so-called 'service-sector' employment as well as to entirely new industrial ensembles in hitherto underdeveloped regions (147).

The New Hollywood blockbuster provides an excellent example of the paradoxical nature of flexible accumulation in the post-Fordist system of entertainment production. The socioeconomic shifts that began in the early 1980s and continue in the present include deindustrialization, the rapid expansion of transnational corporations (TNCs), and the conservative backlash against gains made during the Civil Rights Era. These developments have helped place the film industry within a complex, international web of distribution outlets and delivery systems owned by an ever-diminishing number of huge media conglomerates (Wasko 1-2). Every year the studios release a handful of

117

blockbuster movies to finance their other films and to maintain general operations. These so-called "tent-pole" movies have exorbitant budgets, not only due to their high production values but also due to the cost of the promotional strategies required to draw a large, diverse audience – strategies such as saturation advertising, simultaneous, nationwide (and now sometimes worldwide) theatrical release, and commercial tie-ins. These costs are mostly recouped through exploitation of the ancillary markets that were described earlier.

Synergistic marketing and distribution tactics around the blockbuster, which address an increasingly fragmented and targeted audience seem, at first glance, to suggest a growing appreciation and celebration of difference. However, they do so in the distinctly "postmodern" sense defined thus by Harvey: "Eschewing the idea of progress, postmodernism abandons all sense of historical continuity and memory, while simultaneously developing an incredible ability to plunder history and absorb whatever it finds there as some aspect of the present" (54). If the fundamental tone of modernism was nostalgia for a lost unified subject accompanied by an ambivalent appropriation of difference (whether cultural, racial, and/or temporal), the tone of postmodernism appears to be a nihilistic giddiness accompanied by the playful symbolic cannibalism of difference. [xxiv] bell hooks describes this process of appropriation as follows:

> Within current debates about race and difference, mass culture is the contemporary location that both publicly declares and perpetuates the idea that there is pleasure to be found in the acknowledgment and enjoyment of racial difference. The commodification of Otherness has been so successful because it is offered as a new delight, more intense, more satisfying than normal ways of doing and feeling. Within commodity culture, ethnicity becomes spice, seasoning that can liven up the dull dish that is mainstream white culture (21).

The relatively recent shift in how the center positions itself vis-à-vis the margin is discernible in how racial, sexual, and class differences appear – and how critics interpret those appearances -- in supposedly postmodern films like *Blade Runner.* By the center, I mean those who culturally and economically control the production of media images and stories. As John D. H. Downing (1996), Robert McChesney (1999), and others have shown, control of media production continues to rests in the hands of a tiny few that are racially, sexually, and economically homogenous (white, male, economically and culturally privileged). While this obviously does not translate directly to stories that feature only rich, educated, white men, mainstream media continues to uphold norms of whiteness and heterosexuality, primarily because its stories are directed at those who can afford the products that they sell.

Thanks to political gains by marginal groups and mass immigration from Asia and Latin America in the 1960s, more women, people of color, gays, and lesbians have become interpellated into that consumer category. However, so far, the differences they have brought to the historical construction of the consumer have been mostly cosmetic and usually contained within narrative structures and themes that uphold the social and aesthetic norm as white, straight, and middle-class. Difference is allowed into the national imaginary only if it can at best, *enhance* and at worst, *affirm* the ideology of the dominant culture. Examples include the notion of black, brown, and yellow folks adding ethnic "color" to the food, fashion, and music repertoire of their white counterparts; of gay men providing grooming tips for straight men and emotional bonding for straight women; of "lipstick lesbians" paradoxically serving the male gaze while their slightly more "butchy" sisters teach straight women how to be better feminists; and finally, of "white trash" who become upwardly mobile and thereby confirm the notions of equality and rugged individualism promulgated by the American Dream.

In other words, within the ostensibly hip, politically enlightened narratives marketed toward a similarly hip, politically enlightened audience remerges the specter of liberal humanism inherent in and integral to the classical Hollywood cinema. This raises the following question: do the humanistic underpinnings of the New Hollywood blockbuster differ from those of the classical and modernist Hollywood cinema? And if so, how? What is the relationship between the materialization of a so called "postmodern" style and changes in the representation of race within the parameters of this style? Here I am concerned primarily with the aesthetic dimensions of visualizing non-white bodies and cultures -- how racial identity and difference get commodified and thus reified on screen as image, type, and stereotype. In articles on *Blade Runner* racial difference is read, practically across the board, as something that *supplements* the "postmodern" nature of that narrative – whether postmodernism is defined from an aesthetic or sociopolitical angle. It is to these arguments that I now turn.

ACADEMICS ON RACE IN *BLADE RUNNER*

In the intellectual climate following the "linguistic turn" to poststructuralist theory in the 1980s, scholars in film, literature, geography, art history, architecture, and philosophy recuperated *Blade Runner* for the academy. They employed various theoretical approaches to make sense of the film, including cultural studies, psychoanalytic theory, feminist theory, critical theory, and to a lesser extent, genre studies and postcolonial theory.[xxv] Given the extensive number of books and articles that this film has generated, it seems odd that so few studies consider its construction and deployment of racial difference generally and East Asian difference specifically as a social, affective, and narrative force. Two striking exceptions are the readings provided by Lisa Lowe in *Immigrant Acts* and Robert Lee in *Orientals*. Both provide short

analyses of *Blade Runner* from an Asian American studies perspective. Lowe uses the film as a way to talk about the commodification and containment of multiculturalism in Los Angeles in the 1990s. Her reading is supported by an astute political and cultural analysis of social, historical, and economic shifts in the racial geography of the city. However, Lowe's interpretation does not engage with the narrative and stylistic components of the film itself. Lowe's insertion of African immigrants in the cityscape of the film is telling in this respect:

> The portrait of Los Angeles as a metropolis congested with poor Asian, Latino, African, and Arab immigrants projects the future of the first world as the third world. In *Blade Runner*'s version of the twenty-first century ... "the world" has come and now inhabits, indeed possesses, Los Angeles. ... "Asia" is both constructed as the "foreign" threat to US capital and, in the representation of Los Angeles as a ghetto for "hordes" of Asian immigrants involved in service-sector labor, as the occulted horizon for the visible emergence of the free, white liberal subject (84-85).

The addition of African bodies here is significant. As will be discussed later, the noticeable *absence* of black bodies in the *mise-en-scène* provides an important key to understanding how the film hierarchizes racial difference in the "multicultural dystopia" of its future fantastic version of Los Angeles.

The two major points that Lowe makes – i.e., the notion of Los Angeles as both third world and first world and of the foreign Asian presence as bifurcated into corporate threat and cheap labor – are reiterated by Lee in his slightly longer analysis of the film. Lee's unique contribution is the symbolic and historical parallel that he draws between the figure of the replicant and that of the Asian American model minority:

121

> Like the Asian American model minority, replicants are the perfect workers, virtually indistinguishable from humans ... yet completely inauthentic. Replicants can be expected to perform humanly, yet need not be treated humanely. ... Both the android "new friend" and the model minority are people without history; both are simulacra whom a programmed historical memory simultaneously renders functional and inauthentic. Both replicant and model minority are critical to production but, lacking history, are necessarily sterile in the reproduction of a national narrative (194-196).

Lee's provocative analogy raises two questions. First, what histories have the replicant and the model minority been forced or chosen to forget? The fact is that both *do* have histories, and their relationship to these histories is integral to their subject-positions as illegal and conditional citizens. The replicant searches for its origins to extend its lifetime (to *become* human) while the model minority disowns or otherwise falsifies its ethnic past to assimilate into dominant culture (to be *recognized* as human). Second, how do these alternative, unknown or repressed histories challenge and/or supplement the dominant national history? Lee reproduces the rhetorical mode and assumptions of the very institutions that he critiques when he posits one kind of history as "authentic" over another as "inauthentic." What kind of "national narrative" might these amnesiac replicants and model minorities dismantle and/or produce as "inauthentic" and ahistorical subjects of the state? And how might such narratives be recognized as such, not only by the dominant culture, but also by scholars in ethnic studies who continue to perpetuate the binaristic categories of that culture? These questions are considered in more depth in the following chapter.

Outside ethnic studies, several critics have mentioned racial difference in their readings of *Blade Runner*. While their interpretations differ in many ways, these critics display a few common tendencies in their treatment of race. Most take as a starting point the supposedly postmodern form and content of *Blade Runner*. They then try to locate

racial and cultural otherness within the formal and ideological systems they have delineated. In the process, the readings almost always diverge into a discussion of other social "others." In the political economy approach, that other is class; in the psychoanalytic one, it is gender and sexuality. Race ultimately becomes a modifier for gender, sexuality or class, or drops out of the discussion completely.

Within film studies, Robin Wood (1986), Steven Neale (1989), and Scott Bukatman (1997) offer excellent ways to begin considering the role of race in the film. However, their observations remain at that level. For instance, Wood points out that *Blade Runner* uses a postmodern aesthetic to illuminate the unequal distribution of power in post-capitalism. This is epitomized in the contrast between the "ideal image" of the geisha in the ubiquitous electronic advertisement and the "mystified poor ... mostly Asians" that consume this image. As well, he notes the replicants' class, racial, and sexual otherness: they are simultaneously "oppressed and exploited proletariats," "racial minorities" (read: black, via the association of the epithet "skin-jobs" with the racist slur "nigger" in the Domestic cut), and sexually ambiguous, lacking "family" or biological kinship ties (186).

Yet like Bukatman who further develops these points a few years later, Wood does not suggest any connection in terms of race, class, or sexuality between the symbolic blackness of the replicants and the people on the streets, who are read consistently as "oriental." It is as if the Asians, Latinos, racially ambiguous folks, young punks, sexual perverts, and mechanical dwarves who constitute these crowds are somehow raceless – not only in the film, but in most of the criticism around the film, too. It is precisely their "orientalization" that appears to render them subordinate to the principle white male characters and to align them in some vague way to the replicants, yet does not grant them the power of the victim position given the latter.

At the time of this writing, Steven Neale (1989), Kaja Silverman (1991), Brian Locke (1997), and David Desser (1999) provide the only readings of *Blade Runner* that attempt to address overtly how race operates in the film. Of these, I engage primarily with Neale and Locke's analyses since theirs are the only ones that deal with the film's orientalized bodies and *mise-en-scène* in a sustained fashion. I end this chapter by outlining their major points, which provide the framework for my own analysis of race and space in *Blade Runner* that follows in the next chapter.

In his article, "Issues of Difference: *Alien* and *Blade Runner,*" Neale breaks down primary and secondary characters in the film based on racial (black, Asian, or white), sexual (male or female), and ontological (human or machine) identities to look at how "sexual difference interrelates with other categories of difference without reducing the latter to the former." He notes that while the film contains both male and female human "Orientals," all the "Occidentals" are male. Meanwhile, the replicants are sexually but not racially differentiated as they are all phenotypically white. Neale states that Rachel's coupling with Deckard fills the absence of women on the occidental human side but in so doing, represses the racial difference between the oriental/occidental binary, which opens the film.

According to Neale, the human/replicant opposition is erased with the deaths of all the replicants except Rachel, who effectively becomes human through her union with Deckard. The oriental/occidental divide, however, remains unresolved, embodied only briefly in the shot of Gaff – the "oriental" detective played by Latino actor Edward James Olmos – at the end of the film. According to Neale, Gaff's unexplained appearance and assistance in the couple's escape serve only to highlight the residual racial tension between Orient and Occident. Neale does not explore how the viewer's knowledge of Olomos' ethnicity might play out here, a point that I consider in the next chapter. He then

segues from this failure (discussed again, in oriental/occidental terms) to the symbolic link between the replicants and African Americans via the history of black slavery and racism against African Americans in the US With this transition, he suggests (but does not make explicit) a connection between the symbolic blackness of the replicants and the "oriental" look of the subordinate characters.

Neale ends his article with a call for studies which focus on "representations of the body that figure so centrally in *all* the categories of difference" (213-225). Locke's work seems to fit this call. In his dissertation, "Three's a Crowd: The Racial Triangle of 'White,' 'Black,' and 'Asian' Men in Post-World War Two United States Culture," Locke discusses the function of racial difference in the film through an analysis of the visual representation of white and yellow bodies in its set design (127-214). Unlike most previous scholars, he argues that *Blade Runner* toes a conservative line regarding race as expressed in his formulation of the "racial triangle." This triangle consists of US white and black agents bonding over a foreign Asian threat. In *Blade Runner* Deckard assumes the white role, and Roy Batty, through class and rhetorical affiliation, assumes the black role while the "sub-human" Asian bodies and iconography that constitute the *mise-en-scène* – i.e. the city itself -- assume the historical position of Asia as Yellow Peril (178-225).

Both Neale and Locke initiate a much needed conversation around racial identity and performance in *Blade Runner.* However, as I hope to show in the next chapter, more needs to be said along these lines, especially given current industrial and social developments around the popular representation of racial others.

CONCLUSION

Neale and especially Locke's analyses aside, why do so few examinations of race in *Blade Runner* actually stay on the topic of race? Within the considerable amount of scholarship surrounding this film – a film that for so many academics crystallizes the elusive notion of the postmodern – why has the topic of racial difference systematically been overlooked or summarily glossed over? Along with the persistence of a restraining kind of identity politics in the US academy, I suspect it has something to do with the inability of most existing theoretical and methodological modes to accommodate the aesthetic and social, the mythic and historical aspects of race. To put it another way, it is still difficult to express critically the idea of race as an *imagined* story lived on, in, and through one's *material* body – a body that moves and transforms certain spaces even as it itself is moved and transformed by these spaces.

In social practice, it is, of course, impossible to separate the operations and effects of one's race, class, gender, and sexuality. Consider for instance the following scenario. A young Asian American woman momentarily leaves her table at a cafe in a liberal Southern town. On her way to the restroom, a white, middle aged man brusquely motions for her to clear off his table. When she responds that she doesn't work there, he grunts and returns to reading *The New York Times*. In this situation, the man clearly assumed the woman to be in a role subordinate to him. However, it is much less clear why he made that assumption. Was it because she was young? Female? Asian? Because she used passive body language? Because he is a boor? All, some, or none of the above?

Precisely because it is so hard to answer these questions of identity and power when they arise in the fraught spaces of our daily lives, it is important to address them in the popular representations of difference that we draw from to perform our social roles. I suggest that we can better understand how identity positions work with and against each

126

other by noting when and how certain positions appear and do not appear in creative and critical narratives. Just as *Blade Runner* compels its viewers to interrogate what is meant by the category of "human," the dearth of criticism on this film that actively considers race and ethnicity begs an important question for film and Ethnic Studies scholars -- namely, what is meant by "difference?" What categories are included and excluded in scholarly analyses of difference across disciplines and critical schools? And again, why is it still rare to come across studies of cultural texts that attempt to examine rigorously *multiple* forms of difference – race, gender, class, sexuality, nationality – as they appear or are invoked, in various combinations within a given story?

In the next chapter, I attempt to articulate this silence around racial difference in *Blade Runner* by using a cultural studies approach rooted in close visual and textual reading. My approach takes into account the economic, social, and cultural constraints of production against and within which certain creative choices are made. It focuses on how racial, gender, and class differences appear in *Blade Runner*'s depiction of the multicultural urban future, especially as they are illuminated or obscured by oriental imagery. In the process, I hope to shed some light on the ways in which social constructions of the Oriental and Technological Other are connected subtly, sometimes almost imperceptibly, to their representations on the silver screen.

Chapter Four

The Orientalized City

Blade Runner was always a film that is very much about 'now.' It shows a future that can be recognised by people, because it is based on trends that we can see around us.

-- Film scholar Ed Lawrenson[xxvi]

This is a city with neighborhoods that are very distant. Below the cosmopolitan sheen on the surface, there is a lot of racial tension. It does not take much to lift the lid on the rules the city depends on. This is a city built by the dreams of optimists who left other places to make a better life. This is still a dream. My worst fear is that the middle class leaves and ethnic groups are pitted against each other.

-- Los Angeles councilman Michael Woo[xxvii]

Machines will probably surpass overall human intellectual capability by 2020, and have an emotional feel just like people. At some point they will develop genuine self awareness and consciousness, and we will have to negotiate their rights. By the end of the 21st century, they will have far superior intelligence to people, but probably also have more attractive personalities, so relating to machines will be more pleasant than dealing with people.

-- Futurist Ian Pearson[xxviii]

INTRODUCTION

Much like the wave of cyberpunk aesthetics and sensibility that it helped to spawn, the look of urban dystopia in *Blade Runner* has become clichéd, so thoroughly embedded in the American popular consciousness that it is hard to remember when and how we could have experienced the screened future otherwise. "Future noir" or "tech noir" settings characterize many cyberpunk films, both low and high budget, from the

later 1980s to the present, including the *Terminator* series, *Total Recall, Freejack* (Murphy 1992)*, Tank Girl, Twelve Monkeys* (Gilliam 1995), *Judge Dredd, The Fifth Element, Dark City* (Proyas 1998), and of course, *The Matrix.* At the same time, Ridley Scott's vision of Los Angeles also has managed to seep into the "real world," profoundly affecting how we see and understand the present day city.

In *The History of Forgetting: Los Angeles and the Erasure of Memory*, Norman Klein makes this evident when he lists various manifestations of the film's title outside its entertainment context*:*

> By 1990, Frank Gehry's architecture is praised in a mainstream review as "post-apocalyptic," having a "Blade Runner inventiveness." The term "Blade Runner" is also applied to police tactics – Operation Hammer, the gang "sweeps" of 1991, and the watchful waiting (promotional campaign by LAPD) after the Rodney King beating. And, most of all, by 1994, it is applied to the widening gulf in real-estate values – "Blade Runner neighborhoods" – the middle-class panic about crime that is helping to spin many poor communities in Los Angeles further into the problems that this fantasy suggests. One myth builds another (95).

As noted earlier, East Asian iconography contributes strongly to producing the film's version of Los Angeles in the projected year 2019. Many critics have pointed out that in this teeming multicultural city, oriental tropes such as Asian-influenced foods, music, speech, architecture, costumes, props, and bodies-as-objects saturate the wet, dirty, and perpetually nocturnal streets.

In this chapter I examine how such ubiquitous East Asian presence at the level of spatial design works in relation to the film's thematic thrust and narrative payoff. I then go on to consider the indirect links between the racial (and especially East Asian) dynamics of the fabulous city in *Blade Runner* and those of the post-industrial US city. The following questions will be addressed. First, in what ways specifically do these

oriental tropes help to construct a cinematic city of the future? Second, does the use of these tropes in *Blade Runner* gesture toward shifts in Hollywood's perception of East Asia? If so, what relationship do these industrial and stylistic developments have to social and political ones within the changing racial landscape of the United States from the 1980s to the 1990s?

IMAGING THE FUTURE

Cinematic Bricolage, Film Noir and the Orient, and "In-head Memory"

Ridley Scott has emphasized the importance of *mise-en-scène* in his work with catchy aphorisms such as "a film is a seven-hundred-layer cake" and "sometimes the design is the statement" (Sammon 1). He unpacked these sound bytes in an interview with Sammon:

> There should be a total integration on a film, a complete synthesis running through the hands of a director who is involved in everything. That includes all the design elements. Certainly, there are moments in movies when the background of a shot can be as important as the foregrounded actor, whether that background be a figure or a landscape (Sammon 73).

Instead of replicating the Classical Hollywood style which subordinates *mise-en-scène* to montage and stresses a linear, character-driven narrative, the director views filmmaking as a carefully orchestrated visual and sonic narrative performance. Scott believes in creating "total environments" for his films that play as much a role in the narrative as its central characters. In this sense his individual approach to filmmaking seems to reflect a general trend in Hollywood since the 1980s toward a privileging of the visual over the narrative, encapsulated in Justin Wyatt's term "high concept." Drawing from his art

background and his experience in advertising, Scott designed *Blade Runner* through a method he calls "pictorial referencing" in which he and his production assistants scoured a wide variety of sources for illustrations that evoked the central moods and themes of the film. Important visual foundations for *Blade Runner* included paintings by Rembrandt van Rijn, Johannes Vermeer, William Hogarth, and Edward Hopper, various styles of architecture, underground French comics *Metal Hurlant*, and German Expressionist and noir films, especially *Metropolis, Citizen Kane* (Welles 1941), and *Chinatown*.

Scott and the art team "layered" the various artistic concepts in these found images to create a densely textured, detailed world for the film (Sammon 74). This layering technique takes one step further Claude Levi Strauss' concept of bricolage, which was referenced briefly in the section on punk culture in Chapter Two. In *Subculture* Hebdige defines British youth subcultures in the 1960s to 1980s as homological systems both entrenched in and critiquing a "culture of conspicuous consumption." According to Hebdige, these subcultural styles reclaim symbols and icons from dominant culture by decontextualizing them, emptying them of their original social, cultural, and political messages. The bricoleur then rearranges these cultural forms in ways that elicit meanings different than the intended ones. The result is a reworking of history that can be regarded (sometimes in the same breath) as apolitical pastiche or a new politically charged style (113-117).

Scott used the bricolage technique to construct a dark, overcrowded, and mechanized city that would carry and complement the primary themes of *Blade Runner* -- loss, alienation, and dehumanization. Along with mixing different visual styles, he combined three time periods in the film: the 1940s (past), 1980s (present), and 2020s (future).[xxix] According to Scott and his production crew, the goal was to imagine the future nostalgically, as worn and old. In order to do this, Scott evoked film noir, the

signature cinematic style of 1940s Hollywood, through the pop commercial aesthetic of the 1980s, to produce a credible twenty-first century version of the US city.[xxx]

Movies that have come to be known as film noir, from *Double Indemnity* (Wilder 1944) and *The Big Sleep* (Hawks 1946) to *Body Heat* (Kasdan 1981) and *L.A. Confidential* (Hanson 1997) are concerned broadly with themes and motifs similar to those in *Blade Runner.* As many film scholars have observed, it is difficult to categorize noir films definitively as a genre or a movement, since they have little in common apart from certain stylistic and tonal qualities. Regardless, some critical background on this genre or style is required to understand how its formal elements manifest in *Blade Runner.* According to Alain Silver and Elizabeth Ward, film noir originated from the hard-boiled detective novels of Raymond Chandler, Dashiell Hammett, Horace McCoy, and James M. Cain. These American crime novels were serialized in France under the title of "*Serie Noire.*" Films resembling these narratives began to fall under the "noir" label as well. Nino Frank is credited with inventing the term "film noir" in 1946, and Jean Pierre Chartier with popularizing it later that year in his article in *La Revue du Cinema* (1).

In these classic noir narratives, the American city typified by Los Angeles became the consummate symbol of urban hell, the American dream gone wrong (Davis 40-41). The male protagonist served as a kind of Everyman trying to fight the good fight in a morally ambiguous and ambivalent world. Sometimes he won, but more often than not he lost. Noir films externalized the internal unease, fear, and despair of their characters through lighting and design techniques derived from German Expressionism, a style brought to Hollywood by Fritz Lang, Robert Siodmak, Max Ophuls, Billy Wilder, Otto Preminger, William Dieterle and countless others. Along with low-key lighting and location filming, film noir could be recognized by Expressionist elements such as the

"moving camera; oddly angled shots; a chiaroscuro frame inscribed with wedges of light or shadowy mazes, truncated by foreground objects, or punctuated with glinting headlights bounced off mirrors, wet surfaces, or the polished steel of a gun barrel" (Silver and Ward 3).

The appeal of noir novels and films lies in the reader/viewer's identification with the protagonist as he makes a series of bad choices. These choices draw the protagonist into psychological states of anxiety, paranoia, cynicism, despair, and emotional numbness (not unlike the shellshock of war veterans). This internal landscape manifests outwardly in two tropes that appear consistently in the genre: the cold, indifferent city and the sultry, calculating girlfriend. Both function as instruments of industrial capitalism at its worst, and both draw an attraction/repulsion response from the protagonist and the audience. Unlike the anti-hero of the gangster movies, which influenced film noir, the noir protagonist is not punished for his material and moral excesses. Instead he suffers the consequences of poor decision-making in response to random twists of fate, which lie beyond his control. This sense of unjust victimhood coupled with an ironic Hemingway code of "tough guy" heroism constitutes the general tone and formula of most noir narratives. Supplying the social dimension to this aesthetic, Silver and Ward suggest that film noir functioned as a "black" slate upon which national anxieties were cathected when veterans returned home to their newly prosperous country (1). In other words, these films functioned as a fantastic space where male subjects could express and work through the collective sense of insecurity that surrounded American masculine identity at the time.

The anxieties that plagued the Anglo American masculine psyche in post-war United States can be traced to two sources. The first was the combined global threat of Communism and nuclear war which, if realized, would eradicate the consumer capitalist

133

way of life and the physical environs of that way of life, respectively. The second form of anxiety was domestic in nature, and consisted of the threat posed by women and people of color who had gotten a taste of financial and social independence during the war. If these groups were to demand and attain more rights, it was feared that one's power in the home as patriarch and outside the home as breadwinner would diminish.

Both global and domestic threats collided in the representation of racial and sexual otherness in film noir. While many scholars have (psycho)analyzed the castrating figure of women in this group of films, few have addressed racial difference, either embodied in film characters or projected onto film settings. One exception is James Naremore, who in *More than Night: Film Noir in its Contexts,* devotes a chapter to looking at the racial dimensions of noir. Along with analyses of Latino and African American representations, Naremore notes the prevalence of Asian motifs in film noir, citing among other films, *The Shanghai Gesture* (Von Sternberg 1940), *Lady from Shanghai*, *The Manchurian Candidate* (Frankenheimer 1962), and *The Crimson Kimono* (Fuller 1959) as well as neo-noir films such as *Chinatown, Year of the Dragon*, *Black Rain*, and *Rising Sun*.

According to Naremore, "If the Far East was repeatedly associated in film noir with enigmatic and criminal behavior, it was also depicted as a kind of aestheticized bordello, where one could experience all sorts of forbidden pleasures" (225). This dual role of East Asia closely resembles that of the femme fatale, the smart, sensual, and usually treacherous female to whom the male protagonist is erotically drawn. In the end, she must be extinguished for her evil, boundary-crossing ways or turned into an "honest" woman through the containment of her appetites in a legitimate romantic relationship.[xxxi] The connection between East Asia and the femme fatale is made explicit in *Shanghai Express* and *Lady from Shanghai* which both feature white female protagonists who are

associated with (and presumably have been "contaminated" by) the exotic perversities of East Asia, which is epitomized by the cross-cultural space of the Chinese port city, Shanghai. The connection between the mythologized image of East Asia and the figure of the femme fatale neatly follows the gender and sexual logic of Orientalism which positions the West as the masculine subject against the East as its feminized other.

This connection also opens up more ways of looking at Scott's decision to fashion *Blade Runner* as a neo-noir science fiction movie. William Lightman and Owen Patterson discuss the use of the noir style to create a specific kind of diegetic world in the film:

> The production design for BLADE RUNNER appears ultimately to have been rooted less in sociology or a vision of the future than in an appreciation for the style of the old Sam Spade/Philip Marlowe detective genre. The starting point is the desire to create a certain aesthetic and emotional texture – the nitty-gritty, funky world of a hard-boiled private eye; and the sociology is conjured up in order to give the design a logic and steadiness (720).

For Lightman and Patterson, the film's creative vision of the future *precedes* the sociohistorical referents used to construct that vision. This view privileges the aesthetic over the political and fails to see the inherent dialectical relationship between the two. Conceptual artist Syd Mead takes a small step in acknowledging that relationship with his notion of "in head memory" which he explains in the following way: "people will believe something is real only if it is done right and compared to what they think it should be" (Lightman and Patterson 717).

The idea of "in-head memory" raises a compelling point: namely, that one must draw from existing social and cultural referents to construct convincing fantastic worlds. Without such reference points, the audience would have no idea how to comprehend or navigate through such worlds. The production crew used Mead's concept to create a "retrofitted" city in which futuristic hovercrafts share the same space as jacked up Buick

convertibles, and mom and pop food stands exist under the shadow of shiny high rise buildings. Mead's background in industrial design is apparent in the following description of his concept for the city:

> The street sets were going to show this accumulated progress. The building would just become surfaces on which you'd mount retrofitted electrical conduits, air conditioning ducts and all kinds of other things … essentially it was an industrial design approach, because there had to be a very solid, mechanical logic behind it. It had to look like what it was. And what it was a city whose discreet individual structures had been enveloped into sort of an urban machine, with people living inside (Shay 8).

The statement "it had to look like what it was" gives pause. After all, how could anyone know what a future city looks like? Mead's comment starts to make sense though, when one takes into consideration the vital role that contemporary social trends play in fashioning a believable fantasy of the future. Lawrence Paull, the production designer for *Blade Runner* was trained in urban design and city planning. His comments below which describe the social idea behind the concept of "retrofitting" – the bricolage effect of mixing old and new technologies which aesthetically expresses the collapse of past and present – demonstrate the links between production of social and cinematic space:

> You go back to the script, and the middle classes have left the earth. They're going to off-world colonies and who's left in the center of the city but the working class, the unemployed, and the homeless. These people do not have the wherewithal, the education, the skills to fix what breaks in the city. Therefore, when things like heating and air conditioning break down within buildings, they can't go internally and fix it. They discard what isn't really working; they take other generators and machinery and retrofit it to he buildings. They hook it up with other power to serve the same function because there's no room inside the buildings to do it (La Brutto 170).

136

In a similar vein, architect Charles Linn observes that the twentieth-century audience can relate to the city in *Blade Runner* thanks to its incorporation of recognizable sights and occurrences from the present; some developments are taken to the next level (as in the replacement of English and Spanish with East Asian languages) while others remain the same:

> Despite blimp-like, audio-spouting billboards that promote a new life in intergalactic space, and flying cars that lock onto buildings to become elevators, the real action is still at street level. There is a dominant Asian influence everywhere. ... English and Spanish no longer appear to be L.A.'s mother tongues, and considering the influence the Pacific Rim is exerting on our culture now, that is totally believable, too ... familiar sights in Blade Runner include gigantic billboards for Coca Cola, hordes of people riding bicycles, poor ventilation in offices supplemented by ceiling fans. People still can't get a cab in the rain (27).

The notion of "accumulated progress" is integral here to the visualization of a future society built on the present one. At the same time that social referents help to conceive and construct entertaining mass fantasies, such culturally and politically inflected fantasies also influence how we frame and experience our realities. Film references to extradiegetic objects – whether trench coats or a pictures of geishas – necessarily must be accompanied by common ideological codes that make sense of these objects in the social world. To a large extent, these cultural codes are shaped and disseminated through images and narratives produced by the media industry which are understood and accepted in varying degrees by the audiences that consume them.

A psychoanalytic examination of the unconscious racial, gender and class assumptions behind filmmakers' technical choices lies beyond the scope of this study. However, one can analyze the choices themselves and the explanations that the producers

lent them, to arrive at certain conclusions. For instance, at the same time that Scott drew from the 1940s (as expressed in film noir style), he drew from the 1980s – the "present" at the time of filmmaking – to build a credible future city. According to Scott, he was going for a magnified version of "New York on a bad day" (Shay 6-7). This required projecting an experience of urban density, tension, dirtiness, and dislocation on the screen. What images then, along with those of rainy night streets and expressive lighting from film noir, did Scott and his crew members cull from their collective cultural memories to simulate this experience?

The final set design and comments from the art department point to mental pictures of the overdeveloped, modern Asian city. In *Blade Runner* the exotic streets of Tokyo, Hong Kong, and Calcutta combine with the mythic streets of a past Los Angeles to produce an uncanny aura of familiarity – how one might remember a city from a bad dream. Giuliana Bruno describes this city as an intensification of present day racial and cultural mixing, which culminates in a "China(in)town":

> In the postindustrial city the explosion of urbanization, melting the futuristic high-tech look into an intercultural scenario, recreates the Third World inside the first. One travels almost without moving, for the Orient occupies the next block. The Los Angeles of *Blade Runner* is China(in)town (186).

In Hollywood cinema East Asian cities have tended to be depicted as densely packed areas that typify the negative effects of overdevelopment. Early examples can be found in *Casablanca* (Curtiz 1942), *Shanghai Express,* and *The World of Suzie Wong* where the psychological dramas of mostly white principal characters are set against a backdrop of non-white "oriental" bodies for whom "life is cheap." Later, Kurosawa, with his modern crime thrillers, *The Bad Sleep Well* (1960) and *High and Low* (1962), introduced western

138

art house audiences to views of the Tokyo cityscape in post-war development. Seijun Suzuki brought a similar urban aesthetic to the Japanese B-film in *Tokyo Drifter* (1961) and *Branded to Kill* (1967) while the *Gojira* (Godzilla) movies provided a simplified version of densely populated, rapidly modernizing Tokyo for mainstream audiences. It is not a big stretch to speculate that this notion of the East Asian city might have been in the heads of the *Blade Runner* production crew when they were creating their fantastic city.

According to Mead, Scott envisioned the future as distinctly Asian, highly technological and overcrowded. Mead also makes it clear that for artistic inspiration he drew from his own experiences as a Western foreigner in Tokyo:

> There is a kind of Hong Kong or Calcutta kind of density that Ridley was after. The Oriental graphics on the streets contribute to that density without being as distracting as English language signs would be for an American audience. They give you the visual crowd and the add-on visual jumble without too much distraction. I had noticed that myself in Tokyo on the Ginza where the signs look incredibly jumbled, but I was not distracted by being able to read them so I could enjoy the pure visual composite they created (Lightman and Patterson 687).

This mythic Orient of opaque signs looms large in the *Blade Runner* city, best exemplified in the neon *kanji* (Chinese script)*, hiragana,* and *katakana* (Japanese scripts) that light up the darkness and the flashing virtual geisha hawking pills and Coca Cola. The following comment by cinematographer Jorden Cronenweth suggests a link between these flickering oriental signs – constantly moving yet still – and the bodies of Asian and non-Asian extras that make up the background, which makeup supervisor Marvin Westmore named 'Asian Blade Runner Blue ... sort of a greasepaint with a light blue cast to it" (Sammon 110).

The streets were depicted as terribly overcrowded, giving the audience a future time frame to relate to, we had street scenes just packed with people … like ants. So we made them look like ants – all the same. They were all the same in the sense that they were all part of the flow. It was like going in circles … like going nowhere (Lightman and Patterson 720).

Like the Asian languages flashing in neon above, the bodies on the streets below take on a compressed and unintelligible quality meant to dislocate the presumed Western viewer. That the oriental signs and bodies heaving in the *mise-en-scène* were put there deliberately to alienate this audience appears, at first glance, to support the Yellow Peril aspect of techno-orientalism. And indeed Locke convincingly makes this argument in his analysis of the film's cityscape.

Yet these alien signs and bodies also fascinate, as indicated by viewers' consistent obsession with a fantastic Los Angeles rendered indistinctly Eastern. Given this fascination, how might we begin to account for the strong appeal of the film's production design? Rather than consign the discomfiting specter of the Orient to the extreme background of the film as Locke does, I suggest that it occupies the film's visual *middle* ground, contained between the blue-black base of the noir night palette and the luminously lit white bodies of the principal characters. East Asian iconography and Asian bodies-as-iconography definitely are distorted and relegated to the *mise-en-scène.* Nonetheless, they are visibly *present*, in stark contrast to the conspicuous *absence* of African American and Latino iconography, of black and brown bodies.[xxxii] This dominant Asian presence in the film's *visual* middle space recalls the idea of Asian Americans as model minorities occupying a *social* middle ground between dominant white culture and other racial Others. The position is an uneasy one since it has the potential to undermine the power of the former which it is supposed to maintain.

140

I will return to this notion of East Asia and Asian America as visual and social middle space later in the chapter. Before I do so, however, I will examine how this Asian-inflected city is organized spatially and who occupies certain kinds of spaces, in order to better understand the ways in which racialized and gendered forms of power circulate within the visual and narrative economy of the film.

NO PLACE IN VIRTUAL SPACE

The Postmodern City

BR's ambivalent treatment of East Asia as an eclectic, mildly threatening force safely contained in and as background characterizes its attitude toward the various forms of technology which also play an important role in the set design. Referring to the multiple screens, electronic billboards, flying "hovercrafts," and panoptic surveillance lights that flood the streets, Scott Bukatman in *Blade Runner* describes Los Angeles in the film as a city on the verge of *becoming* virtual -- of "urban space moving toward cyber space" (48). This urban-virtual hybrid illustrates the concept of the global, post-Fordist city in which territorial boundaries are more fluid, or cease to exist entirely, and where the emphasis is less on a sense of place than on one of constant movement. When space and information become interchangeable, the city begins to resemble an information network:

> In cyberspace the density of the central, inner, city became an analogy for the dispersed matrices of information circulation and overload, while cyberspace itself presented an urbanism stripped to its kinetic and monumental essentials. ... Critics of cyberpunk tended to emphasise its dystopian cityscapes, missing the dialectic between the two modes of mutually informing existence, urban and electronic. Urban space and cyberspace each enabled an understanding and negotiation of the other (*Ibid*).

Later, Bukatman mentions the influence of film noir on the cyberpunk ambience of *Blade Runner*. In both noir and cyberpunk, the dark, decentered city becomes a kind of antagonist, threatening to overwhelm the hero, physically and psychologically. Yet at the same time, the depiction of the *Blade Runner* city is not wholly "dystopic." Moments of technological sublimity enthrall the viewer, as in the opening sequence when Vangelis' eerily beautiful electronic soundtrack plays over the bird's eye view of the city at night. One marvels simultaneously at the technological fantasy that is the city and at the special effects technology that has been used to construct it. The camera lingers on the central locus of power, the Tyrell building which as Sobchack points out, strikingly resembles both a light-drenched Mayan temple and a huge, glittering microchip (234). Allure mixed with awe describes the film's attitude toward this abstracted technology, which is viewed detachedly from above. The cityscape, belching fire and twinkling neon, is experienced visually. As spectacle, it recalls similar sublime, purely visual, encounters with technology as Other (usually in the form of space ships, aliens, or outer space) in films such as *2001: A Space Odyssey, Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (Spielberg 1977)*,* and *E.T.: The Extraterrestrial*.

Meanwhile, a more perverse blend of attraction and dread, even disgust, characterizes the perspective of the camera on the recycled technology of the streets which includes within it the automaton-like, orientalized bodies of the city's poorer citizens. Unlike the cityscape, one has trouble viewing the city at street level -- both literally, through the polluted air, rain, commercial clutter, and crowds -- and more figuratively, as a complete picture or entity. Instead one must *move* through and push against this intensely physical city in which it is so easy to get lost. Whereas the cityscape is rendered in mental, abstract, and visual terms, the city at street level is communicated viscerally, through tactile and kinetic ways. The former presents the more utopic side of

142

cyberpunk cinema while the latter exhibits its more dystopic side. The point is that the representations of technology exemplified in both versions of the city mutually reinforce each other.

In his 1991 article, "Prisoners of the City: Whatever Could a Postmodern City Be?" Kevin Robins, like Bukatman, uses the computer metaphor to talk about the postmodern city: "Where once Le Corbusier imagined the city as machine, the postmodern metaphor invokes the city as cybernetic machine (14). Note Robins's use of the word "machine" to describe both kinds of cities here; the difference between the modern city and the postmodern one lies in degree (mechanical versus virtual machines) not form. The article opens by mentioning the popularity of the postmodern city among urban planners and policymakers in the 1990s as an antidote to the failed modernist city of the 1960s exemplified in the International Style of Walter Gropius, Mies van der Rohe, Philip Johnson, and Le Corbusier:

> The postmodern city is projected as the antithesis of modernist abstraction and anomie: it is about the renaissance of urban culture and sensibilities ... If modernism was driven by universalizing forces, then postmodernism is about a return to difference and particularity ... If modernism was about abstraction and functionalism, then postmodernism is about the renaissance of tradition and the re-enchantment of place (1-4).

Robins then goes on to critique the false opposition that this binary posits between modernism and postmodernism, universalism and particularism. According to Robins, the binary not only relegates modernism to the "historical dustbin," but it also fails to see the ways in which postmodernism is very much an extension of modernism and riddled with many of the same problems (8). The most pressing of these can be summed up in the question, how can different sorts of people learn to live together equally in the same

space? Neither urban gentrification nor suburban gated communities – both products of postmodern urban planning – seems to present a viable answer.

Perhaps this is because, as Robins points out, the postmodern sensibility, like the modernist one, is rooted in Romanticism: the postmodernists idealize urban life in much the same way that the Romantics idealized rural life. Both idealizations reflect the values and interests of the middle classes (15). The working poor and people of color become quaint and exotic ornaments within these white bourgeois visions. For instance, the role of colorful Rastafarian navigators and virtual Japanese pop stars in William Gibson's cyberpunk novels does not differ so much from that allotted to the Noble Savage in the work of Blake, Rousseau, and Shelley.

What then does Robins' notion of the US postmodern city as an extension of the modernist city in crisis have to do with Bukatman's idea of the cinematic postmodern city as a kind of technological organism in the process of becoming virtual? Initially, the two seem at odds. On closer inspection, however, one finds that in both descriptions of the so-called postmodern city, power continues to be defined in relation to the spaces that certain kinds of bodies are allowed or not allowed to occupy. It is at this point, for me, that the question of how to define the city becomes moot. The more pressing issue is how racial, class, sexual, and cultural differences are allowed to appear in the real or virtual city – and what changes, if any, these differences bring to previous ways of dealing with difference. As many critics have argued, *Blade Runner* visually screams postmodern "pastiche." The *mise-en-scène* is cluttered with anachronistic, culturally diverse signifiers that flatten and collapse time and space. The city seems to have turned itself inside out in an ecstatic simulation of "New York on a bad day."

Yet the tone and themes of *Blade Runner* are most decidedly *not* postmodern, at least not in any post- or anti- human way. Even the replicants, who are postmodern

subjects *par excellence*, lacking histories and dwelling in the perpetual present as they do, manage to exude a tragic, melodramatic air. Their leader, Roy Batty (Rutger Hauer), embarks on a fairly straightforward Oedipal quest for his father Tyrell (Joe Turkell), neatly dispatching with the guides on his way to that important rendezvous. The head of the Tyrell Corporation is a fusion of corporate mogul and mad scientist. Above all, though, he is the quintessential indifferent father. Tyrell has made a profitable business out of manufacturing and selling android slaves that are "more human than human" to perform various forms of labor on the off-world colonies. Roy's "human" double, grumpy blade runner Deckard (Harrison Ford), grows anxious about the state of his own humanity (i.e., his whiteness and masculinity) when he falls in love with a replicant who saves his life after he has shot another female replicant in the back. Meanwhile, his Aryan looking nemesis moves the film closer to its climax. Protagonist and antagonist, in terms of motivation and action, read more like modernist anti-heroes than postmodern *poseurs*. Furthermore, vestiges of the humanist subject – as enlightened, western, bourgeois male – are apparent in the depiction of the principal characters and in the positions they assume within the cinematic city.

Space, Race, and Power

In *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience,* geographer Yi-Fu Tuan frames the abstract notion of freedom in literal, spatial terms:

> Spaciousness is closely associated with the sense of being free. Freedom implies space; it means having the power and enough room in which to act. Being free has several levels of meaning. Fundamental is the ability to transcend the present condition, and this transcendence is most simply manifest as the elementary power to move. In the act of moving, space and its attributes are directly experienced (52).

145

The colonialist aspects of the US past and present make clear Tuan's link between freedom (the capacity to develop into a fully realized human being) and the organization and assignment of space (where one lives, works, and plays). It can be seen historically in the sanctioned genocide of American Indians under the banner of Manifest Destiny; the wretched life conditions of African American slaves; and the ghettoization of Irish, Eastern European, Asian American and Latino immigrants. It exists today in the explicit and implicit racial and class segregation practices of state institutions (prisons, schools, hospitals) and residential areas (neighborhoods and city districts) in the United States.

How then does cinema communicate this experience of space as interrelated with issues of power and identity? A small group of cultural critics, geographers, architects, and film scholars have noted the unique ability of the cinematic art form to reflect and shape our understanding of social space, especially that of the city.[xxxiii] David Goldberger sums up the link most succinctly when he makes the following observation:

> Film was, in a sense, the first virtual reality, the first place where technology could create in one place a simulation of another place. Precisely what that other place would look like was the province of set designers, who looked both outward to the real world and inward to their own imaginations, often simultaneously, and frequently blending the two beyond recognition ("Film View").

In the remainder of this section, I will examine the relationship between space, identity, and power in *Blade Runner* by describing the physical positions that various characters are made to assume and inhabit in the film.

Above: Tyrell, Deckard, and Sebastian

Like many cities in the science fiction genre, including H.G. Well's novel, *The Time Machine,* the uber-city film, *Metropolis*, the science fiction musical, *Just Imagine* (Butler 1930)*,* and the comic *Heavy Metal*, class division in *Blade Runner* is depicted in spatial terms. According to Mead,

> The premise was in my design mind, that with these enormous structures going up 2,000 to 3,000 feet, decent people never went below the 60th floor so you had these big pile-ons, supporting the architecture, and the street then became a basement essentially, an urban basement (Abbott).

High, interior, well-lit or softly-lit, roomy spaces are privileged over low, exterior, dark or poorly-lit, crowded ones. The rich occupy the former, the poor the latter, and the middle-class with whom the audience is usually made to identify, is situated somewhere in between the two. Tyrell's corporate penthouse is located high above the rest of the city. Its interior is clean, quiet, and austerely palatial. Golden, orange-tinted hues from the setting sun stream in through the windows of the Tyrell building in the scene in which Deckard administers the Voigt-Kampf test on Rachel (Sean Young). Setting sun notwithstanding, the scene is replete with Western signifiers – from the mechanical owl that alludes to Athena, Greek goddess of wisdom and war, to the baroque and rococo furniture, to film noir references in Rachel's outfit and hairstyle and the use of Venetian blinds as an expressive lighting device. When we encounter this interior again, it is nighttime, and Tyrell reads in bed by candlelight, unaware that he will be murdered soon by his mechanical prodigal son. Inasmuch as Roy is Tyrell's literal (though not biological) son, Deckard and Sebastian are his figurative sons. Like the son of the ruler in *Metropolis,* both characters function as mediators between high and low classes and

cultures, and provide hope for bridging the differences between the haves and have-nots. In this sense, their physical positioning within the city reflects and reinforces their narrative roles.

Deckard lives below Tyrell, but still above the street rabble in his ninety-seventh floor apartment while J. F. Sebastian (William Sanderson), the mild-mannered, socially obtuse genetics designer, lives below Deckard in a huge, gorgeously decaying house closer to the street. In his article, *"Blade Runner*'s Post-Individual Worldspace,"* Kevin McNamara provides valuable architectural background on these homes. Both are based on prominent historical buildings in Los Angeles. Deckard's apartment is actually the Ennis House, built for Charles Ennis by Frank Lloyd Wright in 1924, and Sebastian's house, the Bradbury office building designed by George H. Wyman for Louis Bradbury in 1893. With regards to the former McNamara observes,

> The Ennis House (1924) sits on a ridge above the city, an appropriate setting for a design by a strident champion of "extreme individualism" and bitter opponent of urbanism and machine culture. ... The "Mayan" design, rather than being the architect's signature, now blends with the pyramid-style skyscrapers to suggest that the city is a collective memory of the thirties turn-of-the-millennium city (429-430).

Both Wright's legacy as "bitter opponent of urbanism and machine culture" and the Mayan design of the Ennis House, which stylistically links Deckard's home with Tyrell's, associate Deckard with the same lineage of Enlightenment values and aesthetics that Tyrell embodies more explicitly. In the film this lineage is threatened by the presence of the "new immigrants" (of which the replicants are the newest group) and their competing alien cultures which lie just outside and below the nostalgic domiciles of the few upper- and middle-class citizens that remain in the city.

148

Sebastian is the only white human male in *Blade Runner* (with the exception of extras whose homes we never see) who lives on street level. According to McNamara, the Bradbury building, the architectural basis for Sebastian's home was itself inspired by a description of a futuristic department store in Edward Bellamy's influential book, *Looking Backward* (1888). Essentially Bellamy envisioned a stunning shopping mall with natural light flowing down from the dome above. When the light hit the softly tinted frescoes lining the walls, the products on display would take on the aura of truly magical commodities. McNamara points out that in *Blade Runner*, this utopic vision of a space for commodity fetishism and exchange has crumbled into the cluttered, warehouse-like laboratory digs of a lonely "chickenhead" (*Ibid*). As I mentioned in the previous chapter, this is the term used in *Android* to describe those human beings who, due to genetic or mental deficiencies, are prohibited from leaving inner city Earth for suburban "Off Worlds." Sebastian's ailment is Methuselah's complex, a disease that prematurely ages him. Like the "old technology" that constitutes the lower city in the form of recycled architecture and machinery, his body is in a state of "accelerated decrepitude." As unnatural, diseased, and retrofitted, Sebastian embodies the qualities of the very city in which he lives.

The viewer's first glimpse of Sebastian establishes that he is alone and lonely in this city. A harbinger of the computer nerd, he is able to relate better with machines than with human beings and displays a childlike naiveté concerning social and sexual matters. Unable to make human friends, he literally "makes" his friends, the dwarfish mechanical toys that greet him when he comes home. When Pris (Darryl Hannah) makes coy advances at him, he blushes and stammers like a schoolboy. When Roy arrives, he marvels, "You're so different, you're so perfect," then quickly establishes a link between the replicants and himself with the remark, "There's some of me in you." Sebastian has

149

helped to create the replicants, like Tyrell who designed their minds and Hannibal Chew (James Hong), the Chinese mechanic who designed their eyes. In such ways, Sebastian implicitly is connected both with the city and its orientalized inhabitants and with the replicants, who later use him to their own ends. This double connection, in turn, suggests a link between diseased and/or perverse whiteness (Sebastian) and racial and technological otherness (city and replicants).

In the United States people of color have been and continue to be linked with perceived degenerate or undesired forms of whiteness. This association has appeared in various forms, including analogies made in the nineteenth century between poor white ethnics, such as the Irish and the Jews and people of color regarding mental capacity and moral character; the legal and social taboo around interracial marriage between whites and non-whites which was lifted only recently in the 1960s; the social infantilization of black men and the stereotyping of black women as domineering and castrating in the Moynihan Report (1965); and finally, the consistent aligning of white insanity, liberal and radical politics, and/or sexual perversity with African American, Latino, and Asian American cultures in popular entertainment. For instance, the popular film *Bulworth* (Beatty, 1998) is premised on the assumption that a US senator (Warren Beatty) needs to have a nervous breakdown before he is able to listen and relate to his African American constituency -- a relationship that is predictably mediated through the body of an attractive, young black woman played by Halle Berry.

Iris Marion Young delineates the difficult project that members of marginal groups must undertake to avoid reproducing inadvertently the rhetorical and epistemological structures of the neocolonialist, liberal humanist system. Young describes this system as eliding equality with sameness and thereby continuing to define the norm or standard using the terms of the Enlightenment -- as male, white, bourgeois,

150

able-bodied, and heterosexual. According to Young, "rhetorical commitment to the sameness of persons makes it impossible even to name how those differences presently structure privilege and oppression" (164). The task then is simultaneous and twofold. Stereotypes from dominant culture, not only of discrete groups but also across and between groups need to be reclaimed and redeployed. At the same time, various groups must attempt to form productive, potentially transformative coalitions within and without their own boundaries. The hope is that through these strategic, often temporary coalitions, individuals will learn to understand and appreciate each other's differences in more fluid, relational ways rather than static, binaristic ones.

Sebastian's lifestyle and relationship with the replicants presents the possibility of representing on the silver screen this kind of coalition-building. However, no such representation appears, as might be expected from a film that had to meet the ideological and narrative imperatives of 1980s New Hollywood. Roy easily dispatches with a confused Sebastian before taking the elevator up for the standoff with his maker. This leaves Deckard with the job of mediating between human and replicant groups which he accomplishes, at least in the happy ending of the Domestic Cut. He does so not by initiating a collective coming-together between replicants and humans where the two groups acknowledge and learn to appreciate their differences, but rather by coupling with Rachel, a female replicant which, as I will show later, erases their racial difference in the soft, fuzzy glow of heterosexual romance.

Below: The Orientalized City

So far, my reading of space, race, and power in *Blade Runner* has focused on principal white male characters that live in high, cushy domiciles. Outside and below, it is dirty, noisy, dark and wet. Those living and working at street level are constantly

assaulted by the presence of the commercial corporate-state, in the form of advertisements, surveillance cameras, and patrolling policemen. In 1982 Michael Dempsey gave the following vivid description of the *Blade Runner* city:

> Its polluted megalopolis is simply the worst of contemporary LA triple-distilled; earthquake-defying skyscrapers that reek of soullessness and paranoia-inducing secret activities; polyglot Breughel-on-the-River-Styx hordes of punk-Oriental-Krishna-humongous-hustler-lowlifes clustering like heaps of scurrying cockroaches at their bases; air thick and fetid enough to walk on; mural-sized video ads flickering tauntingly from the sides of buildings and the fuselages of drifting blimps – all of it soaked in nearly continuous, doubtless acid-laced drizzle (33).

Demsey could have been painting in unflattering terms the mixed crowds of young bohemian, working class, criminal, and homeless citizens in less affluent (increasingly gentrified) sections of contemporary global cities such as New York, Tokyo, and London. The hybrid mass of bodies in Dempsey's account takes on a distinctly East Asian tenor in Bruno's description below:

> The city is called Los Angeles, but it is an LA that looks very much like New York, Hong Kong, or Tokyo. … The film is populated by eclectic crowds of faceless people. Oriental merchants, punks, Hare Krishnas. … The city is a large market; an intrigue of underground networks pervades all relations. The explosive Orient dominates, the Orient of yesterday incorporating the Orient of today (186).

Both the Orient of yesterday and the Orient of today are defined through capitalist production and consumption. It is no coincidence that this oriental presence "dominates" a city whose various spaces and citizens are linked primarily through the exchange of commodities (which includes artificial humans). As Tchen illustrates repeatedly through

152

rich, historical examples in *New York Before Chinatown,* the notion of the Orient, exemplified by China, has always been conflated in the US imaginary with luxury goods. In the eighteenth century, these goods included tea, silk, and porcelain ware ("china"). Such items endowed their owners with much desired cultural and class capital. Furthermore, their exchange as gifts and heirlooms helped to shape and cement the identity of the developing upper and middle classes in New England and the South.

By the mid 1800s however, the growing presence of immigrants from Asia had begun to sully Western fantasies of the Orient with their not so fabulous physical presence. Like African American slaves and poor white ethnics, Asian immigrants took part in the hard, exploitative labor that transformed the US into a formidable world power in the twentieth century. Male Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Filipino, and Indian workers were enticed into unfair forms of indentured servitude in various parts of the nation: working the sugar plantations in Hawaii, constructing the Transcontinental railroad in the West, and performing factory labor in the East. Meanwhile, most Asian female immigrants, with the exception of Japanese and Korean picture brides, arrived initially to the US as sex workers. Their existence served to combine fears of the Yellow Peril, already embodied in the popular representation of their male counterparts, with the threat of racial contamination through sexual relations between Asian women and Anglo-American men.

In this way, Anglo Americans' historical encounters with East Asian cultures through objects and people-as-objects gave US Orientalism two contradictory faces. The first face, associated with luxury objects from a distant and mythic East Asia, symbolized elegance, wealth, and power, or *the Oriental Other as commodifiable style*. The second face, associated with uncomfortably close Asiatic bodies, signified an unwanted, dangerous, and potentially contagious kind of cultural difference, or *the Oriental Other*

153

as human commodity. Both forms of Orientalism tightly linked the idea and reality of East Asian difference with industrial capitalism. Regardless of increased numbers of Asians and Asian Americans in the US, many now in the ranks of the middle and upper classes, this double-faced Orientalism has not disappeared in the era of post-industrial capitalism. To the contrary, it remains and perhaps has even intensified under high-tech makeup as Ziauddin Sardar (2002) has suggested.

In 1982 Ridley Scott managed to capture and display the beginnings of this high-tech, Janus-faced Orient for the Hollywood audience. In *Blade Runner* he connects East Asia, especially Japan, with transnational corporate power and wealth through the advertisements, scripts, and general dominance of East Asian cultural signifiers in the *mise-en-scène*. At the same time, through the working-class Asiatic merchants which act as guides for the protagonists and the "orientalized" bodies that blend in with the streets, Scott references the invisible oriental presence that keeps the city running.

MANIFESTATIONS OF THE ORIENT

One finds three kinds of oriental presence in the multicultural city of *Blade Runner*. The first is embodied in the secondary characters which are phenotypically and culturally East Asian. All are old and poor and work hole-in-the wall entrepeneurial jobs. All function as mediators or guides for the principal white characters: two for Deckard and one for Roy Batty. These characters signify the socially undesired but economically necessary Asian American immigrant. In that sense, they represent the Oriental Other as human commodity. The second presence emerges in the images and iconography of the city which I have called oriental tropes. These tropes allude to East Asia as a foreign, corporate, specifically feminized power -- also invisible but in a more captivating and insidiously negative way. They represent the Oriental Other as commodifiable style.

154

Finally, the third presence is epitomized by the replicants whom I read as racially fluid others but whose difference is represented in ways that have been used historically to describe and categorize Asian Americans in the United States. The replicants have traits of both kinds of Oriental Others: as menial laborers, they are human commodities like the Asiatic secondary characters; at the same time, as forms of cutting edge technology produced by the Tyrell Corporation, they are also part of the commodifiable style that defines the city.

The Orient as Asian American Worker

According to Locke, "The white replicant bodies are *uber*-human to the extent that the Asian bodies are sub-human. *Blade Runner* represents the Asian bodies as either sub-human or in an advanced state of physical decay" (Locke 200). In the film Asians, Latinos, and their multiracial progeny are the new immigrants who have reshaped the cultural landscape of Los Angeles in 2019. In the next few pages, I will analyze three scenes from the Domestic Cut in which secondary characters from the *mise-en-scène* – all of East Asian descent – are given some command of camera. I will consider how and what they communicate in their interactions with principals, Deckard and Roy Batty, and their narrative roles in the film.

Lee the Translator

We first encounter Deckard reading a newspaper before ducking into The White Dragon, an open-air Japanese fast-food stand, much like those in East Asian countries like China, Japan, and Korea. As Locke observes, Deckard is clearly displaced in this street environment. Surrounding him are young punks and commuters washed in blue tint

155

and placed in shadow. Their quickly moving bodies blend in with the neon signs and television screens that clutter the frame. They wear different kinds of futuristic industrial fashion, carry plastic umbrellas with lighted tips, and are absorbed in the images that constantly flash around them. In contrast Deckard wears a rumpled trench coat, his movements are slow, and he reads a newspaper. Terribly archaic in this setting, he is the most familiar figure for the twentieth-century audience. The light foregrounds Deckard as the camera descends from an establishing aerial shot to focus on his tired figure and visage.

Howie Lee or the "Sushi Master" (Robert Okazaki), the unnamed purveyor at the White Dragon, wears what looks to be a sushi chef uniform and speaks hurriedly in Japanese. His speech is as incomprehensible as the neon signage which also happens to be in Japanese and Chinese. He and Deckard argue over how many pieces of sushi Deckard should order. When Lee informs him he can only order two, Deckard is visibly annoyed. His face reflects the disgusted resignation that American tourists so often express in Hollywood movies when they are forced to confront unfamiliar cultures and customs in the Third World. Indeed Ford displays the same expression here as he does in *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (Spielberg 1981) when he casually confirms the idea of American supremacy in the Middle East by shooting the Arab who has just impressed the audience with elaborate swordplay.

As Deckard is chewing his rubbery sushi, slurping his *udon* noodles, and reflecting on his failed marriage, Gaff, a non-white blade runner, arrives on the scene with a Korean police officer.[xxxiv] Like Deckard, Gaff sports a forties detective look, complete with trench coat and fedora hat. However, he projects a more polished and contemporary aura than Deckard; he even appears foppish. Gaff tells Deckard he has been sent by their superior, Captain Bryan (T. Emmett Walsh) to take him to police

headquarters. After a terse exchange in which we learn that Deckard wants to renounce blade running, Deckard reluctantly leaves with Gaff. Lee plays a significant role in this brief interaction which paradoxically renders him invisible. Gaff uses cityspeak – the multilingual patois of the city's non-white, working class inhabitants – which Deckard claims not to understand. Lee becomes Deckard's translator and the audience's as well, since no subtitles are provided in the scene. As translator, he is literally placed between the two men, his face positioned in direct address with the audience. *Yet we do not see him*. The camera spotlights instead the adversarial relationship between Deckard and Gaff through shot/reverse shots in which they say their lines, followed by Lee's squeaky voice translating.

This scene resembles the second turning point in John Ford's classic western, *The Searchers* (1956) in which an old Mexican guide (Nacho Galindo) is also placed between two differently raced adversaries as he translates the words of American Indian chief Scar (Henry Brandon) for the protagonist Ethan (John Wayne), who later reveals that he understands the language. Here, too, we suspect that Deckard understands cityspeak but feigns ignorance to keep his racial and class identity distinct from those of Lee and Gaff. Gaff in turn refuses to speak in the oppressors' language. The audience is meant to identify with Deckard, the disoriented white man. Gaff plays the role of the mysterious and potentially dangerous racial other. Meanwhile Lee, the Asian American male, provides comic relief while proffering a useful service.

Chew at the Eyeworks

The same representation of the Asian worker as valuable but disposable aid appears in the scene between Chew, the synthetic eye-engineer, and Roy Batty. When Roy and Leon (Brion James) enter the Eyeworks, Chew is fiddling with lab instruments,

muttering and giggling while dipping artificial eyes in bubbling chemical mixtures – a depiction that recalls orientalist images of ancient herbalists in Chinatown. He wears a gray, fur-fringed uniform to keep warm in the freezing temperatures of his laboratory and is hooked to a machine by thick wires reminiscent of umbilical cords which establish his intimate association with technology. Resembling a large bug, Chew is hysterical and servile in stark contrast to Roy who is physically and verbally poised. Their class disparity is racialized, made apparent in the different forms and styles of speech that they use. Chew speaks in incomprehensible gibberish with Cantonese tonal patterns while Roy misquotes William Blake in controlled, clipped English. The scene functions narratively to introduce us to Roy as an antagonist. His ruthless murder of Chew throws some doubt on his moral character and precludes viewers from completely identifying with him. At the same time, however, the subhuman way in which Chew has been represented also keeps viewers from caring very much when he dies.

Chew occupies the lowest rung in the manufacturing process of the replicants. A subcontractor whose work recalls that of present-day Asian American workers in the garment and microchip industries, he "only does eyes." In awe of Roy's superior capabilities as an advanced Nexus 6 model, he whispers, "I gave you your eyes." Roy makes clear their connection when he responds, "If only you could see what I've seen with your eyes." Of the many analyses of this film that center on its eye imagery, none has discussed the significance of this particular scene in that regard. If the eye acts as a window to or mirror of one's identity as these analyses argue, how does it signify that the eyes of the replicant leader were created by a lowly Asian American worker? Perhaps one of the reasons that Roy and the other replicants can never become wholly human has something to do with the fact that their eyes which are intimately related to their identities were made by someone who is not quite human himself.[xxxv]

The Cambodian Woman: "Not fish, snake scale!"

Like Lee and Chew, the Cambodian Woman (Kimiko Hiroshige), the last secondary Asian American character to appear in the film, functions as a guide for a principal character. Like Chew, she is linked closely with sight and technology. Before she is introduced, Deckard uses the Esper machine, a criminal investigation device that zooms in and magnifies images, to analyze a photo that he retrieved earlier in Leon's apartment along with an animal scale. He becomes convinced that the two clues are related after discovering in the photographic image a woman's reflection in a mirror. Deckard promptly leaves for Animoid Row to learn more about the scale. Animoid Row is the only trace in the film of the artificial animal trade that plays such an important thematic role in *Android.* This section of town consists of East Asian, Middle Eastern, and South Asian architecture and objects and a diverse group of vendors and customers. Deckard approaches the street stand of an elderly East Asian woman. Upon examining the scale under her microscope, she informs him that it belongs to an artificial snake -- not a fish, as he had assumed. This information leads him to locate the female replicant Zhora in Chinatown.

Unlike the other Asian American characters, the woman speaks English fluently with a slight British accent. Also, while her help is not acknowledged by Deckard or the narrative, it differs noticeably from the kind of aid associated with Lee and Chew. Before giving Deckard important information about the scale, she repeats the same scientific procedure that he used earlier to examine the photograph. Her microscope, like the Esper machine, is a technological prosthesis that allows its user to see what is invisible to the naked eye. In other words, the Cambodian Woman, who remains unnamed even in the credits, is the only secondary character represented as a potential equal, at least technologically, with the principal character she aids. Why is this? And what might her

159

gender have to do with the difference in her representation from those of the other male Asian American characters? One clue lies in the landscape.

The Orient as Feminized Urban Iconography

The second kind of East Asian presence, as I mentioned earlier, appears in the spectral form of foreign economic and cultural capital. It is represented visually, in Asian-inflected images, architecture, and props, and textually in two forms: the neon signs that punctuate the darkness and cityspeak, a mixture of German, Spanish, Cantonese and Japanese that privileges the East Asian languages (in inflection and endings). It is palpably present as well in the music and sound design. My analysis spotlights the visual representations of oriental iconography in the film and within these, two images of highly sexualized "oriental" women.

The Virtual Geisha

I would like to begin with the "'Japanese simulacrum,' the huge advertisement which alternates a seductive Japanese face and a Coca Cola sign," according to Bruno. This depiction of a young Asian woman dressed as a geisha, popping what has been described variously, as a digestive, a birth control pill and a piece of gum, recurs throughout the film.[xxxvi] It is usually accompanied by the ominous sound of Tayo drums, eerie electronic strains of the samisen, and quick shots of bicyclists in Asian straw hats and loose tunics streaming diagonally into the foreground. The camera cuts to the image, projected on an enormous screen above the city, after especially significant and often violent scenes. For instance, it first appears immediately after the opening scene in which Holden administers the Voigt-Kampf test on Leon, one of the four fugitive replicants at

large in the city. Holden asks Leon to describe his mother; Leon kills him in response. The next image we see is that of the virtual geisha. She appears again after Deckard and Rachel first kiss and later presumably have sex. Their verbal foreplay is tinged with hints of sadomasochism as Deckard grows more aggressive physically and as Rachel dutifully repeats his declarations of desire. Finally, the image is visible through the staircases of Sebastian's apartment building in the violent chase scene between Roy and Deckard before the former rescues the latter. In all three instances, non-reproductive sexuality is showcased: Leon has no biological mother; he was made, not born (a theme that emerges again in *The Matrix*). Deckard and Rachel engage in human-replicant sex. And, as Bukatman has shown, the chase scene between Roy and Deckard is replete with homoerotic overtones.

In terms of narrative and representational function, the advertisement falls somewhere between those of the Asian American workers and the non-anthropomorphic oriental tropes described above. The ad is clearly a technologically constructed object; however, it also contains and projects an unmistakably East Asian face – that of a young, coyly seductive woman. This electronically pulsing face transforms the foreign East Asian body into palatable consumer iconography. It suggests that racial difference might be transcended in two ways: through (hetero)sexual and commodity consumption. Both are linked inextricably to fantasy and the exoticized eroticization of Asian women. Perhaps this is why the Cambodian Lady was given a slightly more dignified representation than her male peers -- because the idea of East Asia in the orientalist consciousness has been and to a large extent continues to be gendered perversely feminine as the virtual geisha demonstrates so spectacularly.

Zhora: The Artificial "Oriental" Woman

The two categories of Orient as worker and iconography also collapse in Zhora's death scene in Chinatown. This Chinatown is multiracial, a conglomeration of Middle Eastern, Latino, East Asian, white, and racially ambiguous faces and bodies – all exuding an air of luxury, decadence, and debauchery. The setting recalls other public spaces of play in which differently raced people have mixed on and off screen, including opium dens, jazz clubs, bars, dance halls, and more recently, concerts and raves. Once again Deckard looks distinctly out of place as he tracks Zhora (Joanna Cassidy) to Taffy's Bar where she works as an exotic dancer. When Deckard catches her after the show, she nonchalantly rebuffs his advances, wearing nothing but the phallic snake and some body glitter. Zhora plays the role of the unruly woman who is in control of her sexuality and knows how to use it to return and subvert the male gaze. In that sense, she is the only real *femme fatale* in the film. Pris, despite her athletic struggle with Deckard before dying rather orgasmically, remains a beautiful sex toy, used to bait Sebastian and partnered with Roy who is obviously her superior. Rachel also takes a submissive position to men throughout the film, first her father/creator, Tyrell then Deckard, who assumes the paternal role as her lover.

In contrast Zhora is never partnered with anyone, male or female. Her power and appeal stem from her sexually and culturally "fallen" state. Zhora's disguise as a white, exotic dancer in Chinatown conflates oriental otherness with deviant female sexuality – deviant in the sense that it exists purely as and for pleasure (i.e. it has no reproductive value). The character is part of a long lineage of historical and fictional women who appropriated oriental tropes to enhance their erotic appeal. This lineage includes the self-styled Mata Hari (Margaretha Zelle) who is credited with inventing the strip tease in 1905;[xxxvii] the evil, robotic Maria in *Metropolis* who dances in the red light Yoshiwara

162

district;   actress Myrna Loy in a number of yellowface roles, including that of Fu Manchu's daughter in *The Mask of Fu Manchu* (Brabin and Vidor 1932);[xxxviii] and even arguably, the Chinese American actress Anna May Wong whose "Dragon Lady" roles required a kind of self-orientalization to appeal to the Hollywood audience.[xxxix]

Like the virtual geisha, Zhora self-consciously functions as a spectacular commodity and, in doing so, performs and exposes the spectacle of race and gender as such. The virtual geisha remains safely contained within the screen of the advertisement. However, Zhora triply transgresses the boundaries of proper womanhood established in the film -- racially (as an orientalized white woman), ontologically (as a human being), and sexually (as a single, empowered female). She is duly punished for her transgressions when Deckard shoots her in the back after chasing her through Chinatown. This chase scene provides one of the longest sustained depictions of urban *mise-en-scène* in the film. The sense of technological and cultural disorientation that has been established as an integral characteristic of the city is heightened here in several ways. These include the use of a "busy" camera, long and medium-long shots of Zhora and Deckard at the beginning of the chase as they run against the crowds, fast cuts to the expressionless faces they pass, and the camera's lingering on both old and new forms of technology. The former is exemplified by the traffic lights, old, rusting cars, and the subway station entrance, which is covered in graffiti, while the latter is epitomized by the sleek, sterile surfaces of buildings, newer forms of transportation, and again, the incomprehensible and ubiquitous East Asian signs in neon. Like representations of Chinatown in film noir, this depiction treats the ethnic enclave as an enigmatic, exotic, and subtly sinister space – a dark, foreign stain that, in the case of *Blade Runner,* has spilled into and sullied the rest of the city.

163

Throughout the sequence, the viewer is not quite sure with whom to identify. Deckard is drawn as the protagonist of the story: we have had more exposure to him than any other character; we see the city through his eyes; and we are with him as he tracks the replicants. It is also arguable, however, that Zhora, in her distanced, objectified position, elicits more sympathy. Unlike Deckard, she is associated with the city and its inhabitants. Shots foregrounding her face and figure are presented through a blue filter as are those of the streets and extras. Conversely, Deckard is shot mostly through a red filter; the contrast becomes most striking in the glance-object cut toward the middle of the chase, when Deckard spots Zhora blending in against the wall of the subway station entrance. Deckard (illuminated behind by red neon) looks down at Zhora (in blue neon).

The replicant Zhora's panic is palpable: her chest heaves and her eyes dart everywhere. Meanwhile, the human Deckard shows no emotion. Deckard locates her and lunges, at which point Zhora commences running with superhuman speed. Her attempt at escape ends only when Deckard shoots her in the back – the cowardice associated with this particular killing method is compounded here by the victim's gender.[xl] Even after she has been shot, Zhora continues to run, crashing in slow agony through several sheets of department store glass. The way in which this section of the scene is shot aesthetically fetishizes Zhora's death. Her clear raincoat matches the glass; their transparency reflects her identity as a sexualized and racialized commodity. She is pure surface – her subjectivity, wholly exteriorized as a corporeal *object*. In this sense, Zhora is no different than the mannequins whose plastic parts fall off and bounce around her as she plunges to her death on the street.

Zhora's death and the consistent presence of the virtual geisha highlight the underlying artificiality of a specific kind of racialized gender identity -- that of the orientalized woman. Their brief, secondary roles in the narrative provide a counterpoint

164

to the definitions of normative humanity, in terms of gender and race which are supplied by the other principal characters. In other words, Zhora and the virtual geisha force the narrative (and the audience) to question once again, what defines an entity as a human being or a thing and how one might become – and perhaps in some ways already is – the other.

The Orient as Raced Replicant

As noted earlier, the city in *Blade Runner,* following Bukatman, undergoes a transition from material and concrete (urban) to fantastic and abstract (virtual) space. Paradoxically, in this hybrid space, the replicants attempt to change their virtual, illegitimate identities into concrete, legitimate ones. Their displaced and unwanted presence in 2019 Los Angeles categorizes them as social contagions that need to be contained, processed, and either expelled from or incorporated into the dominant culture. In that sense, the representation of the replicants resembles those of primarily Asian immigrants before and Latino immigrants after the 1965 Immigration Act. At the same time, as several film scholars have argued, the plight of the replicants also resembles that of African Americans during slavery even as phenotypically, they display a kind of hyper-whiteness (this description applies mostly to Roy and Pris with their pale skin and bleach-blond hair).

In this final section, I will attempt to discuss the replicants in terms of their racial identity, performance, and representation. Are they black? Asian? Latino? White? Can they be read racially at all? What relationship does their race, whatever it is, have to do with their class and sexuality? And finally, what significance does that relationship have to the ways in which the soon-to-be virtual city is imagined?

165

Beyond Black and White

In her article, "Back to the Future," Silverman posits that the replicants are "black" to the extent that they occupy narratively the symbolic space of slavery which in the US has been occupied historically by African Americans.

> It is precisely through this character's [Roy's] hyperbolic "whiteness" that *Blade Runner* most dramatically denaturalizes the category of "slave" – the category which our culture still manages, in an attenuated way, to rhyme with negritude. By putting Batty in the position classically occupied by those with dark skin, the film obliges the white spectator to understand the relation between that position and those who are slotted into it as absolutely arbitrary and absolutely brutal (115).

Locke rejects this argument, noting Silverman's failure to consider the ways in which the replicants and her own reading appropriate the history of US slavery by assuming the moral power of the victim position (i.e., the replicants' symbolic blackness) without acknowledging the violent, colonialist origins and consequences of that position. Instead he argues that her racial reading retains the social, political, and representational power of whiteness much as the replicants do through their excessively white phenotypical features.

> In its project to refurbish white masculinity, BR must wrestle with a paradox with respect to the category of blackness. It must incorporate blackness on the level of metaphor and yet at the same time it must exclude blackness on the level of the literal (147).

Locke later suggests that the replicants are racially schizophrenic, both black and white, and thus representative of the best of both cultures and histories:

> Part of *Blade Runner'*s genius ... lies in the way that the film solves this paradox about how to both include and exclude blackness through a detour around the literal register. It surreptitiously splits blackness in two, along the lines of the literal and the metaphorical. This splitting of blackness enables the film to put a hyperbolically white male body into a hyperbolically black subject position. Thus, *Blade Runner'*s replicants, the film's embodiment of "humanity at its finest," are both white and black in a significant sense (147-148).

Locke's observation is a cogent one. However, it leaves no room for movement between or outside the racial poles of black and white. Similarly, Robert Lee's conflation of the replicants with Asian American Model Minorities which I mentioned in the last chapter fails to take into account the racial, economic, and symbolic *elasticity* of the Model Minority position. For instance, one could just as easily compare the replicants to illegal and/or working class Latino immigrants or middle class African Americans and Latinos who aspire to enter, culturally and socially, the historically white dominant class.

I would like to present a different kind of reading concerning race and the replicants. Rather than assigning these artificial humans a specific racial identity, I suggest viewing them instead as nonracially specific Model Minorities. While the role of the Model Minority currently is associated with Asian Americans, I argue that it can be extended to apply to all marginal subjects who lack and desire the cultural, legal, and economic capital of whiteness. The emphasis here is on *class* as a crucial element in how one is read racially. The variation on the Model Minority that I offer is based on the idea of race as social performance, namely, that the spaces one occupies, the people with whom one associates, and the behaviors and attitudes that one displays determine how one is racially defined. Along with beauty which is based in phenotype, one common way in which people of color have been able to assume the spaces, attitudes, and behaviors of dominant white culture has been through the possession of class capital. In the figures of

167

the replicants, one sees the costs and benefits of becoming "human" which, in the logic of the film and of dominant culture, can be interpreted as becoming "white."

The Difficulty of Becoming Human

As noted earlier, the replicants are able to blend in with and quickly acclimate to the city: Zhora and Leon find working-class jobs while Pris and Roy hide out in Sebastian's house. In this respect, their relationship with the city appears at the beginning of the film to lie in stark opposition to that of Deckard, who seems forever lost within it. This changes when Deckard develops emotionally strong ties to the replicants Rachel and Roy Batty. His social and physical boundaries grow more elastic and even threaten to break as these ties force him to questions his own status as "human." Indeed, the final scene in the Director's Cut intimates that Deckard could be a replicant – supporting the notion that the traditional category of the human being becomes unstable and perhaps untenable in the age of mechanical simulation.

In these relationships between Deckard and the replicants, the latter are shown "becoming" human to Deckard (and the audience) through their interactions with him – the first via heteronormative coupling and the second, homoerotic doubling. I will address these processes of transformation shortly. Before doing so, I would like to note that Deckard becomes more "human" himself as he begins to recognize similarities between his own situation and that of Rachel and Roy. Like them, he does not seem to have much of a personal history: his apartment is full of unexplained photographs, which are just as opaque as those that the replicants carry with them – proof of their fake memories. Like the replicants, he does not know where he comes from, why he is alive, where he is going, and when he will go. Like them, he is an orphan of the city. This association between Deckard and the replicants, which remains at the metaphorical level

168

in the 1982 version, is suggested more strongly as a possibility in the 1992 Director's Cut.

It is also a universal condition in the film. Everyone, regardless of his or her ontological status, is single and alone. No one is depicted as part of a family whose members share biological kinship ties. The two scenes in which mothers are mentioned involve murder and betrayal: the first, of course, is the opening scene with Leon. The second is when Deckard tells Rachel that the woman in her photograph is not her mother but rather someone else's memory implanted in her consciousness by Tyrell. Coincidentally, the only recognizable family type structures in the film are those of Sebastian with his toys and the replicants with each other. For machines that are not supposed to have or express emotions, the replicants seem to care quite deeply for each other. Leon visibly shows grief when Deckard kills Zhora and is angry enough at her loss to seek revenge. Roy responds even more intensely to Pris's death at the hands of the same blade runner. His face falls before he kisses his lover's lifeless body then grows rigid as he begins stalking her murderer.

The central theme of the film then is the link between human beings who have become machines and machines that want to become human. The replicants come to earth to find their maker and to learn their histories – i.e., how they were manufactured – so that they can extend their termination (death) dates. If they are able to accomplish this, the replicants will be able to "pass" completely as human subjects. Like most immigrants, they have come to the US for a better life, for more social and economic opportunities. Also like US immigrants when they are "naturalized," the replicants must renounce their pasts as "aliens" in order to be fully incorporated into their new national family/home. None of the fugitive replicants successfully assimilates into US society. However, Roy, in his interaction with his "father" Tyrell, manages simultaneously to invert and affirm

169

the system which has rejected him and yet from which he needs some nominal form of acceptance. Two kinds of assimilation narratives accompany the primary narrative of Deckard's investigation. The first is Roy's search for and murder of Tyrell followed by his own death in Deckard's presence. The second is Rachel's alienation from Tyrell followed by her coupling with Deckard.

Bukatman reads Roy as Deckard's cyborgian double who must be eliminated in order for the protagonist to claim and assert his heterosexual masculinity. Along with acknowledging Roy as the symbolically "black" slave leader, Bukatman suggests that he also possesses some noticeable homosexual and homoerotic tendencies.

> He (Roy Batty/ Rutger Hauer) purses his lips taunts, teases, confesses remorse, paints his face and in general eroticises the world. In a few drafts of Fancher's screenplay, Roy's appearance in the final battle is described as being 'somewhere between a Comanche warrior and a transvestite.' ... Roy is ... transgressive, and never more so than in that prolonged battle as the prey assumes the role of the hunter. Roy becomes ... a kind of homophobic nightmare: Deckard's panic grows beyond rational bounds as lesions appear on Roy's skin and his beauty begins to decay (84).

Yet this abject, transgressive figure rescues Deckard, in an unfathomable Christ-like gesture before he dies in the transcendent climatic scene which begins with Hauer's monologue and ends with the dove that manifests mysteriously in Roy's arms before it flies up into the morning sky. The religious reference here, intentional or not, is hard to miss. Deckard is a changed (perhaps saved?) man after his encounter with Roy, who, in this effectively melodramatic death scene, is represented without overt irony in the position of Jesus Christ. Similar to the way in which Christ's deific status is revealed through his death and subsequent resurrection, Roy's gesture of grace toward Deckard before his death implies he may be "more human than human."

170

Meanwhile, Rachel achieves the same ends by rejecting her newly discovered replicant identity to couple with a human. The romance between her and Deckard structurally bears a strong resemblance to the interracial romance narratives that Gina Marchetti describes below:

> Transcendent romances allow the lovers to "spiritually" overcome social barriers through their love, which forces the suppression of any "aberrant" ethnic or racial characteristics. In assimilation narratives, the nonwhite lover completely relinquishes his or her own culture in order to be accepted into the American bourgeois mainstream, usually represented by the creation of a "typical" nuclear family (8).

Rachel becomes "human" in much the same way that East Asian women in films like *Teahouse of the August Moon*, *Sayonara,* and *The World of Suzie Wong* become or try to become "white" through their hyper-feminized performance of sexual difference vis-à-vis a white American male.

While Rachel could be read generally in this formula as a non-white female, visual and performative cues suggest the correlation of her character specifically to the figure of the "oriental" woman. Early on in Hollywood cinema, the vampish, orientalized appearance and performance of actresses Myrna Loy, Louise Brooks, and Anna May Wong established a stylistic and thematic link between the figure of the femme fatale and that of the exoticized East Asian woman.[xli] The association remains in Hollywood, evidenced in the oriental look and/or style of more recent leading ladies in film noir such as Uma Thurman in *Pulp Fiction* and Jennifer Tilly in *Bound* (Wachowski 1996). As I mentioned before, when Rachel first appears in the film, she looks very much like a femme fatale in a 1940s style dress. This look is accentuated when she coolly smokes a cigarette during her interrogation by Deckard. Rachel also has long dark hair with bangs framing her porcelain white face. The combination of these traits comprise a recognizable

"oriental" look, popularized in the 1920s by silent actress Louise Brooks's trademark bob and later by sex idol Bettie Page's style of long black hair with bangs.

Finally, in the love scene, Rachel allows herself to be seduced by Deckard. She utters her lines passively, repeating after Deckard the words he wants to hear from her. Essentially, he teaches her, rather forcefully, how to be a "real" (i.e. heteronormative) woman-in-love. Again, this performance of childlike femininity is often associated with East Asian women in Hollywood cinema, as Traise Yamamoto has discussed.

Multiracial Traces

Whether we see Rachel and Deckard actually leaving the city for greener pastures (Domestic Cut), or we are left imagining they will (Director's Cut), the film ends with the two as a newly formed, heterosexual couple, perhaps capable of reproducing and starting a nuclear family. Regardless of whether they can or cannot physically reproduce, the closing image presented by Deckard and Rachel – i.e., of two members of the opposite sex in a romantic relationship – has become an established Hollywood trope signifiying the reproduction of the nuclear family and by extension, the community. At the end of *Sayonara,* a classic East Asian-white interracial romance film, Captain Gruver (Marlon Brando) asks entertainer Hana-Ogi (Miiko Taka) to marry him and return with him to the United States. She worries about the social fate of their biracial offspring, asking "What would happen to our children? What would they be?" He answers confidently, "What would they be? They'd be half Japanese and half American. They'd be half yella and half white."

The specter of the unborn biracial child that is overtly addressed in Gruver's response to his Japanese bride-to-be haunts the ending of *Blade Runner.* If Deckard and Rachel are able and decide to have kids, what will they be – human or replicant? Will

they fit into the off-world suburbs where the two may be headed? Or is there an idyllic world that lies outside even the off-worlds where human-replicant individuals are socially accepted and granted legal citizenship? The existence of such a utopia seems as plausible as that of unicorns.

This brings me to the last scene in the film. At the end of the Director's Cut, Gaff leaves an origami unicorn in Deckard's apartment, hinting that he has access to Deckard's memories and dreams as he does to those of the replicants. It is significant here that the key to our hero's suddenly ambiguous identity lies in a mythological symbol from the West expressed in an Eastern aesthetic style. It is just as significant that the deliverer of this message, like the city he lives in, looks multiracial and speaks a multitude of languages with a deliberately strong Asian accent. According to Olmos who not only played the character but heavily contributed to its development, Gaff's backstory was that he "was primarily Mexican-Japanese, and ... his lineage stretched back at least five generations" (Sammon 113). Olmos later mentions that he saw the character as multiracial but predominantly Asian:

> I began to feel that, despite his mixed blood, Gaff was more Asian than anything else. So I asked Marvin Westmore to make up my skin in yellowish tones before every shot. Yet I also felt Gaff had some other nationalities in him, too. So we gave him a French-Spanish mustache, an Italian punk haircut, and China-blue eyes (Sammon 114).

Gaff's multiracial, multicultural look was complemented by his use of multilingual cityspeak. Fancher, who is part Chicano himself, first came up with the idea of cityspeak based on the speech patterns of Latino male youth in East Los Angeles; he also gave the character its name, Gaff based on the word "gaffe," meaning a mistake (Sammon 113). Cityspeak was fleshed out some more by Peoples, who followed Scott's instructions to

173

make the character speak Japanese then added Tagalog when Scott and co-producer Powell later suggested "maybe Gaff should speak in some sort of weird, futuristic gutter language" (*Ibid*). Finally, Olmos added the crucial finishing touches when he translated bits of Gaff's dialogue into Spanish, French, Chinese, German, and Hungarian with the help of instructors at the Los Angeles Berlitz School (*Ibid*).

Fancher's decision to name the character "mistake" recalls the history of anti-miscegenation law and sentiment in the US which is embodied in Gaff's visibly multiracial roots. I suggest another interpretation of the name based on phonetic similarities: Gaff short for "gaffer," the person responsible for lighting the film set. In *Blade Runner* particularly, lighting is extremely important since it directs what the audience can and cannot see. As well it can change not only the ambience surrounding an object, person, or space, but also our perception of its very dimensions, textures, and functions. Gaff seems to lie somewhere between these two interpretations of his name – "gaffe" (an object of fun and ridicule) and "gaffer" (a subject with the power to transform space) – in much the same way that the city lies somewhere between urban and virtual, and the characters between human and replicant.

The Raced, Technological Future

According to Bukatman, in the virtual city, people have "terminal identities," which he defines as "a new identity to occupy the emerging electronic realm ... which refers both to the end of the traditional subject and the emergence of a new subjectivity constructed at the computer station or television screen" (*Blade Runner* 45). These new kinds of identities begin to erase the boundaries between human and machine in a manner that evokes Donna Haraway's figure of the cyborg: "a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of

174

machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction" (*Simians* 437-437). A similar kind of figure is intimated in a 1981 shooting script that was never translated to screen when Deckard's voiceover refers to himself, Rachel and Roy Batty as the "new humans."

Later in "A Cyborg Manifesto," Haraway posits a stimulating connection between the cyborg and the proletarian Asian female which unfortunately remains undeveloped:

> The nimble fingers of "Oriental" women, the old fascination of little Anglo-Saxon Victorian girls with doll's houses, women's enforced attention to the small take on quite new dimensions in this world. There might be a cyborg Alice taking account of these new dimensions. Ironically, it might be the unnatural cyborg women making chips in Asia and spiral dancing in Santa Rita jail whose constructed unities will guide effective oppositional strategies (*Simians* 438).

If cyborgs are raced, as Haraway here suggests they may be, what race or races are they? What is the relationship between the technological and the racial other? And how can we begin to tease out the ways in which the future is portrayed as being dominated by both types of others – racial and technological – the two often conflated and celebrated within the same bodies?

Two popular media representations immediately come to mind at the combination of the words "race" and "technology." The first is the growing global phenomenon of *otaku*, a term that was introduced earlier in Chapter Two. Karl Taro Greenfield provides the following description of this subculture in *Speed Tribes: Days and Nights with Japan's Next Generation*:

> This blurring of man and machine, of reality and what comes in over the VDT, is spawning a generation of Japanese kids who are opting out of the conformity of Japan, Inc., in favor of logging on to computer networks. They have been dubbed *otaku* by the Japanese media, from the most formal way of saying "you" in Japanese, the implication being that there is always some kind of technological barrier between people (274-275).

Since the mid 1990s, western variants of the *otaku* have emerged in the US and Europe via internet fandom groups and the increasing presence of Japanese and East Asian popular culture such as *manga* (Japanese comics), *anime* (Japanese cartoons and animated films), and Japanese videogames. According to Susan Napier, US and UK anime fans have appropriated the derogatory Japanese term as a "badge of honor" to signify their subcultural difference as *anime* fans in the West. I will revisit this term and its implications for Hollywood cinema in the next chapter when I discuss the industrial contexts of *The Matrix.*

The second representation is the increasing number of racially ambiguous and multiracial faces appearing on the small and big screens which look vaguely East Asian, Middle Eastern, and/or Latino. Among other possible origin points, this trend can be traced to the "Face of the Nation" article in *Time* magazine published in fall 1993, which predicted that in the near future, the nation would become a racial melting pot, consisting primarily of multiracial citizens. To illustrate this thesis, digitally morphed photos of differently raced individuals were provided alongside the text. The cover itself featured an attractive, racially ambiguous woman – who looked mostly white. More recently, Amerasian models and actresses appear to have taken on this role of the whitened multiracial US (female) subject, as evidenced by the increased visibility of "oriental" women in music videos, videogames, television commercials, and magazine and internet advertisements. More will be said about the increasing visibility of multiracial faces and bodies in popular culture in the last chapter.

Both the ontologically and transculturally hybrid representation of the *otaku* and the racially hybrid representation of the "oriental" female model appear to suggest two things: first, that the US is becoming a more culturally and racially diverse place and second, that the "new people" represented in these non-white images will be better

176

equipped to survive and succeed in the technologized future. The relationship between these representations, racial demographic shifts in US society, and changing perceptions of race will be explored further in readings of *The Matrix*.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I provided an extended analysis of the orientalized city in *Blade Runner*. I began with a discussion of how and why the city was imagined as primarily East Asian by its director, cinematographer, and production designer, noting the cultural sources from which the production crew drew to create the city, including previous representations of Asia in film noir and other Hollywood cinema, popular visual culture, and personal experience. I argued that the Orient occupies a visual middle ground in the film, caught between the absent presence of black bodies and the foregrounded presence of white bodies – a space that echoes the historical role of Asian Americans as conditionally white Model Minorities in the US. I then went on to explore the connections between space, race, and power in the film in two parts. First, I examined how the positions of the principal characters in the *mise-en-scène* of the film reflect their social status. I showed that the more powerful a character is, the further away he lives from the streets. The city at street level is depicted as multicultural with strong East Asian visual accents; the only white characters associated with this non-western city are the non-human replicants and Sebastian, a defective and marginalized human being. In contrast Deckard and Tyrell dwell high above the streets.

Second, I described three manifestations of the Oriental Other in the city: first, the Oriental Other as human commodity, a presence embodied in the secondary Asiatic characters which function as expendable guides for the principal characters; second, the Oriental Other as commodified style, expressed in the fantasy of the seductive

177

commercial Orient, which is performed by the electronic image of the geisha and the replicant sex-worker Zhora; and third, the Oriental Other as Model Minority, a state exemplified by the replicants themselves, who, like the city itself, straddle a middle ground between the non-human (non-white) and the human (white). I suggested that the principal replicant characters, Roy Batty and Rachel both transgress human/racial boundaries – the former through death and the latter through romantic love. I ended by noting that the future suggested by Rachel and Deckard's coupling is embodied in the multiracial character, Gaff. Again, like the *Blade Runner* city, Gaff is a composite of many different races and cultures that reads as "oriental."

The political implications of the multiracial and in some ways raceless oriental style that is suggested by Gaff's presence are explored in more detail in my readings of *The Matrix*. I want to stress, though, that its roots lie in *Blade Runner* along with other cyberpunk media from the 1980s. Even as *Blade Runner* is entrenched in oriental tropes, it constantly moves toward the transparent form of oriental imagery that I call oriental style. Traces of this style appear in the blue paint that stands for urban yellowface on the Asian and non-Asian extras, in ethnically diverse city streets and quarters like Chinatown and Animoid Row, and in the replicants who embody the desire of the Model Minority to assimilate into dominant white culture. In Part Three I consider the increased presence of oriental style in cyberpunk cinema and its ideological ramifications. That analysis begins in the next chapter, which provides an overview of the US reception of *anime* and martial arts films, two East Asian popular cultural forms that contributed strongly to the East Asian look of *The Matrix.*

Chapter Five

Cinematic Asiaphilia: Martial Arts, *Anime,* and *The Matrix*

We wrote the story for ourselves and hoped others would pick up on it. Every studio we showed it to thought no one would understand it. We told them it would be complex and dense, but we were also going to shoot the best action scenes and coolest computer graphics ever. Even if audiences didn't get all of the references, we knew they'd at least have a good time with the visuals.

      -- Larry Wachowski[xlii]

INTRODUCTION

      Seventeen years after *E.T.* demolished *Blade Runner* at the box office, an eerily similar scenario appeared in Hollywood. George Lucas's much publicized first prequel to his space opera *Star Wars* bowed at theaters in May 1999, two months after the debut of an intriguing cyberpunk film by two young, obscure, and "geeky" brothers from Chicago, Larry and Andy Wachowski. Once again, a feel-good, cross-marketed science fiction blockbuster squared off with a dark, noirish, and violent film about human beings and technology. The outcome in 1999, however, was decidedly different than that in 1982. While *Star Wars I: The Phantom Menace* more than recouped its production costs, it was the sleeper hit, *The Matrix,* that captured and seemed to reflect the public imagination at the cusp of the new millennium.

      At the time of this writing, *The Matrix* has grossed $456 million in worldwide box office: $171 in the US and $285 internationally (Rentrak).[xliii] It has synergistically generated a mass of *Matrix*-related paraphernalia, including an in-depth DVD documentary (*The Matrix Revisited*), a series of animated shorts (*The Animatrix*), a

videogame (*Enter The Matrix*), and two sequels, *The Matrix: Reloaded* (May 2003) and *The Matrix: Revolutions* (November 2003). Accompanying these products has been a flurry of journalistic hype and criticism, a formidable international fan base linked though internet websites and listservs, and a considerable number of academic books and articles.[xliv]

The Matrix is a fairly standard *bildungsroman* about a somnolent corporate drone-by-day and hacker-by-night named Thomas Anderson, alias Neo (Keanu Reeves). Neo learns that what he has accepted as reality is actually a fake world called the Matrix. The Matrix is Plato's Cave, cyberspace, and Antonio Gramsci's notion of hegemony all rolled up into one "consensual hallucination" – a virtual simulation of reality fed into human beings to keep them blind to the "real" reality: that they are slaves to and energy sources for the machines, which have taken over the planet. Neo's mentor and guide on this journey of discovery is a well-dressed mass terrorist named Morpheus (Laurence Fishburne), who turns out to be the leader of the resistance movement against the machines. He and his crew, which includes Trinity (Carrie-Anne Moss), Neo's strong and sexy love interest, fly around the ruins of the "real world" in their ship, the Nebuchadnezzar, evading the metallic surveillance octopi called Sentinels or "squiggies" and "jacking in" to the Matrix to fight the blank-faced Agents led by Smith (Hugo Weaving).

Morpheus chooses Neo as his acolyte because he believes that the talented hacker might be the "One" (note the anagram) – the savior that the middle-aged black female Oracle (Gloria Foster) has prophesied will free humankind from the machines. Once Neo learns and accepts the awful truth that his life has been a lie, the focus of the film shifts to whether he may or may not be the One. Found wanting in several ways, he eschews the issue to rescue Morpheus who has been captured by the Agents while trying to save

Neo's life. Neo's willingness to sacrifice himself for his teacher and friend – as well as Morpheus' continued faith in him – leads the audience to suspect that he might indeed be the One. This suspicion ultimately is confirmed and realized through Trinity's expression of her love for Neo: her kiss resurrects him from the dead. It also gives him the computer knowledge and power to defeat Agent Smith before flying up to the sky with the promise of more pop-philosophizing and ass-kicking in the sequels.

Given my categorization of *Blade Runner* and *The Matrix* as influential cyberpunk films, it is worth investigating why one was dismissed as bad filmmaking at its debut while the other received critical praise from the outset. I posit that the contrast in their reception was due to the social, political, and industrial developments that separate the two as well as their different narrative and visual strategies. The first part is examined in the rest of this chapter while the second part is considered in more depth in the next chapter.

CRITICAL RESPONSE

As with *Blade Runner,* critics tended to fixate on the *mise-en-scène* of *The Matrix* – especially the special effects and action – as the most noteworthy aspects of the film. This sentiment was reflected at the 2000 Academy Awards where *The Matrix* took Oscars for editing, visual effects, sound, and sound effects editing. Also, most reviews praised the film's relentless "recycling" of ideas and styles from other science fiction films, popular culture, philosophy, religion, and the sciences. In some cases, these allusions were enumerated in list form for less literate viewers. For instance, an April 19th article in *Time* provided a compilation of source notes for the film that included The Bible, Greek mythology, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, cyberpunk novels*,*

theoretical mathematics, Jungian psychology, and Japanese animation and Chinese martial arts – the last two items of which more will be said shortly (Ressner). Unlike their reactions to *Blade Runner,* critics were neither negative nor ambivalent about the Wachowskis' aesthetic and cultural scavenging. The directors' privileging of *mise-en-scène* was considered complementary rather than antithetical to the film's narrative trajectory. Critics applauded the creativity with which the directors organized and deployed multiple cultural signifiers to tell a story that struck a chord with its technologically-steeped audiences. Consider for example, Janet Maslin's comments in her *New York Times* review:

> The most salient things any prospective viewer need know is Keanu Reeves makes a strikingly chic Prada model of an action hero, that the martial arts dynamics are phenomenal and that anyone bored with the notably pretentious plotting can keep busy toting up this film's debts to other futuristic science fiction. ... Nonetheless whatever recycling the brothers do here is canny enough to give "The Matrix" a strong identity of its own (Maslin).

A couple of unkempt college dropouts with a yen for comics and kung fu movies had realized Ridley Scott's earlier desire to make a dark, comic-book action film about cybernetics. How were the Wachowskis able to pull off this considerable feat? What formal or cultural elements made their particular form of cinematic pastiche so "canny" – just smart enough to establish *The Matrix* as the new *Star Wars* for the digitally-minded, visually advanced youth of the impending millennium? After all, many Hollywood cyberpunk films had attempted to capture this post-MTV audience in the 1990s – from forgettable box office busts like *The Lawnmower Man, Freejack,* and *Johnny Mnemonic* to more lucrative films such as *Total Recall, The Net,* and *The Truman Show.* The ending

182

of Maslin's review provides a clue to the secret ingredient that appears to have made *The Matrix* stand out from other cyberpunk films:

> the martial arts stunts ... are its [*The Matrix's*] strongest selling point. As supervised by Yuen Wo Ping, these airborne sequences bring Hong Kong action style home to audiences in a mainstream American adventure with big prospects as a cult classic and with the future very much in mind (*Ibid*).

The suggestion here is that the originality of *The Matrix* stemmed from its ability to combine Eastern and Western popular culture through visual idioms. Jeffrey Ressner makes that connection clearer in his enthusiastic review in *Time*:

> [The Matrix] invokes the kung furiosity of prime Jackie Chan and the heroic bloodshed and long coats of John Woo movies; the Hollywood-Hong Konglomeration has never meshed so suavely as in this film's fight scenes and wire-work aerobatics. Never seen the mega-imaginative, ultraviolent Japanese cartoons known as *anime* (Akira, Ghost in the Shell)? Now you have – in whirling live action (Ressner).

In their 1999 *Newsweek* review, N'gai Croal and Devin Gordon quote Hong Kong director Stanley Tong, lending cultural authenticity to the idea that the film epitomizes the melding of Eastern and Western cinematic strengths: "Even veteran Hong Kong directors are blown away. 'The combination of Chinese martial arts and American special effects is something I've wanted to do for a long time," says Stanley Tong, who directed several Jackie Chan movies" (64).

What such reviews failed to point out is that Asian filmmakers – Tsui Hark especially – already had attempted to incorporate the "magic" of special effects with that of the martial arts. However SF and fantasy martial arts films such as *Zu: The Warriors*

of Magic Mountain (Hark 1983)*, Invincible Asia 2* (Ching and Lee 1992)*, The Wicked City* (Mak 1992), and *The Bride with White Hair* (Yu 1993) remained physically and culturally inaccessible to mainstream American audiences. It took Hollywood blockbusters like *The Matrix* in 1999 and Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon* a year later to popularize this stylistic blend of Eastern martial arts and ostensibly Western special effects. I say "ostensibly" because the special effects highlighted in both films, and particularly in *The Matrix,* though developed in the laboratories of the New Hollywood, are no longer exclusively Western products. Techniques such as digital editing, motion capture, and other forms of computer-generated effects are being used to create the aesthetic template for videogames, commercials, music videos, and action films around the world. Additionally, Japanese animation – especially those in the *mecha* subgenre – had anticipated such technologies thematically and visually since at least Katsuhiro Otomo's *Akira* (1988)*.*

ORIENTALISM REDUX

Andy and Larry Wachowski, like their Generation X compatriots, Quentin Tarantino, Guillermo del Toro, McG, and Robert Rodriguez, no doubt were familiar with these developments. In *The Matrix Revisited,* a documentary about the making of the film, the Wachowski brothers acknowledge their debt to Hong Kong cinema and Japanese animation. Indeed an entire chapter of the DVD is devoted to action choreographer Yuen Wo Ping's collaboration with the directors and grueling training sessions with the principal actors. *Anime* influences receive less attention in the documentary. However, in 2003 the Wachowskis paid homage to the Japanese popular art form with *The Animatrix,* a DVD compilation of nine original *anime* shorts loosely based on *The Matrix*. According to press coverage and the official Warner Bros. website,

the Wachowskis actively participated in the *Animatrix* project, writing three of the pieces, directing two, and personally supervising completion of the rest (*What is the Matrix*). Before the opening of *The Matrix: Reloaded,* producer Joel Silver declared, "This isn't just merchandising or advertising. The animes, the Web site, the game and the movie work together to tell the story" (Croal, "Synergy" 89).

Silver's comment links the narrative and industrial components of the US entertainment industry, emphasizing the former while rendering invisible the mechanisms of the latter. For all the mystique around their "geek genius" image, it would be naive to consider the directors' devotion to their artistic vision independent of its economic context. Instead *The Matrix* franchise demonstrates just how tightly tied the processes of production (creative conception and execution) are to those of reception (marketing, distribution, and exhibition) in today's Hollywood. Using these horizontal marketing practices, the Wachowskis have managed to introduce to the general public East Asian popular forms -- martial arts cinema and Japanese animation -- that until recently have had small subcultural followings in the US.

While their contribution is in some ways groundbreaking, I wish to stress that it does not exist in an economic or stylistic vacuum. Rather, the film and its spinoffs belong to a larger tendency in Hollywood of incorporating East Asian culture and imagery to project a certain picture of the future on the big screen. In other words, *The Matrix* has made a distinctive mark on the orientalist cyberpunk tradition in which it is rooted. This may explain William Gibson's admiration of the film and of Keanu Reeves's Neo:

> [*The Matrix* is] something very special: a big, muscular, "effects" movie that's wildly generous with visual thrills, manages never to quit making sense ... and, most important of all, has a good heart. ... I usually have a certain amount of trouble with the very idea of a hero, but in this case no: Keanu's Neo is my favorite-ever science fiction hero, absolutely (Afterword 451).

185

Along with winning praise from the father of cyberpunk, the film has spawned many stylistic imitators in popular culture – not only in film and media (e.g. *Equilibrium, Shrek, eXistenZ, The Thirteenth Floor, Charlie's Angels*) but also in fashion, television, music videos, popular music, videogames, and even the automobile industry with a namesake SUV from Toyota (Gordon).

The argument I outline in this chapter and flesh out in the next is the following: the consistent presence of stylistic idioms from martial arts and *anime* in *The Matrix* and its imitators presents a variant of Orientalism in Hollywood. This variant is "new" in the sense that recent modes of representing East Asia cannot be traced easily to an overtly colonialist consciousness or reduced to an orientalist act in the more traditional, literary, and European sense. It is not so new in that the Wachowskis' and other filmmakers' self-professed fandom of East Asian popular culture cannot and should not be separated from its social and historical context – one riven with power imbalance not only between the East and the West but between specific East Asian countries and the United States. As discussed in Part One, interest in East Asia has always existed in Hollywood. East Asian people, objects, styles, and stories have been trendy in the United States at various points in time. Periodically that interest has peaked for different social, political, and industrial reasons. What then makes this present historical moment unlike similar moments in the past?

In several ways which I will enumerate in the following chapter, little difference exists. East Asian cultures and bodies often are reduced to decorative oriental tropes in *The Matrix* and others like it such as *Pulp Fiction, Ronin* (Frankenheimer 1998), *Rush Hour* (Ratner 1998) and *Rush Hour 2* (Ratner 2001)*, Shanghai Noon* and *Shanghai Knights* (Dobkin 2003)*, The Transporter* (Leterrier and Yuen 2002), *Bulletproof Monk* (Hunter 2003) and *Kill Bill* (Tarantino 2003)*.

186

What is different in these films, however, is the extent to which certain expressions of orientalist fantasy have become a regular fixture in the movies and the ironic self-consciousness with which these expressions are performed. *Everyone* – from Chow Yun Fat, Wesley Snipes, and Tom Cruise to Uma Thurman, Lucy Liu, Halle Berry, and Madonna – is kung-fu fighting on all sorts of screens these days. They are doing so in slick, dark, and urban spaces which resemble the *mise-en-scène* of *mecha anime* as well as in campy caricatures of prototypically "Asian" spaces that comprise the background of so called "chop socky" films, like the shiatsu massage parlor, the dojo, and the ever popular Chinese restaurant. Often these two spaces – the technologized and the oriental – are conflated. For example, *Demolition Man* features the complacent citizens of a crime-free future clad in vaguely Meiji Era garb while *Equilibrium* exhibits emotionally lobotomized citizens practicing morning Tai Chi in the drugged, Orwellian future.[xlv]

Along with providing visual evidence of screened techno-orientalism, this insertion of non-East Asian bodies in distinctly East Asian styles and settings carries on the Hollywood tradition of marginalizing East Asian and Asian American talent. In the documentary film, *Slaying the Dragon* (Gee 1988)*, Asian American scholar Eugene Wong notes the irony behind sympathetic portrayals of the Chinese during World War II in films such as *The Good Earth* (Franklin and Fleming 1937) and *Dragon Seed* (Bucquet 1944):

> They showed political films, but within the context of the industry, they were still practicing racism because so many of the leading characters were basically white actors and actresses with tape across their eyes. There were available many Asian actors and actresses in America who were wanting [sic] to make money. … The industry said we're going to make a favorable image of the Chinese, yet in the real world you're still out of work.

In large part, this pattern continues in contemporary Hollywood. The majority of Asian and Asian American actors are relegated to the background and secondary roles while Asian signifiers are appropriated and performed by white or non-Asian actors.[xlvi]

At the same time, however, current representations of East Asia in Hollywood differ in that East Asian and Asian American filmmakers, writers, producers, and distributors are beginning to play a greater role in creating and disseminating "oriental" styles. By gaining more of a foothold in the entertainment industry, such media producers and their products are complicating the terms of cultural appropriation in popular visual culture. Also, in the past few years, Hollywood has begun to embrace the East Asian region as a "hot" commodity. The area has become a source not only of cinematic inspiration but also of collaboration, demonstrated by US and European interest in Hong Kong and Japanese New Wave films, Chinese Fifth Generation and Sixth Generation art house epics, and Japanese animation. In addition, East Asia is providing narrative ideas for Hollywood, exemplified in the recent remake interest in Korean films.

Underlying all of this attention, of course, is the economic desire on the part of the US to exploit existing markets and open up new ones in Asia – a desire encapsulated in the spectacular image of 1.3 billion potential media consumers in mainland China. In *Global Hollywood* Toby Miller et. al. give the following snapshot of Hollywood's present influence in Asia:

> Japan provides 10-20 per cent of worldwide grosses on blockbuster releases. ... India and China account for over two-thirds of film screens around the world. Hollywood is optimistic about the market potential of China's 140,000 film theatres ... many expect that a large percentage of its 1.3 billion people ... will become 'conventional' consumers. ... Even in India, where Bollywood and other regional industries dominate the screen, the benchmark for a successful Hollywood release has ballooned almost 1000 per cent over the past seven years. ... By 2015, Asia could be responsible for 60 per cent of Hollywood box-office revenue (8).

For Hollywood, whose narrative commodities comprise the second largest form of American export after those of the aerospace industry, one of the pressing questions in the early twenty first century is the following: what do China – and by extension, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea, Japan, Singapore, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Thailand – *want*? More specifically, what do the inhabitants of this region want to see on the big and small screens? What images and stories will they pay to consume visually? While Hollywood executives and their distributors and co-producers in East and Southeast Asia work to transform these yellow hordes into eager popular media consumers, Asian American communities continue to grow in the United States. The bi-cultural Americans that hail from these communities function both as physical reminders of the historical Oriental Other in one's midst, as well as potential cultural bridges for understanding what appears to some to be an inevitably Asian future.

Whether fleeting millennial trend or the beginning of a new stylistic wave, the staying power of East Asia in Hollywood is related not only to its role in the nation's orientalist consciousness but also in its technological imagination. This is apparent in the frequent association of East Asian representations with martial arts films and *mecha anime* – genres whose chief appeal lies in their aestheticization and eroticization of violence. Drawing from Wendy Chun's argument that the cyberpunk genre is fundamentally structured by Orientalism, I suggest that in an increasingly mediated culture, the real and rational are not easily or clearly distinguished from the fantastic and the irrational. As a result, objects, figures, and experiences that have been associated with the latter, such as the Orient, while retaining certain core traits, also manifest and are perceived differently in the former.

To put it another way, what was foreign becomes more familiar as the familiar itself begins to feel slightly surreal. Asian cultural forms like martial arts, *anime,* yoga,

189

and *feng shui* may not feel as alien as they did a few years ago for two reasons which are intimately connected in techno-orientalist thinking. First, more East Asians and Asian Americans are living in the United States in the early twenty-first century than in any previous era. Second, people are learning to experience space differently thanks to the mediation of advanced telecommunication technologies. The world appears to be shrinking into soundbytes and snapshots in American popular culture. East Asians and East Asian cities *qua* the Japanese and Tokyo represent the "cutting edge" of information technologies. The logic which follows is that as "we" in the West, grow more entrenched in the visual economy of the so-called Information Society, "we" grow to resemble our counterparts in the East.

The Matrix articulated this mixed sense of instability and possibility in the techno-oriental future. It did so by combining the Hollywood SF action film and underground Western comics with the Hong Kong martial arts film and Japanese animation. The result was a thought-provoking, self-reflexive live-action cartoon expressed in the form of a Hollywood franchise film. To get a tentative grasp then, on why *The Matrix,* a movie that introduced American audiences to East Asian popular culture, appeared so "original" to the critics and so "cool" to my undergraduate students, we need to take a short detour into the intriguing worlds of martial arts cinema and *anime* and the history of their eager reception by American youth.

EAST ASIAN POP CULTURE IN THE US

Martial Arts Cinema and the Hollywood Kung Fu Flick

In his article, "Fists of Legend and Fury," Glenn Omatsu compares Hong Kong martial arts-trained actor, Jet Li to another martial-arts trained Hong Kong actor, Bruce

Lee. Like Lee almost three decades earlier, Li has been able to "cross over" to various audiences, including the same immigrant, working class, and non-white viewers that constituted Lee's considerable fan base in the 1970s (231-232). From playing an anti-colonialist national hero in *Once Upon a Time in China* (Tsui 1991) series to co-starring with African American music icons, Aaliyah and DMX in *Romeo Must Die* and *Cradle 2 the Grave* (Bartkowiak 2003) respectively, Li seems to be courting what constitutes marginal audiences in the US, at least within the parameters of Hollywood. Meanwhile, affable Jackie Chan successfully has franchised himself in the US, as he has in the rest of the world.[xlvii] Trained in Peking Opera, Chan entertains kids as an animated character in the *Jackie Chan Adventures* (2000-present) on the WB television network and continues to churn out blockbuster action films though none in recent years has topped the US box office earnings of *Rush Hour 2* in 2001.

Hong Kong celebrity émigrés such as Jet Li and Jackie Chan have made enough of an impact in US popular culture that fans in the entertainment industry have begun implementing martial arts in their own films and TV shows with varying degrees of success. Sometimes sporting a token East Asian face, the majority of the actors are non-Asians performing martial arts in most if not all of the action sequences. Produced and performed by both Asiatic and non-Asiatic people, many films, music videos, and television shows have caught on to the latest martial arts trend. In the next several pages, I will reflect on where this trend came from and where it may be going.

Scattered references to East Asian martial arts were present in Hollywood before the 1970s. A famous example is the scene in which Frank Sinatra shows off his karate skills while fighting Henry Silva in North Korean yellowface in *The Manchurian Candidate* (Frankenheimer 1962). However, the origins of the martial arts film proper in the United States can be traced to the stunning materialization on the silver screen of

martial arts teacher, philosopher, and Hong Kong cha cha cha champion Bruce Lee in the early 1970s. According to David Desser, Lee's popularity was due in large part to his positioning within a "veritable wave of Hong Kong action movies" during this period. That wave climaxed in the US in spring 1973 when three kung fu films – *Fists of Fury* (Wei 1971)*, Deep Thrust – the Hand of Death* (Feng 1972)*,* and *Five Fingers of Death* (Ho 1973) – dominated the Hollywood box office (20). With Lee's mysterious death on July 20, 1973, the kung fu "craze" migrated underground and to the small screen.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, martial arts films continued to be screened in inner city second-run theaters and small town drive-in theaters where they provided political inspiration and emotional catharsis for working-class audiences. Martial arts films were linked commercially, stylistically, and politically with Blaxploitation films which had helped to rescue the studios from financial ruin in the 1970s.[xlviii] The cultural blending between cinematic representations of Asian martial arts and black political empowerment began with *Superfly* (Parks, Jr. 1972) and continued with movies such as *Black Belt Jones* (Clouse 1974), *Three the Hard Way* (Parks, Jr. 1974), and *Cleopatra Jones and the Casino of Gold* (Bail 1975). While this blending made a considerable cultural and political impact on the popular imaginary, its origins were industrial in nature. As Desser notes, the kung fu Blaxploitation hybrid film was the result of specific marketing and distribution strategies by Warner Bros. which produced *Super Fly* and *Five Fingers of Death*:

> Warner Brothers [sic] placed its films in downtown theatres, double-billed many of its martial arts offerings after 1973 with blaxploitation films … and advertised its product along familiar generic and exploitation lines. Other distributors followed suit (25).

At the same time, martial arts as theme and trope appeared on television programs such as the animated *Hong Kong Phooey* (1974-1975)*,* the drama *Kung Fu* (1972), and the comedy *Sidekicks* (1986-1987)*.* In these domesticated forms, the stylized and orientalized moves of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean martial arts were actively consumed by American youth. In the 1980s and early 1990s the martial arts subculture sporadically materialized in Hollywood films targeted toward young male viewers. Most prominent among these were action and war films starring western male actors with martial arts training, including Chuck Norris, Steven Seagal, and Jean-Claude Van Damme, the *Karate Kid* films (Avildsen 1984, 1986, 1989) and *The Teenage Mutant Ninja* series (Banon 1990; Pressman 1991).[xlix]

In the mid 1990s, cinematic traces of the martial arts coalesced into a full-fledged genre as the Chinese martial arts film experienced a revival in the US. The violent action films of transnational Hong Kong directors including John Woo, Stanley Tong, Ronnie Yu, and Tsui Hark, and showcasing stars such as Chow Yun Fat, Jet Li, Michelle Yeoh, Tony Leung, and Jackie Chan combined elements of the 1970s martial arts movies with those of 1980s New Hollywood action films – a formula that enabled the sleek, new Hong Kong films to "cross over" into the US mainstream. The notion of Hong Kong cinema as a kind of Hollywood success story intensified with the American emigration in the mid 1990s of several Hong Kong filmmakers and actors, including John Woo, Jet Li, and Chow Yun Fat. Hong Kong filmmakers became a kind of Model Minority in the US film world. Their presence was and continues to be used to affirm the idea that Asia has arrived, so to speak, at the threshold of American, and by implication, "global" popular culture.

Critics and filmmakers alike attribute the international popularity of Hong Kong action cinema to its unique reworking of the Hollywood style, an uncanny, hyperbolic

mimicry of American films. Esther Yau draws the following parallel between the first and second largest film export industries in the world:

> If commercial Hong Kong movies are shamelessly derivative and creatively irreverant at the same time, their culturally androgynous features are not just local, nor are they a cause for celebration; rather, they register the industry's pursuit of the global market, a pursuit that mirrors Hollywood's, whose 'inauthentic' productions consolidate its screen hegemony (8).

As kung fu film fans David Bordwell and Quentin Tarantino have suggested, the choreographed violence and celebration of chivalric themes in these stories rings culturally specific and universal at the same time. They attribute that cross cultural quality to the films' formal and cultural hybridity which satisfies the primary criterion of the successful Hollywood genre film, namely, the capability to depict familiar narrative and visual patterns with an unfamiliar twist. And they may be right. The contemporary Hong Kong action film derives as much from the Hollywood action and western genres and the Japanese samurai and *yakuza* films as from the *gung fu* or *kung fu* (martial arts first practiced by Shaolin monks in 540 A.D.)[l] and *wuxia* (sorcery and swordplay genres).[li] These genres in themselves contain multiple, heterogeneous roots; for example, the kung fu film can be traced to Peking Opera, Shaolin temple, and American boxing traditions (Prashad 126-149). In addition, filmmakers have always borrowed stylistically from each other; a well-known example is the influence of Kurosawa's samurai films on western filmmakers, Sergio Leone and George Lucas, who helped shape the spaghetti western and space opera subgenres respectively. Less acknowledged, however, are the western influences on Kurosawa's work, e.g. his homage to the Hollywood detective film in *High and Low* which was adapted from the pulp police novel, *King's Ransom* (1959) by Ed McBain.[lii]

194

Multiple cultural allusions give a film the potential for wider appeal. According to Thomas Schatz, "the currency [of Hong Kong cinema] has relied heavily not only on its appeal in Hong Kong and the Asian region but also, crucially, its appeal to several distinct niche markets in the US – from Asian Americans and Asian émigrés to art-cinema connoisseurs and teenage action-film junkies" ("Hollywood and Hong Kong"). Like Hollywood, Hong Kong cinema has been able to cater to such different markets by cobbling together then blasting on the screen at dizzying speeds, its numerous generic and cultural histories whose original integrity necessarily is lost in the process of such mixing. The attraction of both Hong Kong and Hollywood blockbusters then does not simply lie in their many, seemingly incongruous parts, but in their ability to join those parts together seamlessly into a simultaneously new and familiar style.

Hollywood projects a predominantly white, liberal image of America through movies that embody the notion of the melting pot, incorporating racial, gender, sexual, class, national, and regional differences into narratives that emphasize elements of the American Dream which are deemed universal: "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." In turn, Hong Kong cinema borrows and reworks both metaphors – the Melting Pot and the American Dream – decontextualizing and extending them in films that are a consciously exaggerated celebration of Hollywood style. Hong Kong action movies place these *national* metaphors in a supposedly borderless *transnational* space which retains certain elements of Western colonialism. How then does this cultural translation resonate in the US? To answer this question, I will turn to some examples of martial arts style in contemporary Hollywood.

Oriental Style: Asian Whiteface and Colorblind Yellowface

The second largest film exporter and third largest film producer in the world after the US and India, Hong Kong cinema includes a wide variety of films that target diverse audience groups (A. Wong). For example, Tsui Hark's films in the *Once Upon a Time in China* series retell the Wong Fei-hung legend for a new Chinese and Chinese American generation, complete with period costume, wire-fu, and anti-colonial overtones. Meanwhile, the interracial buddy/cop films of the *Rush Hour* series appeal to a more mainstream US audience by highlighting the comic, action-filled exploits of stars Jackie Chan and Chris Tucker. While an interracial buddy film in which neither buddy is white can be seen as racially progressive, one can also argue that Chan's East Asian character is considerably whitened and familiarized for the US audience against Tucker's racial performance of blackness.

The "culturally deodorized" Hollywood films of John Woo and Ang Lee present some of the most critically challenging questions regarding this body of films and cadre of filmmakers with respect to racial, ethnic, and national affiliation. Before articulating these questions, I would like to describe briefly the concept of cultural deodorization. This idea comes from Koichi Iwabuchi's study of Japanese global popular influence which I brought up in an earlier chapter. Iwabuchi uses the Japanese term, *mukokuseki* (meaning someone or something lacking nationality and implying the erasure of racial or ethnic characteristics or contexts) to describe Japanese products from hardware such as game consoles, walkmans, televisions, and other consumer technologies to software such as cartoons, toys, and computer/video games. According to Iwabuchi, Japan's economic success in the international marketplace stems largely from the marketing decisions of its large electronics and auto corporations in the 1970s and 1980s to erase signs of Japanese

196

national specificity and Asian cultural difference in products that were exported to the West (27-28).

Returning to Ang Lee and John Woo, the questions their "culturally deodorized" films elicit include the following. Is the mere racial or ethnic identity of a director or writer enough to categorize an otherwise racially non-specific (i.e., by default white) Hollywood film as Asian and/or Asian American? Are the characteristic camera movements, narrative and thematic patterns, and directorial styles of such filmmakers alone culturally or racially representative? If so, what political uses might such a categorization have – for the filmmakers, the entertainment industries that produce and disseminate their stories, and the audience communities that consume them? On the one hand, we could regard Woo and Lee as playing down to Hollywood style, "selling out" so to speak to dominant US culture; on the other hand, we could celebrate their ability to learn and execute another cinematic language, performing Bhabha's concept of mimicry as anti-colonial resistance and extending the range of their career choices to boot. Most likely what is happening is some combination of both. The questions posed above cannot be answered in this particular study; however, a consideration of these questions helps to delineate the parameters of racial and national acculturation that I am associating with the prevalence of martial arts in contemporary Hollywood.

Further complicating the pattern of cultural exchange in martial arts cinema is the fact that Hollywood is not the only popular media form that has appropriated the style of Hong Kong action films in the 1990s. While the films of Woo and Lee cater to the Anglicized mainstream audience, interest in East Asian martial arts and fashion has also became pronounced in the now ubiquitous culture of hip hop which is rooted racially and culturally in 1970s working class black and Latino youth communities in the Bronx (Watkins 65-70). The songs and videos of De La Soul, Wu Tang Clan, Common, and

Dead Prez among many groups and films such as *Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai* (Jarmusch 1999)*, Blade*, *Blade II,* and *Volcano High* (Kim 2001) incorporate elements of martial arts moves and philosophies much as their Blaxploitation predecessors did.

Furthermore, as Craig Watkins notes, black orientalism differs from its white counterpart in that the former, especially between the late 1960s and the mid 1970s, was espoused primarily by politically militant black youth who actively sought out non-western forms of knowledge, religion, and spirituality as part of a rejection of white, European, bourgeois norms and values.[liii] One could argue here that the difference between radical black orientalism in the 1960s and orientalism in contemporary hip hop narratives lies in the increased explicit emphasis on both black and yellow cultural signifiers as commodities to be consumed by dominant culture as well as the marginal cultures they purport to represent. Within this context, the embrace of the Hong Kong action style by the dominant culture of Hollywood and the no longer marginal subulture of hip hop demonstrates the complex, contradictory, and increasingly blurred relationship in the US between dominant culture and subculture, between "white" and "black" – with "yellow" posed as a necessary, invisible, and sometimes unstable mediator between the two color poles.[liv]

To sum up, two kinds of stylized racial presentation appear in the broadly defined Hollywood martial arts movie; both fall under the category of oriental style. The first is *Asian whiteface* in which Asian filmmakers appropriate and perform Hollywood style, making non-racially, ethnically, or culturally specific films for dominant culture. Prominent examples include the Hollywood films of John Woo (*Broken Arrow,* 1996*; Face/Off,* 1997; and *Mission Impossible II,* 2000; *Windtalkers,* 2002), Ang Lee (*Sense and Sensibility,* 1995*; The Ice Storm,* 1997*;* and *The Hulk,* 2003), and M. Night Shyamalan (*The Sixth Sense,* 1999*, Signs,* 2002). The second is *colorblind yellowface* – a

process in which white, black, Latino, and even Asian media producers appropriate and perform their renditions of East Asian cultures and stereotypes. Examples include *Ghost Dog, Charlie's Angels,* and *Kill Bill.* As I see it, Asian whiteface and colorblind yellowface constitute a complex cultural and stylistic loop: the two merge in the enactment of an ostensibly recognizable oriental style. For instance, John Woo's camerawork, while devoid of overt East Asian signifiers (Asian whiteface), often is seen as representative of Hong Kong cinema and therefore considered East Asian. As a result, when Quentin Tarantino or Robert Rodriguez borrows his trademark camera style, the homage is read as a reference to East Asian cinema (colorblind yellowface).

This kind of double translation prompts the following question: what historical, material, and cultural components of martial arts cinema contribute most strongly to the creation of a particular oriental style that is marketed to audiences outside East Asia? Underlying my question is the assumption that authentic East Asian martial arts film styles (always already a mixture of various national and regional styles) exist and that these are being mixed with non East Asian aesthetic forms. In asserting the existence of an originary culture, I am diverging from postmodern notions of cultural hybridity: I believe in a place called Hong Kong with a distinct past, present, and future separate from the West and Hollywood. However, I also do not believe in the cultural essentialism that often grounds the notion of "authenticity," namely, the belief that national, cultural, and racial identities are definable and fixed. While a real Hong Kong film industry and East Asian martial arts film styles exist outside Hollywood, these entities also are constantly changing and reinventing themselves in response to outside social, economic, and cultural forces, including Hollywood. Observing the way that popular culture travels through media, it becomes clear that categorizing whether something or someone is nationally, culturally, or racially "authentic" per se is no longer relevant or useful. Instead

it is more productive to ask how such authenticities are being produced, *and being made to matter*, by and for whom, in specific historical contexts.

The Art of Action: Martial Arts in the Movies, a documentary that aired on the Encore cable television station in spring 2003, exemplifies one such moment and shows the multiple modes through which race, nation, and culture are represented in popular media. Samuel Jackson, a prominent African American actor, hosts and narrates the program. His figure merges the dichotomies discussed thus far in this section – Asian whiteface and colorblind yellowface, dominant culture and subculture, white and black. In his role as the viewers' guide to the world of the martial arts film, Jackson dons the symbolic whiteness of Hollywood against the foreign yellowness of the marital arts film. His fashionably fly figure is set against a spare backdrop with the term "*wu xia*" painted in large red Chinese calligraphy. Jackson opens and ends the documentary by defining the term, accompanied by his use of stereotypical martial arts hand gestures and sound effects. In this way, he physically and symbolically performs colorblind yellowface which links white and black America through their fascination with the foreign martial arts film. The fact that Samuel Jackson was chosen to host a program on martial arts movies illustrates the ease with which East Asian cultural forms is appropriated and assumed in the US by non-Asiatic people. This becomes much clearer when one tries to imagine, for instance, an Asian American male actor hosting a documentary on Blaxploitation film.

After walking viewers through a celebratory history of the martial arts film genre, complete with interview clips from key Hong Kong players, the documentary ends by touting the success of Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon* (hereafter *CTHD*). The film is upheld as the ultimate example of the culturally mixed future of the martial arts movie in Hollywood. Its significantly less enthusiastic reception in East Asia,

200

however, hints at another aspect of that future. According to *Variety* reporter, Derek Elley, "the pic is a symbol of a huge culture clash":

> The elements that play so cleverly into Western sensibilities – prominent action roles for women, flashy wire work in the fights – are long-accepted staples that don't even raise an eyebrow in the East ... From the casting of Chow and Yeoh, to the use of Yuen Wo-ping for the action sequences, Frisco-raised singer CoCo Lee for the song and Yo-Yo Ma for the cello solos, Lee's movie is an expertly served meal designed primarily to appeal to a general Western clientele ("Asia").

The article proceeds to give dismal box office figures for the film in East Asia with the exception of Taiwan, Ang Lee's home country, and Singapore -- both markets dominated by Hollywood product. It is highly likely that piracy had something to do with the low ticket sales in East Asia. At the same time, low theatrical turnout also might have stemmed from the fact that *CTHD* targeted a Western audience unfamiliar with the martial arts genre over an East Asian audience, which had a different set of standards and expectations for the film.[lv]

The success of *CTHD* in the West, epitomized in its garnering of the Academy Award for Best Picture in 2000, begs two questions by now familiar, but still relevant, to those in Area Studies. First to what extent do non-western popular forms such as the Hong Kong action film cater to and promote a "universal" sensibility which continues to be defined largely by Western standards -- in this case, the Hollywood canon? And second, in what ways are such popular forms simultaneously redefining the very terms of western universality? The same questions can be posed with respect to the growing popularity of *anime*, or Japanese animation, in the United States.

Mecha Anime: Animated Cyberpunk, Japanese Style

In fall 2003 a *Village Voice* segment entitled "Extreme Makeovers" listed several personae for New York college students to "try on for size" with the tongue in cheek aside, "after all, authenticity is just another commodity." Amid identities such as "Original 1970s Punk Rocker," "Wannabe," and "The Artiste," was the nationally specific category of the "Japanophile." According to the article, "the basics" for this identity included "strange creatures with noodles. Techy gadgets. *Anime*" (Kamenetz).

After years of smoldering in the underground, the Japanese form of animation known as *anime* has become officially chic, at least among the liberal *Voice* readership. Antonia Levi briefly notes the multicultural and transnational roots of the term. Originally a Japanese appropriation of the French word for animated films generally, the word now refers to animation specific to Japan (1). *Anime* is easily recognizable: it features striking characters with huge eyes and vividly colored hair, less fluid temporal rhythms than Disney animation (due to fewer cells, initially an economic restraint, now an aesthetic choice), and panels that incorporate negative space into the image, thus opening the scene to the world outside the story proper (Price 153-170). Visually, ideologically, and narratively, *anime* differs, sometimes quite radically, from Disney animation and Hollywood films. According to Susan Napier,

> [The] subversive aspect of *anime* is a prominent element in comparison with much of American popular culture ... much of the best of *anime* resists any attempt at "ideological containment" and, given the dark tone of many of its most memorable texts, could well be considered a cinema of "de-assurance" rather than one of "reassurance," which film scholar Robin Wood asserts is the dominant tone of most Hollywood films (33).

How does this cinema of "de-assurance" work? Noting the primary characteristics of *anime* provides one inroad for understanding why the form is so popular among youth in the US and Europe as well as in Japan and East Asia.

To begin with, *anime* plotlines tend to be more complex and multiple than those of Disney animation; problems are not easily resolved, if at all. Second, character development is emphasized, complementing the serial nature of *anime*. As a result, characters' attitudes and actions exhibit a higher degree of moral ambiguity than those of their American counterparts. Over time, good characters can become bad and vice versa based on changing narrative situations. Finally, *anime* posits a different relationship between characters, action, and *mise-en-scène* than US animation. With roots in traditional Japanese visual and narrative forms such as the 19th century woodblock prints known as *Ukiyo-E* and *Noh, Kabuki,* and *Bunraku* theatre traditions, *mise-en-scène* plays a crucial role not just in setting the tone but also in shaping the narratives of *anime*.[lvi] Rather than functioning as mere backdrop, *anime mise-en-scène* prompts the viewer to participate actively in interpreting the story (*Ibid*).

Exhibiting these traits, *anime*, like the martial arts film, has become racially and culturally universal while retaining its national identity. In his *Foreign Policy* article, "Japan's Gross National Cool," Douglas McGray locates the nation's "secret to thriving amidst globalization" in its double positioning: "There exists a Japan for Japanese and a Japan for the rest of the world" (53). Meanwhile, in Napier's study of *anime* fans at The University of Texas at Austin, the principal reason that participants gave for liking the medium was its difference from American animation and Hollywood narratives (249-255). That Japanese animation functions as Hollywood's aesthetic and narrative Other in the minds of these US fans confirms Japan's ability to cross-market itself to audiences both within and without East Asia. The next few pages offer some preliminary thoughts

203

on how this positionality, which bears some resemblance to my concept of Asian whiteface, may function in the case of *anime* reception in the US

Anime in the US

During the same period that Hong Kong film celebrities moved to the West Coast, a wave of bohemian Japanese youth (colloquially known as "Jap Trash," after "Euro Trash") immigrated to New York, settling in lofts in the Village, SoHo, and Brooklyn.[lvii] In much the same way that the bodies of John Woo and Chow Yun Fat provided belated evidence of Hong Kong cinema's entrance into Hollywood, these young bodies from Japan, most decked in the latest alternative fashions, announced the acceptance of techy *Japonoiserie* as a new style commodity in American youth culture. Along with cute ("*kawaii*") toys and accessories, Japanese food, art, and popular music, *anime* was a distinctive style marker within members of this set and their American admirers.

Of course *anime* was nothing new for hardcore US fans, the majority of whom have been and continue to be young, Anglo American males that study or work in the fields of science, technology, and graphic design.[lviii] As children, many of these fans were first introduced to *anime* in its Americanized form through television cartoons or "*terebi manga*" (television comics) such as *Astro Boy* (1963)*, Speed Racer* (1967)*, Battle of the Planets* (1972/1978)*, Voltron* (1981), and *Transformers* (1985) (Clements and McCarthy 21, 370, 29-30, 435, 409). However, the national origin of such cartoons was unveiled for many only in the late 1980s, with the premiere of *Akira,* the first feature length Japanese animated film screened in the US in 1988.

As an explicitly Japanese product, *anime* first arrived in the US in the early 1980s, through the videotapes of American students who had studied abroad in Japan. Viewed as an international economic success story, Japan was a popular foreign exchange

destination at the time. As well, the increased affordability of VCRs made possible the dissemination of *anime* among fans who met in burgeoning *anime* clubs on US college campuses. Over time, these fan communities and their conventions grew as did the number of US *anime* distributors that emerged to meet their demand. Streamline Pictures, AnimEigo, and The Right Stuff opened shop in the late 1980s; since then they have been joined by US Manga Corps, AD Vision, Pioneer, Central Park Media, Manga Entertainment, Viz Video, and now, Buena Vista Pictures (owned by Disney) – the official distributor for Ghibli Studios, Hayao Miyazaki's production facilities (Levi 9).

In the past ten years, *anime* as a form and a style has spread to dominant culture, appearing in music videos, websites, fashion, and even American-based comics and cartoons (e.g. *The Power Puff Girls* (1998-present)*, Samurai Jack* (2001-present)*,* special episodes of *The Simpsons* (1989-present) and *South Park* (1997-present)). Similar to the way that critical recognition for *CTHD* re-popularized and legitimated martial arts cinema in 2001, the conferral of the 2003 Academy Award for Animation to Miyazaki's *Spirited Away* seems to signal the arrival of *anime* in Hollywood. In 1998 the *Pokemon* phenomenon did the same in a more overtly commercial way and targeting primarily younger children with a successful television program, movie, videos, videogame, and toys. The rising visibility of Miyazaki's gorgeous animated fairy tales indicates a shift toward an adult as well as youth audience which one hopes will lead to a wider variety of *anime* imports in the future. Until then, however, the form of *anime* most familiar to most Americans remains the genre known as "*mecha anime*" ("*mecha*" short for mechanical).[lix]

In Japan *mecha* belongs to a myriad of different genres in the related media of *anime* and *manga* (Japanese comics), including high school, horror, historical, instructional, romance, porn, and children genres. These genres target multiple audiences:

businessmen, housewives, working women, adolescents, and children. According to Levi, *manga* and *anime* initially were categorized by their gendered content and audience ("*shojo*" for girls; "*shonen*" for boys). However, these divisions recently have begun to erode as *shojo anime* assumes characteristics of *shonen anime* and vice versa, and as viewers' gender and sexual orientation become less significant in determining what kind of *anime* is consumed (Levi 9-15). While *anime* in Japan then, is multiple and varied, *mecha* narratives in the US have come to represent *anime* as a whole, in part because *mecha* was the preferred genre of the primary American *anime* audience.

Marketed historically to young boys and adolescent males, *mecha anime* centers around technological and science fiction themes and motifs, featuring giant robots, high tech vehicles, cyborg characters, outer space, cyberspace, and apocalyptic urban settings (Allison 67-88). Like martial arts films, *mecha anime* showcases the violent, repressed, usually male (though increasingly female) and usually young body. In both genres bodies resemble machines. However, the martial arts body and the *mecha* body function differently within their different narrative structures. In the martial arts film, disciplined, mechanical moves transcend the limits of the physical body to assume a spiritual quality. When weapons are used, they are limited to simple, non-technological instruments, like *nanchakus*, wooden sticks, and *kendo* swords. The primary weapon is the spiritually and physically disciplined body flowing in spectacular choreographed motion.

Conversely, in *mecha anime*, the body is technologized through prosthetics and/or body and mind-altering drugs such that the body's owner is rendered a cyborg. This transformation occurs through the consistent use of highly technological weapons such as hand guns, machine guns, and lasers and through the replacement or enhancement of body parts with weapons (e.g., arms and legs as guns, the "body armor" assumed by human characters in *anime* such as *Guyer* (Watanabe 1986)*, Bubblegum Crash*

206

(Fukushima and Ishiodori 1991) and the live-action television show, *The Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* (1993-1996) (Napier 85-116). Finally, while most martial arts films are characterized by an optimistic, sometimes anti-colonialist tone, the majority of *mecha anime* works within the nihilistic anti-heroic register of cyberpunk.

As noted before, until quite recently with *Princess Mononoke* (Miyazaki 1997) and *Spirited Away, anime* in the US has almost always meant *mecha anime* -- from *Astro Boy* in the 1960s to *Akira* in the 1980s to *Ghost in the Shell* in the 1990s. Again, one reason for this elision may be connected to the preferences of US anime consumers, many of whom have tended to be adolescent males. I suggest another related reason may stem from current techno-orientalist trends in American popular culture which are demonstrated by the popularity and imitation of Chinese and Japanese filmmakers and animators such as John Woo, "Beat" Takeshi Kitano, Shinichiro Watanabe, and Mamoru Oshii in Hollywood. These filmmakers blend elements of martial arts cinema and *mecha anime* in their work, resulting in striking contrasts between the controlled and uncontrolled body, the vulnerable and the armed body, the hero and the anti-hero. Such seeming contradictions are also present in *The Matrix* which presents an excellent case study of how Anglo American fans of martial arts and *anime* have read and translated these forms for Hollywood.

The "Transcultural Otaku" as Filmmaker

In the previous section on martial arts cinema, I introduced the idea of oriental style in popular US media that derives from and in some respects, reworks Edward Said's formulation of Orientalism. While Said's model notes the necessary connection between the Western Self and the Eastern Other, it emphasizes the position of the West as a subject that defines itself through the East as its represented object. The site and screen of

Western self-projection, the East elicits two forms of response from the West: first, a threatened defensiveness, encapsulated in stereotypes of the seductive and dangerous Dragon Lady, the despotic, over-educated Fu Manchu, and the immigrating or invading Yellow Hordes; second, a benign condescension exemplified in stereotypes of the Filipinos as "little brown brothers," the sacrificing Madama Butterfly, and the ever-helpful, asexual Charlie Chan. According to Cornelius Castoriadis, these polarized responses are related in their dehumanization of the Other – a dehumanization used to confirm and affirm the humanity of the Western subject (1-12).

What would happen to this model, however, if the Western subject were to cease defining itself as human vis-à-vis its dehumanization of racial others, if indeed it were to cease striving to be human in that fundamentally binaristic sense? To push this line of inquiry further, what would happen if the very terms of humanity were to change as the social and cultural landscape grew increasingly mediated, technological, and multicultural on a superficial level? In this rather cyberpunkish scenario, what would happen to Said's notions of the Oriental Other and the Occidental Self? The task of analyzing the Wachowskis' use of East Asian popular culture in *The Matrix* brings to mind these subjunctive scenarios. I will open my analysis, therefore, with the following questions: does the Wachowskis' self-professed avid consumption of Japanimation, videogames, and martial arts films, and their collaboration with prominent artists from Hong Kong and Japan make them orientalists? More importantly, if these interests and practices do categorize the directors as such, what *kind* of orientalists are they?

Translations of cultural forms and styles occurring at present between filmmakers, actors, and fans in martial arts cinema, *anime*, and Hollywood films hint at the workings of a phenomenon much more complex than simply an appreciative form of cultural exchange or an oppressive mode of cultural appropriation. This is not to imply that Larry

208

and Andy Wachowski or Generation X Asiaphiles in the US somehow have gotten beyond the historical and political apparatuses of Orientalism that Said outlined in the late 1970s. What I am posing, rather, is the possibility that, as Americans who possess a great deal of familiarity with East Asian popular culture, these media producers may be reflecting and constructing new modes of relating to East Asia.

The cross-pollination of oriental and occidental styles in the contemporary New Hollywood, led more and more by members of the set that Douglas Coupland dubbed Generation X in 1991, poses an alternate model for exploring the *ambivalences* in identity and community construction that have always been present in Orientalism. This model looks at the relationship between Self and Other, the West and the so-called Rest, less as a binary and more as a dialectical process, focusing on under-theorized elements in Orientalism such as fascination, complicity, and multilateral circuits of exchange. In the previous chapter I tried to show that such elements are always present in the creative processes of filmmakers who rely on collective cultural memories to shape their individual visions of fantasy and futurity. As such, their films are sites of negotiation between the past and the future, presenting a fleeting snapshot of the ephemeral present.

In his article "Transnational *Otaku*," Matt Hills also presents a picture of the present – one in which international anime fans, living in heavily mediated, post-industrial societies, share common attitudes with regards to identity and community construction. Hills points out that in previous studies on anime and manga fandom specifically and on the relationship between the US and Japan generally, scholars have reproduced the Self/Other binary along existing national and cultural lines. In contrast he proposes looking at cultural identification and communication within transnational contexts:

I would suggest that what the figure of the otaku radically presents to both fan and academic audiences in the US/UK who are prepared to pay attention is a transcultural homology, and one which is not imposed by forces of globalisation, even if it may relate to forces and tensions of late capitalism. ... In this instance, national contexts are neither entirely bounded and different, and nor do they inevitably generate or sustain transcultural "appropriation" or "misreading." Instead, it is possible here that US/UK fan cultures may *recognise* their own cultural devaluation in the figure of the otaku, provoking a transcultural identification (4).

In the previous chapter, I brought up Napier's observation that US anime fans have put a positive twist on the term, "*otaku*" which holds negative connotations in Japan (roughly translated in English as "geek"). Also, this term in the US has come to signify *anime* and *manga* fans specifically whereas it encompasses other kinds of fans and more importantly, a particular obsessive attitude toward technology in Japan. This cultural mistranslation reveals existing attitudes that each party has toward itself (and in the case of the US, toward the Japanese other). In the process, it generates new kinds of cross-cultural identifications and mis-identifications.

Hills suggests that what transcultural *otaku* may share is a common sense of being *different* in their respective societies; this devalued difference ("geek") connects the *otaku* to an imagined community of social misfits and outcasts. Hills's notion of a transnational community linked through shared differences is certainly compelling. One wonders about the nature of a shared difference that is able to translate across national and cultural borders. One also wonders what happens to the transnational community when the difference that binds its members begins to be recognized, celebrated even, in dominant national cultures. The increasing visibility of *anime* in the US mainstream not only presages shifts in the nature of *anime* fandom and definitions of the US *otaku*, it also brings up the challenges and contradictions that any subculture faces when it moves from the periphery to the center.

The commercial success of *The Matrix* rendered visible many different kinds of subcultural communities for dominant culture, including those of underground US comics, fetish culture, and critical theory. Most visible among them, or at least most commented upon by the critics, were East Asian popular cultural forms such as martial arts movies, *anime,* and videogames. Since the release of *The Matrix,* these popular media have experienced a surge of interest in the US and – especially in the case of martial arts choreography – have become thoroughly incorporated into the structures of Hollywood cinema. What is important to remember here is that Larry and Andy Wachowski were and continue to be transnational *otaku*. Like many young men and some women of their generation, they have been watching marital arts movies and *anime* and playing mostly Japanese videogames on Japanese consoles since they were kids in the 1980s. In the next and last chapter, I will examine how these East Asian popular forms were read and used by the Wachowskis and how, translated as oriental style, they function ideologically for the US audience.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I began my examination of oriental styles in *The Matrix* by providing some background on the critical reception of the film, its influence in Hollywood and US popular culture. I then proceeded to give archival overviews of the two primary East Asian cultural products from which the oriental styles of the film derive -- martial arts cinema and *anime.* I focused specifically on their reception histories in the United States and considered issues of cultural appropriation, incorporation, and homage.

That said, I would like to close with a brief mediation on the role of oriental styles in *The Matrix* derived from *anime* and martial arts cinema before I go on to examine those styles more closely in the next chapter. The Wachowski's use of martial arts and

211

anime aesthetics exhibit a form of superficial cultural difference that can be interpreted in several, seemingly contradictory ways. On the one hand, these styles break the narrative and visual frames that contain the oriental tropes in *Blade Runner.* Action choreography enters the foreground as spectacular performance while familiar cyberpunk themes from mecha *anime* make up the architecture of the film. In other words, East Asian imagery is more explicitly visible in *The Matrix* which blurs the foreground with the background than in *Blade Runner* where foreground and background are clearly demarcated.

As such, *The Matrix* lacks the critical anxiety in *Blade Runner* which is linked to the potential movement of the technologized Oriental Other from the periphery to the center. Instead this anxiety seems to vanish as the Oriental Other steps into and becomes the foreground. But has the anxiety truly vanished? It is telling that in their conditional occupation of the center, previously marginal East Asian images and iconography are rendered invisible in *The Matrix*. For instance, the virtual kung-fu sparring session in the Construct recalls videogames such as *Mortal Kombat* and *Virtua Fighter 4* in which gender and racial identities function as decorative avatars that signify random fighting skills and according to their players, nothing more. The selling point in these games and the racial, cultural, and gender differences of their characters is that *anyone* can assume and *play* those identities, detached utterly from any social, political or historical context.

Similarly, anyone can inject her or his body vicariously in the martial arts action scenes of *The Matrix* and other films which use martial arts choreography. According to Geoff King, the spectacular performances in action scenes are not ruptures in the narrative or excesses to be contained by a comforting closure. Rather these moments help facilitate narrative progress in the contemporary Hollywood blockbuster (201-208). In this sense, then, what I am calling oriental styles are cross-marketable precisely because they support and enhance the classic Three-Act structure. If this is the case, are such

212

styles changing the fundamental ideological structures of US cyberpunk cinema? More broadly, can difference perform a political function once it is embedded in and expressed through a mass cultural, mass marketable form? If so, what does that style politics look like?

These questions hearken back to the definition of postmodernism that I introduced in Part Two. In my analysis of *Blade Runner* I suggested that elements commonly characterized as "postmodern" do not break radically from the fundamental tenets of modernism but rather *extend* them narratively, aesethetically, and ideologically. As David Harvey, Arjun Appadurai, Douglas Kellner and others have argued, the concept of the postmodern is most productive when placed in the context of the economic, social, and cultural shifts that have accompanied the uneven adoption, development, and acceleration of post-industrial capitalism around the world. The arts and entertainment industry like all industries, including that of higher education, both follow and help influence the direction of these changes.

To illustrate, one could compare the relationship of modernism and postmodernism to that of classical Hollywood and the New Hollywood of the 1980s. In much the same way that modernist impulses continue to emerge in narratives that cultural critics dub "postmodern," classical Hollywood structures, themes, and tones carried over into the films of the New Hollywood (the more modernist-inflected films of the 1960s and 1970s as much as the blockbusters of the 1980s) and those of the contemporary Hollywood. As noted in Chapter Three, production, distribution, and reception patterns of Hollywood movies have undergone some significant changes in the past twenty years – particularly in the increased emphasis on synergistic marketing and reliance on ancillary and foreign markets. These industrial practices, in turn, have led to a destabilization of the notion of a primary, original text. The multiple cuts of *Blade Runner,* not to mention

213

continuations of the *Blade Runner* narrative in other media including books, Internet, and videogame provide one example of such destabilization in popular culture.

At the same time, however, Hollywood has yet to witness the complete death of the author or the narrative, let alone the meta-narrative – which according to Foucault, Lyotard, Baudrillard, and others, characterizes postmodernism as such. Like their earlier modernist counterparts, so-called postmodern flourishes in the form of clever narrative twists, extended moments of spectacle or self-conscious commentary on the cinematic apparatus almost always serve to uphold fundamentally humanist, usually Eurocentric values or to react against them in ways that ultimately affirm the centrality of those values. I am concerned primarily then with how the notion of the liberal human subject which underlies both modernist and postmodernist modes is able to endure within changing social, industrial, and cultural contexts. Along these lines, the next chapter examines the "postmodern" stance of *The Matrix* toward otherness – a stance that clings to certain traditional notions of the subject even as it displays and purports to embrace new, "alternative" ones.

Chapter Six

The Orient Disembodied

In cyberspace, then, as in all orientalist spaces, there are disembodied minds on the one hand and disembodied representations on the other. There are those who can reason online and those who are reduced to information.

    -- Wendy Chun[lx]

Hip is a hard goddess. Who is so hip as to be above Hip?

    -- Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, Jr.[lxi]

INTRODUCTION

The last chapter provided background on *anime* and martial arts cinema and began to consider the influence of these East Asian popular media in the production and reception of *The Matrix.* This chapter continues that line of examination by looking more closely at how expressions of oriental style work narratively, visually, and ideologically within the film. I start by outlining thematic and stylistic continuities between *Blade Runner* and *The Matrix*. Then I go on to discuss how the films differ in their representations of technological and racial others, fleshing out these differences through close analyses of East Asian references and imagery in *The Matrix* -- specifically, Keanu Reeves's racialized body and the influence of *anime* and martial arts in the *mise-en-scène*.

In particular I consider how these elements of oriental style manifest in the following three action scenes: from *The Matrix,* Neo's sparring session with Morpheus in

the Construct and Neo's final showdown with Agent Smith, and from *The Animatrix,* the opening sparring scene between the Captain and his First Officer. The chapter ends with some thoughts on the cultural and sociopolitical implications of the oriental style featured in these scenes specifically and in *The Matrix* franchise generally, with regards to changing notions of race, Asia, and technology in the US

SIMILARITIES

Outside its reception at the box office, *The Matrix* has several points in common with its Hollywood predecessor, *Blade Runner.* To begin with, both narratives are based on Philip Dick's paranoid schizoid perspective of reality in which the boundaries between the subject and his or her surroundings are always on the verge of dissolving. N. Kathryn Hayles illustrates this view in her analysis of Richard Kongrosian, a character from Dick's novel, *The Simulacra.* Kongrosian is an extremely sensitive pianist with telepathic powers. He becomes psychotic when he learns that the chief government leader is an android and that the democratic society in which he lives is an illusion. After uncovering this conspiracy, Kongrosian develops a symptom in which he literally cannot separate himself from his physical environment. For example, in one scene, he absorbs a vase into his body as his entrails start to occupy the space where the vase had been. Drawing from Carl Freed's post-Marxist reading of Dick's fiction, Hayles observes, "The conjunction in this scene of androidism, schizophrenia, and a profound confusion of "inside" and "outside" is more than coincidence. Kongrosian enacts a confusion of boundaries not unlike commodity fetishism. … Once objects are imbued with exchange value, they seem to absorb into themselves the vitality of the human relations that created them as commodities" (168-169).

216

An outcome of this logic is that as objects assume the characteristics and energy of human relations, the "humanity" of those relations itself is thrown into question.

In a post-industrial society ruled by commodity capitalism the liberal human subject becomes an object, unfamiliar to himself, as the divisions between human and machine, subject and object, and body and space – previously perceived and maintained as separate categories – become confused and on occasion, collapse completely. This sense of boundary crisis crystallizes in the central problem of cyberpunk fiction and film, namely, that of recognizing the human being as a unique entity with individual will and emotional capacity in a future where bio-synthetic objects can display and even develop these very characteristics. In the most memorable cyberpunk narratives, characters grow to acquire a more complex understanding of non-human or not quite human objects, a group which historically has included women, gays and lesbians, the poor, and people of color. Cyberpunk films such as *Alphaville* (Godard 1965)*, Solaris* (Tarkovsky 1972)*,* and *Westworld* (Crichton 1973) force white male protagonists to ask how they can be certain those around them and they themselves are human not android, authentic not imitation.

For instance, in *Total Recall,* the action movie based on a Philip Dick short story, Douglas Quaid (Arnold Schwarzenegger) articulates the confusion generated by the second point when he asks his recorded image from the future, "If I am not me, then who the hell am I?"[lxii] Representations and recuperations of the "human" in such films necessarily are based on and set against those of the Technological Other – whether that other appears as a computer, an android, or some form of artificial intelligence. To a great extent then, cyberpunk narratives force characters and readers/viewers to question their reliance on appearances. By appearances, I mean both the images that are projected on the retina and the ideological assumptions that frame, edit, and color that image as the brain interprets it.

This brings me to the second point of connection between *Blade Runner* and *The Matrix*. Exemplified by Dickian characters Kongrosian and Quaid, cyberpunk protagonists quickly realize (if they were not aware initially) that they have little control over their environment which ranges from the physical and virtual spaces surrounding them to their very minds and bodies. This extensive bio-synthetic environment is dominated by visual media often of a commodified nature, which suggest constant electronic state surveillance. All sorts of public and private screens, photographs, and simulations reproduce spatial and temporal experience infinitely, further destabilizing an already shaky reality. In neither *Blade Runner* nor *The Matrix* is the alien, unfamiliar *space* of the *mise-en-scène* transformed into comfortable, comforting *place*. Here I am referring again to Yi Fu Tuan's idea of "space" as the unknown and "place" as space that has become familiar introduced in Chapter Four. Rather than Tuan's formulation, the relationship between space and place in these films more closely reflects Michel de Certeau's in *The Practice of Everyday Life* of which Wendy Chun gives the following gloss:

> Place is on the level of *langue;* space is on the level of *parole.* We see places on maps; we articulate space through our everyday lives. … According to Certeau, space is not what one longs for while one is encumbered in place. Rather, it is how we negotiate place – it is how we *do* or *practice* place (6).

According to de Certeau, space does not precede place. Instead our experience of space is influenced by how we have previously understood it as representation, or mapped place. Space functions as a verb that describes a performance, namely how we move through place, changing its topography in the process. In other words, our movements, concretized as a series of navigation routes, become a kind of living

architecture (which, not coincidentally, resembles early definitions of hypertext, hyperspace, and cyberspace). In Jorge Borges's short story, "On Exactitude in Science" signifier and signified collapse as a map of England takes over and consequently becomes the terrain it purports to represent (325).[lxiii] In a similar vein, taking de Certeau's model to its logical end, space and place merge into one constantly changing territory. *Blade Runner* and *The Matrix* exemplify this dialectical notion of space as place: characters stumble through the simulation-dense *mise-en-scène*, never quite sure what is real and what is not.

The third similarity between the films is their negotiation of the continuous tension between medium and message. Both refer self-reflexively to the movie medium as a primitive form of virtual reality, recalling Andre Bazin's idea of "pure cinema" and Hortense Powdermaker's famous reference to Hollywood as the "dream factory."[lxiv] Visual and virtual technologies, including the cinematic apparatus itself, make up these films both materially, in the sets, props, and special effects, and conceptually, in the moral and philosophical questions prompted by the technological advancements in their narratives. At the same time, as I have shown in my analysis of *Blade Runner* and will show in my reading of *The Matrix,* both films convey a strong humanist message which advocates keeping the Technological Other in its proper, subordinate place to human beings.

Many film scholars have noted this fundamental paradox in the science fiction genre, namely that the anti-technological strain of science fiction cinema is undercut, or at the very least, put into question, by the highly technological nature of its setting. Curiously, however, that contrast often goes unnoticed during the viewing process. It is as if audiences, including critical ones, register their visual and visceral awe for backdrop and special effects separately from their intellectual and emotional engagement with

theme and narrative (if such engagement exists). Yet these two experiences – the visual and the narrative – are inextricably linked. Whether depicted in the *mise-en-scène* or embodied within specific agents, technology is deeply imbricated in the lives of the human characters with whom the viewer is supposed to relate.

This leads me to the last and, for this study, most important common point between the two films. Both *Blade Runner* and *The Matrix* draw implicit and sometimes explicit connections between social and technological others. Like social others fin classic Hollywood cinema, technological others assume the supplemental roles of backdrop, spectacle, and plot points that are crucial to the development of the protagonist's story yet ultimately expendable. Like their racial, sexual, classed and gendered counterparts, Technological Others, simultaneously challenge and reify modern notions of the human being as straight, white, and male in a disorienting, other-dominated world. In so doing, they present the potential for deconstructing the mind/body split inherent in liberal humanism which undergirds both imperialist and cybernetic projects. Hayles notes this connection as follows:

> One could argue that the erasure of embodiment is a feature common to *both* the liberal humanist subject and the cybernetic posthuman. Identified with the rational mind, the liberal subject *possessed* a body but was not usually represented as *being* a body. Only because the body is not identified with the self is it possible to claim for the liberal subject its notorious universality, a claim that depends on erasing markers of bodily difference, including sex, race, and ethnicity (4-5).

A little later Hayles states that the aim of her project is to recuperate the bodies erased in cybernetic dreams of the disembodied posthuman. My study, on a much humbler scale, supplements Hayles's project specifically along racial lines. I want to show that the way we perceive technology in popular culture bears some fascinating

220

resemblances to how we have been taught to regard racial others. In the case of *Blade Runner* and *The Matrix* a profound and complex sense of ambivalence underlies representations of technology and of non-white peoples as useful, not-quite-human objects that play an important but unrecognized role in defining and maintaining the white subject as human and vice versa. This ambivalence manifests and functions a bit differently in the two films. In the next several pages, I will investigate these different forms of ambivalence toward the Technological and Oriental Other to get a sense of why the use of oriental imagery seems to be increasing in cinematic depictions of race and technology.

DIVERGENCES

"More Human than Human": The Replicants as Symbolic Racial Others

In Chapter Four, I discussed how *Blade Runner* presents Deckard and the replicants in a morally ambiguous fashion that precludes a clear identification on the part of the viewer with one representative of the good human/evil technology binary. By revealing the empty emotional lives of the human beings and the potential for emotional development in the machines, the film seems to question the validity of the morally loaded human/machine binary. *Blade Runner* exposes the permeability of the border between the human and the non-human as characters' perceptions of and behaviors toward their respective "others" change. At the same time, *Blade Runner* works *thematically* on a melodramatic register, which privileges the human over the machine: the audience is meant to sympathize with the replicants as Deckard's attitude toward them alters. In the end, *Blade Runner* transforms the machines into worthy subjects by making them over in the idea and image of the modern human being. It does so by

stressing the psychological alienation of the replicants which arises from their socioeconomic condition, i.e., their alienation *as* labor. The film recognizes the gradual evolution of these non-human objects into conditionally human subjects only through their emotional, moral – and in Rachel's case, erotic – use-value to the principal character. Introduced as leading a rather dry, mechanical existence, Deckard recovers (or perhaps discovers?) his "human" ability to feel through his relationships with Rachel and Roy Batty.

Brian Locke has pointed out that the replicants' narrative role resembles that of Uncle Tom in Harriet Beecher Stowe's abolitionist classic, *Uncle Tom's Cabin.* Unlike Tom, the replicants are introduced as rebellious, unsympathetic characters. However, by the end they have been destroyed or contained and thus rendered more sympathetic to the audience. Like the sacrificing black slave in the antebellum South of Stowe's bestselling novel, the primary replicants (Rachel and Roy) gain the viewers' sympathy by demonstrating moral and emotional superiority over their oppressors. In doing so, they transcend their socially subordinate status. Roy achieves transcendence through death in a compassionate gesture toward Deckard, while Rachel gains transcendence by coupling with Deckard, thereby becoming the symbolic mother of an ontologically mixed future. Rachel's character resembles that of Pocahontas in the popular national myth of the Algonquin Indian maiden who saves the life of English captain John Smith against the wishes of her own father and people.[lxv]

The figures of Pocahontas and Uncle Tom represent the Model Minority from the perspective of a white America that wishes to keep the status quo. Both are sympathetic, likable, and assimilated others who enjoy conditional cultural citizenship thanks to their "more human than human" status. Paradoxically, it is precisely this idealized humanity that keeps Model Minorities like Uncle Tom, Pocahontas, and Rachel the Replicant from

being regarded as wholly human by the dominant group and at the same time, marks them as untrustworthy outsiders to their own groups and other subordinated groups.

In the course of the film, the replicants that become primary characters are made more "human" to the audience in two, intertwined ways. First, their connection to Deckard, the quintessential (if sometimes ambiguously) human being in the film, develops and deepens. Second, their individual, white bodies are contrasted visually to the undifferentiated, dark Asian bodies and signs that overwhelmingly occupy the background and that comprise the *visibly racial* other in the narrative. As I suggested in Chapter Four, the replicants function metaphorically as racial others by appropriating symbolically the historical institution of black slavery in the US However, the potential political value of this role is significantly undercut -- not only by the hyper-white physical characteristics of the replicants, but also by the juxtaposition of such characteristics against the racial threat posed not by African American slaves in the past but by Latino and Asian immigrants in the present – a threat visualized in the suddenly foreign, brown and yellow city of the film.

To put it more simply, the developing humanity of the replicants is recognized as such in relation to established norms of what constitutes a human being (Deckard in the foreground who has command of camera) and what does not (non-white secondary human characters in the background who have no or only occasional command of camera). Visually and narratively then, the replicants strategically straddle the divide between the (white) human characters and the (non-white) set. In this spot they remain perpetually conditional citizens, again, recalling Asian Americans' racialized historical role in the US

Like Charlie Chan, Uncle Tom, and the Noble Savage, these Technological Others embody the potential to bridge the divide between the human and the non-human.

223

Their bodies mark the absent presence of race in *Blade Runner'*s future depiction of multicultural Los Angeles, simultaneously making visible and erasing the role of race in existing relations of power. However, also like other model minorities from popular cultures past, the replicants in *Blade Runner* fail to challenge the terms in and through which humanity is recognized and defined. Transcending rather than acknowledging their radical difference, they both reinforce the division between non-human and human and reproduce the reductive moral binaries of "good" and "bad" underlying this division which are used to keep subordinate others in their place. For example, the ability of Rachel, one special replicant, to gain entrance into the human community via the romantic love of one of its members, displaces the replicants' systematic, collective oppression onto the arena of individual, emotional experience, thereby refusing to acknowledge the existence of that oppression.

Just as there are "good" and "bad" women, racial minorities, and gays and lesbians, *Blade Runner* implies there is good and bad technology. The good are assimilable into (or at least tolerated by) dominant culture: they are able to contain their difference by deploying it strategically and/or by attempting to eradicate it altogether. Meanwhile, the bad must become good or be destroyed. Ironically, according to this logic, the good technological, racial, and sexual others that survive and ostensibly succeed cannot be trusted due to their original "nature," the trace of radical difference that could make them turn traitor at any moment. Indeed in this light, the most assimilated others also can be seen as the most dangerous since the same characteristic that grants them cultural citizenship – namely, the ability to pass as members of the dominant group -- also renders their credibility as such continuously suspect.[lxvi]

While *The Matrix* exists within this system of racial hierarchies and borders, it also raises new questions about border crossing in current contexts of racial formation. I

224

turn now to these questions and to the multiracial hero played by Keanu Reeves, the figure that initially prompts them.

Multiracial Passing in *The Matrix*: From "Tragic Mulatto" to Hollywood Trend

In *Gay Fandom and Crossover Stardom,* Michael De Angelis gives the following explanation for the wide popularity of Keanu Reeves who plays Neo Anderson, the protagonist of *The Matrix*:

> He is perceived (by critics and fans) to be … a more authentic actor because of his very malleability, his ability to drastically alter his persona according to the demands of each new role, revealing slightly more of "himself" in the process … the suggestion that he is always about to shift from one identity to the next, paradoxically indicates the presence of something constant and authentic (191-192).

According to De Angelis's fascinating reception study, Reeves's authenticity is based not – as with lead male stars like Harrison Ford – on the consistency of his performances, but rather on his mutability as an actor, his ability to take on strikingly different types of roles in movies of varying genres, budgets, and artistic visions, including a clueless California teenager in the now classic Hollywood teen movie, *Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure* (Herek 1989)*,* a gay male prostitute in Gus Van Sant's independent production, *My Own Private Idaho* (1991), a lean, feminine Siddhartha in Bernardo Bertolucci's *Little Buddha* (1993), and a buff, resourceful cop in the surprising action blockbuster, *Speed* (de Bont 1994). De Angelis observes that in these and other roles, Reeves's projection of "pansexuality," a gender-ambiguous, receptive form of erotic charisma, makes him appealing to a sexually diverse and politically liberal fan base.

225

Along with his pansexuality, Reeves's subtly multiracial phenotype contributes to the supposedly enigmatic quality he brings to his characters. According to Maria P. P. Root, similar kinds of crises around identity arise when a racially or sexually ambiguous individual cannot be categorized through phenotype, performance, and other physical and cultural signifiers: "The identity crisis around multiraciality has kinship with sexual orientation identity crises where one is expected to fit neatly into exclusively heterosexually- or homosexually-oriented social constructions" (33). While Reeves generally passes as white, many critics and fans have noted that his whiteness contains an intriguing hint of ethnic otherness. They refer to this otherness through distinctly East Asian signifiers, including Reeves's alluring "almond shaped eyes," his "exotic" Hawaiian name (which translates roughly to "cool breeze over mountains"), and his calm, Zen-like disposition, which has been reinforced lately with the actor's gravitation toward Buddhism in his personal life.

In point of fact, Reeves is *hapa*, the Hawaiian term for racially and ethnically mixed. He was born in 1964, appropriately enough in the Middle East, to Anglo British showgirl and costume designer Patricia Taylor and Chinese Hawaiian geologist turned drug dealer, Samuel Nowlin. After Nowlin abandoned the family, Taylor took Reeves and his younger sister to New York then to Canada where they grew up, moving from city to city while their mother remarried three times. An avid hockey player, Reeves dropped out of high school to try his hand at acting and landed his first significant gig in the hockey themed Rob Lowe vehicle, *Youngblood* (Markle 1986). That was followed by adolescent roles in *River's Edge* (Hunter 1986) and *Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure*, which for better or worse, launched his Hollywood career.[lxvii]

De Angelis notes that many of the characters Reeves has played are provisional outsiders, always a bit distant from the rest of the group. He suggests connections

between this pattern and public perceptions of Reeves as sexually unreadable. Again, I would add that Reeves's unacknowledged or cursorily noted racial difference enhances his consistent "lone wolf," outsider image. By alluding indirectly to historical representations of the "tragic mulatto," the actor's racially ambiguous appearance contributes to his on- and off-screen persona as androgynously beautiful, innocent, and somewhat lost. Freda Scott Giles describes the figure of the tragic mulatto in the following way:

> The mulatto could be identified with and pitied as the victim of the miscegenation taboo while at the same time be feared as the despised other lurking within who had to be punished, either for trying to sneak into the white world as an imposter or for reminding the black world of the mark of the oppressor. … The tragic mulatto is a complex symbol read as the submerged other that cannot be kept completely hidden, the object of attraction and repulsion that cannot be exorcised, the taboo that has been breached, resulting in a divided consciousness (63-64, 78).

Implicit in Giles's description is miscegenation defined as taboo sexual relations between white and black persons. The biracial offspring of such unions embody the forbidden intersection of these two color poles on the US racial binary. Belonging to neither group, these individuals must renounce their socially subordinate black identity to retain their tenuous place in dominant white culture. The "tragic mulatto" type is featured centrally in US films such as *Birth of a Nation* (Griffith 1915), *God's Stepchildren* (Micheux 1937), *Showboat* (Pollard 1929; Whale 1936; Sidney 1951),[lxviii] *Carmen Jones* (Preminger 1954),[lxix] *Imitation of Life* (Stahl 1934; Sirk 1959), *Pinky* (Kazan and Ford 1949), and *Purple Rain* (Magnoli 1984).

According to Teresa Kay Williams, Maria Root, and Naomi Zack, the model of passing that creates the "tragic mulatto" figure erases, disavows, or otherwise fails to recognize the social, psychological, and cultural dynamics which have shaped and

continue to shape multiracial identities in the US Williams explains, "Passing in and of itself is problematic for multiracial individuals because it accepts and further reifies the exclusive, oppositionalized, unequal structure of race in which either fluidity across its boundaries or multiple situationality within many boundaries is not permitted (63)." For someone to pass from one identity/group to another, those identities/groups must be regarded as stable, unified, and distinct. To be more specific, the phenomenon of passing presumes two static monolithic racial identities that are mutually exclusive. Reified notions of black and white history, identity, and experience in the US neatly fit this fallacious model.

Gloria Anzaldua's concept of "*mestiza* consciousness" provides an alternative framework for thinking about interracial relations which acknowledges simultaneously racial, ethnic, class, gender, sexual, and national positions. Her perspective comes closer to representing the experiences of many multiracial individuals whose physical and cultural ambiguity presents a mass of contradictions to the monoracially framed world. According to Anzaldua, how multiracial individuals negotiate these contradictions point toward ways in which people of different races, ethnicities, and nationalities might coexist together peacefully. This framework also can help to render visible previously invisible or marginalized Asian multiracial identities such as Afroasian and Eurasian.[lxx] Of these, my focus will be on the Eurasian.

According to Williams, "The Eurasian, like the mulatto or mestiza, represents the dangerous, yet exciting blend of purity and sin" (90). She describes the following patterns in the representation of Eurasians and Asians in Hollywood and speculates on the sociopolitical origins and resonance of these patterns:

Hollywood has tended to cast Asians in Eurasian roles and Eurasians in Asian ones. By casting Eurasians as Asian, Hollywood is proclaiming that the "more Caucasian-looking Asian" is the more acceptable one, while casting "unmixed" Asians in Eurasian roles states that Eurasians are perceived as "a kind of Asian" (86).

Williams proceeds to give examples of the former pattern, citing Eurasian actors such as Russell Wong, John Lone, Brandon Lee, and Ariane Koisumi who have played monoracial Asian roles. She then briefly notes Eurasian actors such as Meg Tilly, Phoebe Cates, Keanu Reeves, and Dean Cain who pass as "nonracial" or "white," fitting neither pattern. Unfortunately, she does not discuss how this latter form of "passive" passing might be interpreted by various audiences, including viewers who perceive the actors to be white, "off-white," and/or Asian. A critical consideration of the mechanics behind such seemingly inadvertent passing would compel us to rethink what it means to be Asian American or Anglo American, for that matter. We can begin engaging with these mechanics in *The Matrix* by posing the following question: in what ways and to what extent can the Eurasian type be applied to Reeves's depiction of Neo?

As noted in Chapter One the Eurasian type in Hollywood has been feminized like its Asian counterpart: men are emasculated and possess homoerotic overtones; women are hypersexualized and infantilized. However, due to their mixed racial origins, Eurasians – like passing light skinned African Americans – posed more of a threat to social and cultural constructions of unadulterated whiteness. For this reason, the Eurasian was punished and usually killed, sacrificed, or otherwise disposed of at the end of most Classic Hollywood films, as exemplified in Anna May Wong's "Dragon Lady" roles in *Thief of Baghdad* and *Shanghai Express*. The situation changed somewhat after World War II, which saw the weakening of the Production Code and the steady immigration of Asian war brides in the United States. Such conditions resulted in Eurasian and Asian

229

female characters being allowed to assimilate quietly on the big screen through the redeeming love of white male saviors as per the former prostitute Suzie (Kwon) in *The World of Suzie Wong* and former showgirl Hana-ogi (Taka) in *Sayonara.*

However, the combined legacy of yellowface, the perpetually foreign "oriental," and the "exotic" Eurasian type did not disappear in Hollywood or US popular culture. It just grew slightly more subtle. It is telling, for instance, that the stories of the soon to be Americanized Asian women in *The World of Suzie Wong* and *Sayonara* end in Hong Kong and Japan, respectively, with the women about to embark for the US It is clear that the women have not been "naturalized" culturally as the narrative cannot accommodate their actual physical presence in the US In other words, they remain foreign objects with the potential to acquire conditional human status. The films are unable and unwilling to show us the realization of that potential because such a move would require giving the women narrative agency.

It must also be stressed again that with the exception of Asian American actors like Wong and Sessue Hayakawa, most Eurasian and Asian roles in Hollywood were played by white actors and actresses before the demise of the Production Code. While the most garish of these roles, such as Kathryn Hepburn in *Dragonseed*, Marlon Brando in *Teahouse of the August Moon,* and Mickey Rooney in *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (Edwards 1961) can be relegated safely, if embarrassingly, to the past, the practice of yellowface persists. Indeed, in certain realms such as the comic genre and the fashion industry, the practice seems to have intensified in recent years as I will discuss toward the end of this chapter.

As well, the concept of yellowface continues to be associated especially with Eurasian roles in the imagination and practices of the US entertainment industry. The controversy that erupted in the Asian American community around the casting of *Miss*

Saigon in 1991 proves a case in point. As chronicled by Dorinne Kondo and others, a lead part that was to have gone to an Asian American actor was changed at the last minute to a Eurasian role, in order to cast Anglo British actor Jonathan Pryce (229-237). More recently, along a somewhat similar vein, Asian American media activists protested script changes in *Charlie's Angels: Full Throttle* (McG 2003) that changed Alex's (Lucy Liu) father from Chinese to Anglo British (and Liu's character, consequently, to Eurasian) so as to cast John Cleese in a cameo role (MANAA, "Title").

Such events demonstrate the elasticity and endurance of the Eurasian type in Hollywood. Given these characteristics, does Reeves's depiction of Neo fit and/or rework this racial type? And if so, how? Earlier I suggested that the actor's facial features and distant aura evoke certain traits of the "tragic mulatto," historically the most common representation of mixed race people in US culture. Again, according to Williams, the Eurasian, as the product of racial transgression, shares with the mulatta and the mestiza, a kind of lost, tragic, and inaccessible appeal – characteristics often used to describe Reeves's image by critics and fans. However, even as Reeves's physical presence triggers the cultural memory of the tragic Eurasian, no tragedy actually befalls the character he plays due to his racial difference. This is because that difference is never articulated, much less spotlighted, in the narrative.

Instead Neo assumes an Everyman position, epitomized in Richard Dyer's description of the white male figure whose universality stems from his possessing a tinge of darkness. The darkness manifests physically, in a darker skin complexion, eyes, and/or hair color and morally, in less than virtuous thoughts and actions. According to Dyer, this coded darkness represents the sexualized racial other that threatens to overwhelm our less than perfect white male hero and at the same time, gives the hero his necessary masculinity:

231

> (The darkness) furnishes the heterosexual desire that will rescue whites from sterility while separating such desire what whiteness aspires to. Dark desires are part of the story of whiteness, but as what the whiteness has to struggle against. Thus it is that the whiteness of white men resides in the tragic quality of their giving way to darkness and the heroism of their channeling or resisting it (28).

Indeed it is precisely the fatal flaw of the dark racial other in the protagonist which draws us to him: "The presence of the dark within the white man … enables him to assume the position as the universal signifier for humanity" (28). Toward the end of his book, Dyer puts Harrison Ford's Deckard into the category of the slightly dark, "skin white not hue white" male protagonist. The example makes clear the inherent assumption behind this category, namely that the character in question is undoubtedly white.

Neo's character, played by a passing Eurasian actor, visually unsettles that assumption, in the process extending the category of the "dark white male" specifically and of whiteness generally. Later in the chapter, I will analyze in more detail the intersections between whiteness and non-whiteness in *The Matrix* and discuss the location of Asian/American identity within and in relation to these intersections. Before doing so, however, I would like to provide some context on multiracial demographics in the US and multiracial casting in Hollywood to ground my discussion of the film. To that end, the following section touches briefly on how and why racial ambiguity seems to be developing into a powerful trend in US popular media.

"The Only Color that Matters is Green"

The number of multiracial people in the United States has grown substantially since the late 1960s when miscegenation laws finally were lifted.[lxxi] According to the Population Reference Bureau, children born to parents of different races increased from 1 percent to 3.4 percent of total births in the US between 1968 and 1989, and the number of

mixed race couples excluding Hispanics grew from 310,000 to 994,000 between 1970 and 1991 (Fernández 192). Asian Americans are very much a part of this pattern. According to Root, the rates of intermarriage between Asian Americans and other racial and ethnic groups in Los Angeles in 1992 were close to 50 percent or higher. Japanese Americans, in particular have been out marrying to the extent that in 1992 the number of children born of multiracial Japanese ancestry was fast approaching that of monoracial ancestry (29).

Popular media appears to be reflecting these demographic trends. In Hollywood *The Matrix* played a key role in establishing the pattern of a multiracial protagonist passing as white in a multicultural setting, which since then has become a popular template in US cinema. In summer 2002 an article in the *New York Times* announced the emergence of a new kind of action hero and film characterized by the special effects, dense storyline, and youth sensibility of *The Matrix*. It quotes Jeanine Basinger, chairwoman of the film studies department at Wesleyan University, who expresses that sentiment thus: "'The Matrix' gave this type of movie a brain. It really did change everything. Filmmakers now realize that action doesn't have to be dumb" (Lyman). More specifically, according to the industry players interviewed, the film opened up the possibility of casting actors not exclusively affiliated with the action genre. It did so with its heavy use of special effects for action sequences, a process that allows "accomplished performers [to] build their characters and then let the computer do the tricks" (*Ibid*). As examples of the new cadre of Hollywood action hero, the article lists young, white actors, Matt Damon, Ben Affleck, Heath Ledger, Owen Wilson, Toby McGuire, and Colin Farrell.

However, it then stops to linger on two multiracial actors, who function as the poster children for this new and different type of action hero. The actors are self-

233

identified Italian American Vin Diesel of *The Fast and the Furious* (Cohen 2001) and *XXX* (Cohen 2002) and Afro-Asian Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson, a wrestling star who crossed over into film with his lead role in *The Scorpion King* (Russell 2002). In the following statement Sean Daniel, producer of *The Scorpion King,* gives this rationale for the current association of multicultural looks with marketable coolness in the entertainment industry:

> What's happening is our image of what makes an action star is evolving. Dwayne Johnson is powerful, he is multicultural, he is very much contemporary, as is Vin Diesel. And that's where today's youth culture is at. Vin Diesel is appealing because he springs from today's young population. He is the son of today's diverse audience (*Ibid*).

Such developments bring up a couple of central questions around the role of racial difference in contemporary Hollywood: first, what cultural and aesthetic purposes do multiracial characters and casts serve in Hollywood? And second, what ideological message is their presence sending viewers with regards to the state of race relations in the US?

On the one hand, the increased visibility of non-white actors seems to provide concrete evidence of racial progress in US popular media which is taken to reflect similar progress at the sociopolitical level. For example, many critics saw the conferral of the Academy Award for Best Actor and Best Actress in 2002 to African American actors, Denzel Washington and Halle Berry, respectively, as proof that the social, economic, and cultural barriers posed by racial discrimination finally had been eased. Both stars were held up to embody the achievements of the Civil Rights movement and to showcase the politically liberal views of the entertainment industry. In particular, as the first black actress to win in the category of Best Actress, Berry seemed to represent a breakthrough

234

for women of color in Hollywood, an achievement she stressed in her highly emotional acceptance speech.

Along with their growing on-screen presence, non-white actors today seem to be playing roles besides that of token racial others that try desperately to assimilate or multiracial characters that painfully and self-consciously pass in an all-white universe. Instead films such as *Romeo Must Die, The Fast and the Furious, The Scorpion King,* and *Better Luck Tomorrow* which stem from the "ghettocentric" crossover African American films of the late 1980s to the mid 1990s, situate their primary non-white characters in a distinctly (indeed almost hyper) multicultural milieu. When whiteness appears explicitly through bodies and/or performance, it is often ridiculed. For instance, in *Romeo Must Die* the chief villain, a spoiled, cowardly snob is white. The film clearly critiques this character by showing how he pits the black and Chinese gang families against each other through the colonialist "divide and conquer" strategy. Likewise, Brian (Paul Walker), the undercover white male protagonist of *The Fast and the Furious* must work hard to earn the "respect" of the predominantly non-white street racers led by racially ambiguous Dom (Vin Diesel).[lxxii]

With the exception of celebrities such as Dean Cain and Tiger Woods, multiracial actors like Diesel and Jessica Alba (of the cancelled TV science fiction drama, *Dark Angel*) tend to downplay their specific nonwhite ethnic roots, referring to themselves more generally and generically as "people of color."[lxxiii] Meanwhile, outside Asian American circles, the question of nonwhite ethnicity hardly comes up, if at all, around Eurasian actors such as Jennifer and Meg Tilly, Kristin Kreuk, Phoebe Cates, and Keanu Reeves. A similar pattern can be discerned in the critical reception of Latina/o actors like Cameron Diaz, Raquel Welch, Martin Sheen, and Anthony Quinn.

235

The boundary crossings between whiteness and non-whiteness that occur actively and/or passively in these racial performances parallel the gender and sexual crossings associated with the rather nebulous term "queer." Reflecting tendencies of the postmodern project, multiracial and multisexual movements radically stretch and at times, seem to erase the boundaries that have separated and thus defined traditional identity categories. Racially and sexually ambiguous people who are able to move fluidly across, into, and out of various groups are threatening because they embody the potential for a future where present categories of difference have ceased to matter. Such potential is threatening not only for all manner of racists, sexists, and homophobes but also for those who perceive themselves to be anti-racist, feminist, and "queer friendly." It is difficult to imagine a world in which now important criteria that define who we are – how we see ourselves and how others see us – do not exist. Yet it is precisely this near utopic state that we are being shown, not only as the future but also the present, in mass popular media narratives.[lxxiv]

Do such developments signal the disappearance of racial discrimination and perhaps of race itself in the US as historian Michael Lind, journalist Leon Wynter, and sociologist Paul Gilroy have proposed?[lxxv] Most recently, Wynter has used examples from popular culture to argue that a new "transracial" order is emerging, which is absorbing historical definitions of whiteness. Consider his following claim:

> The much maligned melting pot, into which generations of European American identities are said to have dissolved is bubbling again, but on a higher flame; this time whiteness itself is finally being dissolved into a larger identity that includes blacks, Hispanics, and Asians. … The transracial vision has acquired an aspirational value in the broad market not because it's politically correct but because it's how America wants to see itself: as a unified multiracial society (5).

In *Shopping for Ethnicity,* Marilyn Halter also tries to make sense of the proliferation of racial and ethnic diversity in popular culture. According to Halter, multicultural images and narratives in the US cannot be separated from their market value. Instead visions of a harmonious, multiracial society are products, manufactured and sold based on perceived cultural trends; different communities emerge from and contribute to these visions. Put another way, Halter shows the ways in which racial and ethnic identity increasingly are being defined through and as commodities (172-180). Observations in books such as *Latinos Inc.* by Arlene Davila, *Uses of Television* by John Hartley, and *Color by FOX* by Kristal Brent-Zook likewise suggest a trend toward "postmodern" individual and group construction via popular media.

Once again, I am referring to postmodern identity here as a consciously fragmented, constructed and dehistoricized self, which consists of multiple, not necessarily congruous selves. Unlike the identities that we are given by our families and immediate social and cultural environments (over which we have no control), postmodern lifestyles and identities can be chosen and discarded, bought and sold. It is at this commercialized level of identity and community production that racial and commodity fetishisms seem to be meeting and occasionally converging. It is also the point at which we can examine how race as a category and racism as a practice are not disappearing but rather *changing.* We might start by looking at how the concept and experience of whiteness, always defined in relation to those of non-whiteness, have altered since the Civil Rights Movement. Wynters provocatively but reductively concludes in his book that whiteness in the twenty-first century is being absorbed into a melting pot of color. Howard Winant's systematic breakdown of whiteness in "Whiteness at Century's End" helps us examine that conclusion a bit more critically. According to Winant, three racial projects emerged in the wake of the Civil Rights movement: Neoconservatism,

237

Liberalism, and New Abolitionism. These projects describe current positions of Anglo-Americans toward race in the US By extension then, these positions also delineate different forms of contemporary white US identity.

Neoconservatives define race as a subset of ethnicity. According to Winant, their political strategy "conserves white advantages through the denial of racial difference" (7). An apt example of this viewpoint is the racially diverse but politically homogenous composition of the US Cabinet under President George W. Bush. Liberals diverge from Neoconservatives by providing a "progressive racial spin to individualism" (10); they perceive race to be a horrible mistake, which can be corrected by providing "equal opportunities" for individual racial others. For both groups, the goal is an ostensibly "colorblind" society where race does not matter. In "Whiteness as Property" Cheryl Harris locates the central problem with this goal as follows:

> To define race reductively as simply color, and therefore meaningless … is as subordinating as defining race to be scientifically determinative of inherent deficiency. The old definition creates a false linkage between race and inferiority; the new definition denies the real linkage between race and oppression under systematic white supremacy (1768).

Finally, New Abolitionists, who sometimes refer to themselves as "race traitors," consider whiteness a non-racial category devoid of meaning. They advocate the renunciation of one's white identity and history in favor of merging with constituencies of color. An example of this position from popular culture is the formerly working class, white hip hop star, Eminem, whose performance of young black masculinity is emulated by many white suburban male youth.

Elements of all three positions can be found in Wynter's conclusion that the US is heading toward a "unified multiracial society." And all three, according to Winant, are

238

riddled with the same two problems. They continue to privilege whiteness as an invisible (and thus universal) position from which to define non-whiteness, and they refuse to acknowledge that "whiteness already contains substantial nonwhite elements." To the latter point I would add that these positions also fail to recognize the ways in which *non-whiteness already contains elements of whiteness*. Let me elaborate on this addition. Winant concisely defines US racism as "the continuing struggle to allay fears about the instability of whiteness." In *White* Dyer describes how these fears have been allayed, at least temporarily and superficially, such that whiteness continues to be maintained as a category of privilege in Hollywood:

> A shifting border and internal hierarchies of whiteness suggest that the category of whiteness is unclear and unstable, *yet this has proved its strength*. Because whiteness carries such rewards and privileges, the sense of a border that might be crossed and a hierarchy that might be climbed has produced a dynamic that has enthralled people who have had any chance of participating in it (19-20, emphasis added).

In much the same way that the Right has appropriated the rhetoric of the Civil Rights struggles, whiteness as an unacknowledged racial and cultural category has broadened to include previously unassimilable racial others. The fact that such rhetorical and racial appropriation has occurred (and so quickly and easily!) suggests, as many have argued, that there is a flaw in the basic principle of equality -- defined *against* the notion of radical difference -- upon which struggles for racial, gender, and sexual rights have been based. Implicit in this liberal humanist notion of equality is the inherently imperialist core/periphery model in which the "human" (historically defined in the West, then in the rest of the world following imperialist expansion, as white, male, straight, and middle to upper class) occupies the core, with various categories of the "non-human"

239

(female, non-white, not straight, working class) occupying concentric levels of the periphery.

Rather than attempting to re-define the category of the "human" from the perspective of those who have been denied human rights, oppressed groups instead often try to fit its criteria to become part of the dominant culture in ways that continue to exclude other subordinate groups. This explains the parallel phenomena, for instance, of racism among white women, gays and lesbians, and of sexism and homophobia among men of color. It also explains the unconscious (and sometimes conscious) self-hatred among members of oppressed groups who have internalized dominant views of themselves, which results in the perpetuation of racism among people of color, sexism among women, and homophobia among gays and lesbians. In all of these cases, whiteness and heterosexuality continue to be upheld as identity markers to which one should aspire. If white people historically have defined themselves through people of color, people of color in the post- or neo-colonialist era, have defined themselves through their repudiation of and/or desire for the cultural capital of whiteness, or in Cheryl Harris's words, "whiteness as property" (1713-1715). In both cases, whiteness remains the standard by and through which the racial other is evaluated and evaluates herself or himself.

Underlying all of this is the importance of class, which brings me back to the tenacity of whiteness in the US popular consciousness. Sut Jhally and Justin Lewis's reception study of *The Cosby Show* (1984-1992) is often cited in media studies to demonstrate the ability of whiteness to absorb racial difference. Most white viewers surveyed in the study indicated they did not consider the Cosby family to be "authentically" black. Despite their obviously black phenotypical features, the cast members were seen as *symbolically* white and therefore, acceptable by Anglo-American

viewers. This perception derived mostly from the Cosby's upper middle class status and the cultural capital associated with that status, which were highlighted through Bill Cosby's star persona and background in television, film, and live performance.[lxxvi]

According to Jhally and Lewis, the positive visibility of black people in *The Cosby Show* paradoxically reinforced negative perceptions of African Americans who were not upper-middle-class doctors and lawyers living in a multicultural, gentrified New York neighborhood. As Marlon Riggs notes in his documentary, *Color Adjustment* (1991), the media memory of more "authentic" black folks rioting in Los Angeles after the Rodney King verdict functioned as an awkward structuring absence for viewers during the last episode of *The Cosby Show* in April 1992. Like the Model Minority type epitomized by the *Blade Runner* replicants, the Cosbys were accepted by white viewers through a simultaneous double movement. They were contrasted against less "human" racial others (poor and working class, less educated Blacks in the inner city) while being associated with (white and fully "human") America through their upper middle class status. Ultimately in the minds of many Anglo-American viewers, the recognizable cultural signifiers associated with this class identity allowed the black Cosby family to enter their living rooms during primetime and thus "pass" effectively into dominant culture.

George Lipsitz and Thomas Cripps have discussed how whiteness became associated with the middle class consumerist lifestyle in the 1950s, and how that association was sold to audiences through popular media, especially television. According to Lipsitz, the sitcom was performing an assimilative function for American audiences from its generic beginnings with shows like *I Remember Mama* (1948)*, The Goldbergs* (1949-1954), and *Life with Luigi* (1952). Lipsitz argues that to become consumer-citizens of the post-war middle-class, many Americans had to break with their

immigrant, ethnic and working class pasts, which were embodied in the Old World traditions and attitudes of sitcom parents: "Television … provided a forum for redefining American ethnic, class, and family identities into consumer identities" (48). Thomas Cripps describes how these shows "naturalized" white ethnic immigrants by foregrounding and resolving intergenerational conflicts. In the process they produced a more generic national white identity defined by commodity consumption:

> Television producers had quickly invented a formula that expressed their sentiments as they applied to various ethnic groups – the Jews in *The Goldbergs*, Nordics in *I Remember Mama*, and the Italians in *Luigi, Papa Cellini*, and *Bonimo. ...* All of them shared a pool of interchangeable parts: an extended family, crotchety but warmly sentimental old folks, happy problems happily resolved in twenty-eight minutes of air time, and a division of characters into an older generation encrusted with cultural survival from the old country and a younger group of super-Americans who had assimilated the virtues of the new land (43).

This model of the sitcom as a liberal televisual "melting pot" is based on the construction of audience commonality. The sitcom functions as a fantastic public forum, a space where with hard work and the right attitude, anyone, regardless of race, sex, class or disability, can reap the benefits of the Great American Dream -- material security and social acceptance.

Before the Civil Rights movement, blackness overtly constituted the "dark continent" against which US consumerist whiteness was defined. Shows such as *Amos 'n Andy* (1951-1953) and *Beulah* (1950-1953) originated as minstrel-like radio serials in which white voice actors performed a sort of "blackvoice." Translated to the television medium, such voices found flesh in comic, infantilized black bodies, which functioned as

narrative, racial, and cultural foils for white characters even while they assumed central stage as entertaining spectacle.

In the 1960s very different representations of African Americans began to appear as white, mostly Jewish American television producers and writers tried to reflect coeval sociopolitical changes in their shows. According to Herman Gray, television programs showcasing exemplary black personae such as *The Nat King Cole Show* (1956)*, I Spy* (1965-1968), and *Julia* (1968-1971) attempted to assimilate African Americans into dominant white culture. However, unlike earlier white ethnic sitcoms, these shows featured "superhuman" token black protagonists without extended families or personal histories, who seemed to exist with no difficulty in all-white worlds. This pattern culminated in the long run of *The Cosby Show* which combined representations of the overachieving, assimilated black American with the conventions of the domestic sitcom. The show was unique in its portrayal of a large black family during the conservative, (white) family-centric period of the 1980s (282-305).

There are links between the mainstream appeal of *The Cosby Show* more than twenty years ago and that of racially ambiguous and multiracial actors currently in US popular media. Examples of the latter include both the high visibility of non-white (especially female) stars such as Halle Berry, Jennifer Lopez, and Lucy Liu in predominantly white films and the crossover marketing of (especially youth) films – dubbed "hip hop kung fu movies" by producer Joel Silver – that feature non-white casts, environments, and styles. Like the popularity of *The Cosby Show,* these developments suggest a superficial "browning" of American popular culture. However, also like *The Cosby Show,* the current vision of racial diversity projected on US television, film, video,

and computer screens is limited in its scope. This limitation plays out specifically in the arena of class, which, like that of whiteness, is maintained through its invisibility, exclusivity, and elasticity.

In what ways do race and class work together to produce a certain image of the dominant culture in representations of white, non-white, and racially ambiguous persons on the small and big screens? Here it may be instructive to return to the two black actresses who have been considered for the Oscar in the Best Actress category. Much like the digitally morphed, multiracial face of *Time* in 1996 mentioned, Dandridge and Berry possess predominantly European features and the tall, thin, controlled body type associated with white feminine beauty. A person of color's successful entrance into and acceptance by dominant culture appears to be based then on two forms of performance -- one, at the level of class, exemplified by groundbreaking shows that "humanize" the racial other such as *Roots* (Chomsky 1977)*, The Cosby Show,* and *The Bernie Mac Show* (2001-present) and films such as *Stand and Deliver* (Menéndez 1988)*, Boyz n the Hood* (Singleton 1991)*,* and *A Time to Kill* (Schumacher 1996) and the second, at the level of the body, exemplified by Berry, Dandridge, and a slew of past and present non-white Hollywood starlets.

Gender difference clearly influences the extent to which one kind of performance might be emphasized over another. For instance, European phenotype generally is stressed more in women of color than in men of color, with regards to their acceptance by dominant culture as female (read feminine) subjects. Exceptions here include women of color who play desexualized or excessively sexualized, "clown" roles such as Carmen Miranda, Whoopi Goldberg, and Margaret Cho (Berg 73-76). Referring to Latina stars,

Mary Beltran suggests that women of color in popular culture face a double objectification since both racially and sexually, they are closely associated with the mute, "to-be-looked-at" body (18). Yet this very emphasis on *certain* woman of color as beautiful bodies confers upon them a specific kind of power and subjecthood. Their bodies, which are able to pass into dominant culture by passing *for* a particular ideal of contained difference ("exoticism"), possess cultural and economic capital inaccessible to other unbeautiful and therefore invisible female bodies of color. That the owners of certain nonwhite bodies can gain cultural and economic capital while others cannot underscores the critical connections between class and racial phenotype in one's acceptance or rejection by dominant culture.

We can see these connections most clearly in the formation and maintenance of certain ideals in beauty culture. While dominant notions of beauty cannot be reduced wholly to certain class and racial values, they are strongly influenced by such values. Beauty procedures from basic personal hygiene to elaborate cosmetic surgeries reflect the fact that the bodies considered desirable – especially for women, but increasingly so for men – are those that conform to the image of the youthful, physically fit, and middle and upper middle class individual, a type that historically has been associated with rich, educated white men. Young reminds her readers, "Nineteenth-century theorists of race explicitly assumed white European body types and facial features as the norm, the perfection of human form, in relation to which other body types were either degenerate or less developed" (128). While it is no longer polite to express publicly or even to acknowledge these standards consciously to others and even to ourselves, Young points out that they remain embedded in our individual and collective unconscious.

245

So strong indeed is our unconscious privileging of whiteness – and the positive physical and moral qualities associated with it – that such privileging continues to operate *even when there are no actual white bodies in sight*. We can see the process at work, for instance, in the fetishization of whiteness in nonwestern countries as racially and culturally different as Brazil and South Korea. The majority of Brazilians are racially mixed whereas Koreans are highly homogenous racially. However, in both nations, lighter skin color is privileged over darker skin color, and typically European features are considered more beautiful than non-Western ones; in the case of South Korea and other East Asian nations, plastic surgery has become an immensely popular way to transform indigenous features into more Western looking ones.[lxxvii]

A similar kind of unconscious privileging of whiteness is evident in the current popularity of multiracial faces and bodies in US culture. More easily than monoracial people of color, multiracial folks can be regarded as symbolically white because they already contain visible traces of whiteness, which hint at the invisible, historically fetishized biological property of white blood. As such, multiracial bodies can be appropriated easily by both the Right and the Left to reflect a near future society in which Other and Self have merged without conflict, i.e. without disrupting or displacing current hierarchies of power. If the tragic mulatto of the past reinforced the incompatibility of two distinct races, the multiracial star of the present epitomizes the desirable compatibility of many races and ethnicities. The tragic mulatto and the multiracial star then would appear to represent two radically different visions of the future -- one dystopic and the other utopic.

246

In Chapter Four, I discussed the often unacknowledged connection between these two visions in the construction of both lived and imagined "postmodern" urban space. In "Urban Crisis: Past, Present, and Virtual," Julian Bleecker shows how the presence of racial difference plays a significant role in defining and distinguishing an urban space as dystopic or utopic. Bleecker states that these ostensibly opposite versions of the future are based on the same reified conceptions of the racial other (here, specifically black bodies and cultures):

> Upon what categories does the binary "dystopia versus utopia" pivot? … For the purposes of this work, the distinction between utopia and dystopia pivots on the contingencies of race in the urban context – people of color, poverty, and the squalor are imagined as proper to the ghetto. This inscription distinguishes itself through a white racial imagination that eradicates the possibility of difference in an ordered social structure and situates racial otherness as an absence, as something to be overlooked or dismissed as aberrant (192).

In other words, activating Tuan's binary, dystopia is imagined as a *space* dominated by the bodies of racial others in films like *Blade Runner* and *Demolition Man* whereas utopia is seen as a *place* where racial difference has become disembodied, mutated into metaphor, symbol, and performance, in videogames like *Sim City 2000*. According to Bleecker, both dystopic and utopic versions of the future in visual culture rely on the appropriation and erasure of racial others.

The Matrix, a Hollywood SF film that approximates a videogame in its narrative and visual style, seems to lie somewhere between the mediated versions of dystopia and utopia that Bleecker analyzes.[lxxviii] As I described in previous chapters, the multicultural future was rendered in dirty, dangerous, and dystopic tones in *Blade Runner* and most other cyberpunk films of the 1980s. By the time *The Matrix* appeared at the end of the

1990s, this image of the future seemed to have changed dramatically. In *The Matrix*, the multiracial nightmare has been transformed into the multiracial dream, exemplified by a racially and sexually diverse band of tattered humans and its Eurasian representative. Whereas in previous science fiction movies, multiracial bodies had functioned as objects in the background or as villains who had overstepped social and legal boundaries (e.g. *Escape from New York*, *Liquid Sky*, and *Demolition Man*), here they take center stage, representing the "human" against the non-racialized (and subsequently, "white") machines.

To what degree, however, do these superficial changes, which posit racial difference in a utopic rather than dystopic light, reflect or gesture toward actual shifts in social and political attitudes about race in the US? Have such sociopolitical shifts, in fact, taken place? Are we witnessing the scenes of racial and ethnic diversity that appear in the movies, TV, and the Internet in our homes, schools, and streets, our places of work, worship, and play? The Civil Rights movement and its effects have led to legal gains in the struggle for racial equality, as exemplified most recently in the move for Affirmative Action in *Grotter v. Bollinger*.[lxxix] However, a large gap still exists between the reality of current race relations in the US and the images of multiracial and multicultural mixing appearing in popular media.

To elaborate, I will refer to two studies that recorded Anglo American attitudes toward two different racial groups in the US The first study, conducted in the early 1990s asked young white students how much they felt they should be compensated if they had to renounce their white identities and assume black ones. The majority felt it was reasonable to ask for $50 million or $1 million for each year they would be black (Harris

1759). According to Cheryl Harris, who references this study in her article, "Whiteness as Property," these responses emphasize the continued belief in whiteness as valuable social and cultural property. They strongly suggest that most white people in the US still harbor no desire to be black despite supposed improvements in the life conditions and social status of African Americans.

Meanwhile, current attitudes toward Asian Americans, who presumably lie on the opposite end of the assimilability scale, are not much more positive. A study in 2001, which included phone surveys and focus groups of highly educated persons in major metropolises, produced the following results. Among similar findings, the majority preferred African Americans, Jewish Americans, and women in the roles of president, boss, and CEO over Asian Americans in the same positions of power, and two-thirds predicted that China would be a menace to the US in the future. The study also found that participants' opinions on specific Asian countries (e.g. China) correlated with those on Asia in general and that their views of East Asians correlated with those of Asian Americans (Wu 12).

The negative attitudes toward people of color revealed in these studies are expressed concretely in the maintenance of racial hierarchies based on class and phenotype in the US Contemporary studies show that the segregation level at schools in the US is higher now than it was before *Brown v. Board of Education,* black and brown people are disproportionately racially profiled and imprisoned, and basic resources crucial for life chances and success – such as clean air and water, food, education, and decent housing – are withheld from the majority of nonwhite people in the US Asian Americans, the group most closely associated with Anglo Americans in terms of

economic capital, continue to face glass ceilings at work, are treated as conditional citizens, and in the case especially of Asian American women, consistently are infantilized, objectified, and harassed. Clearly then in the US, there is a sharp discrepancy between the safe, multicultural worlds and words that are publicly disseminated and the more honest, "politically incorrect" opinions that are kept in private.[lxxx] This incongruity is worth exploring because it points to progressive changes that are occurring and may yet occur in US race relations as well as to deep-seated fears and perceptions that keep many of those changes at surface level. It is precisely at this surface level, however, that an interrogation of the disturbing disconnect between public and private racial attitudes might begin.

To illustrate, I will refer to my experience teaching a large, introductory course in Film and Television Studies at The University of Texas at Austin. While the course focused on narrative strategies, one of its main goals was to teach students how to perform ideological analyses of Hollywood films and US television shows. To do this, I would call attention to the representation of gender, sexuality, class, and race in popular media narratives. Almost always, the students were most hesitant and unwilling when it came to talking about race; when discussions occurred, I found many actively resistant to the idea that racism actually exists in this day and age. It should be noted that the majority of the students were white, hailed from middle and upper middle class backgrounds, and had a strong desire to enter the media entertainment industry. That said, many, including those of color, argued that racist practices could be consigned to the past since they themselves had never experienced racism and since the media and other ideological state apparatuses (Althusser's term, not theirs) indicated there were ample

250

opportunities for people of color in many arenas. As examples of progress, they cited images of racial and ethnic diversity from popular culture, including music (especially hip hop), videogames, movies, television, fashion, sports, and food.

To these youth, the social, cultural, and identity category of race, unlike those of gender, region, or religion, was appreciated, worn, and consumed *as style* rather than understood and experienced as personal or collective history (until, of course, they had experienced a semester of my grueling attempts at consciousness raising). These initial attitudes suggest that racial changes depicted in popular narratives and images, which we may perceive to be merely cosmetic, and therefore superficial or ineffectual politically, are in fact strongly influencing younger generations.

My interest in and out of the classroom revolves around the kinds of communities that are created by this notion of race specifically and of identity generally *as style*. When for instance, does an allusion to Buddhism – in the form of *koan*-like language uttered by an androgynous white child with a shaved head and prayer beads – compel young viewers to learn more about this Eastern religion? And when does this reference remain something vague that earns the movie in which it appears a few more "cool points?" What are the implicit and explicit connections between style and history – the ever present shiny surface and the textured layers of the past? Such connections, especially with regards to racial difference, are both highlighted and obscured throughout *The Matrix*. I will now turn finally to the film itself to see how this magic trick is executed.

NEO AS THE "DARK WHITE MAN"

Unlike Gaff, the visibly non-white multiracial character in *Blade Runner*, Neo, the less discernibly multiracial protagonist of *The Matrix*, plays the central role in the film's narrative. The Eurasian hacker destined to save humanity from slave-master machines presents a cross-marketable composite of Gaff's stylish racial ambiguity and Deckard's blank-faced existential crisis mode in *Blade Runner*. Whereas Olmos is distinctly non-white, Keanu Reeves passes as white for most non-Asian American audiences as Peter Feng, LeiLani Nishime, and Frank Wu have noted. Consider for instance, Wu's following description of the contradictions in Reeves's presumed racial status:

> There would be no reason other than excessive ethnic pride for Reeves to out himself as Asian. But the ease with which he has adopted whiteness is fascinating. To the extent that he has chosen to be white and has consciously selected his whiteness, he confirms that whiteness is beneficial. …To the extent that Reeves has not selected whiteness but has stumbled into it, he indicates how whiteness is the default mode. Unless he deviates blatantly from the norm, he is assumed to be white. Even though Reeves is essentially white, the uniformly negative commentary of film critics on his work unwittingly echoes the classic line about Asians. To many reviewers, ironically, he is inscrutable (296).

As Wu suggests, Reeves and the characters he plays are read as "white" because the narratives around them do not refer to their race.

Specifically in *The Matrix*, Neo assumes the iconic role of the young, white male hero via his juxtaposition with Trinity's gender difference (femaleness) and Morpheus' racial difference (blackness). As well Neo clearly fulfills the audience expectations for the action adventure hero, a role that men of color seldom have been allowed to play in Hollywood. He grows from a passive, feminized object violated by technology to an active, masculinized subject capable of beating the machines at their own game. This

252

transformation is shown primarily through Neo's relationship to his body and his control over its movements in various spaces. Ultimately, it is only when he can enter and *become* the body and mind of Agent Smith – namely, when Neo masters the technology behind the Matrix – that he and we finally are able to recognize him as "the One." Like the cyberpunk cowboys of Gibson's novels, Neo becomes a (white, masculine) subject by taking on the traits of others: Morpheus's strength, discipline, and faith, qualities inscribed in his large, black male body; Trinity's abilities to fight and nurture, likewise expressed through her androgynously feminine body; and finally, the knowledge of the Matrix itself, information embedded in esoteric computer code, which not coincidentally contains a large proportion of Chinese and Japanese script.

Neo reaches his apotheosis through the help of his strikingly unconventional friends whose various differences and camera time noticeably diminish as his own powers and confidence increase. Morpheus morphs from a dangerous cyber-terrorist, kung-fu master, and Cultural Studies professor to a battered Rodney King in need of rescue. A cool, sexually ambiguous Trinity opens the film with one of its most stunning action sequences. By the end of the film, she has become both girlfriend and mother to the One and sealed this new position in soft romantic lighting with the perfunctory hetero-normative kiss – albeit in a gender inversion of the climatic scene in *Sleeping Beauty* (Kimball 4). Tank (Marcus Chong), the Nebuchadnezzar's multiracial pilot, is wounded but resurrected to save Neo from the traitorous Cypher (Joe Pantoliano). And his brother (Anthony Ray Parker) is killed along with the other minor characters, including the only other female in the group, the very butch Switch (Belinda McClory). No doubt, this racially and sexually diverse crew appeals to a wide spectrum of viewers in various ways. That such difference appears among the principal characters can be seen

253

as politically progressive. That it remains contained within the rules of the Hollywood *bildungsroman* perhaps not so much so.

A similar paradox is reflected in Neo's fluid sexual and racial identity. The protagonist acquires symbolic whiteness through the narrative and appears, again at first glance, to be an average, All-American white "dude." However, it is important to note the trace of otherness that remains perceptible, if not wholly definable, in this particular dude. According to Nishime, Neo's otherness is expressed through his metaphorical biraciality, which she describes thus:

> Reeves as Neo, occupies a liminal space within the film. He is the only character who we see move from the world of the matrix into the "real world." Yet he never is at home in either world. More telling are the two re-births in the film. The first comes as he regains consciousness in the "real" world. He barely survives the process and must be brought to life, Frankenstein style, by Morpheus. At the end of the movie … he is reborn, or maybe resurrected, by the love of a white woman, Trinity. Thus, within the film's metaphoric logic, Neo is the child of a black father and white mother, doubly re-inforcing [sic] a sense of Neo as biracial (3).

Following Nishime, I would like to explore how Neo, while coded on surface as white and straight, also can be read as non-white and non-straight (at least in the framework of traditional Hollywood American masculinity) through his association with the other two protagonists of the film, Trinity and Morpheus.

Trinity and Neo: The Hero as Feminized Infant

Neo's love interest is white, but with the dark features common to orientalized white women (i.e., pale skin and dark hair and eyes), which were discussed in Chapter Four. Neo's phenotypical doubling with Trinity, coupled with his generally passive demeanor and her generally active one, serve to effeminize Neo in ways that differ from

254

Deckard's emasculation in *Blade Runner*. As I discussed in Part Two, Deckard's appearance and actions recall the hard-boiled detectives of film noir and the stoic loners of the later Western, both anti-hero types working within their own rules which often contradict those of the societies in which they are confined. External castrating forces (women, technology, corporations, people of color, the law) constantly threaten the masculinity of these types. Here it is important to note something that may seem obvious: in order for one's masculinity to be perceived as being under threat, this masculinity – or its comparable facsimile – must have existed in the first place. Hence, my earlier reference to Deckard as "emasculated."

I refer to Neo not as emasculated but rather "effeminized" because he does not seem compelled to perform or even to desire performing this particular form of American masculinity. Throughout most of *The Matrix,* Neo does not exhibit the recognizable machismo traits of the traditional Hollywood male action star. (I am thinking here not only of Harrison Ford but also actors such as Kurt Russell, Clint Eastwood, and Bruce Willis.) Instead Neo's character, played with Reeves's characteristic minimalism, strongly resembles the male protagonists of *anime,* described by Antonia Levi as follows:

> Heroism in most *manga* and *anime* is internal: heroes must be sincere and they must be selfless, at least at the moment of heroism. It is not necessary for a *manga* or *anime* hero to be an [sic] saint, to fight for the right side, or even to be successful. Anyone who sincerely gives his or her best efforts to almost any task can be a hero (Kittleson 72).

According to Levi, the more ambivalent, internalized representation of the hero in Japanese popular media appeals to North American twenty-something youth in ways that the clear cut, action-oriented US hero does not and cannot. She explains, "The American heroic ideal often leaves them (members of Generation X) with a choice between

denouncing the actions of those they love or finding a rationalization for causes they might find more than slightly questionable. Japan's flawed warrior-heroes offer them an alternative to that choice" (*Ibid*).

When we are introduced to Neo, he reflects the passivity, ennui, and confusion of these youth: a corporate drone by day and a dangerous hacker by night, Thomas Anderson a.k.a. Neo leads a somnolent existence with no apparent meaning or larger purpose. When his abilities initially are tested, he demonstrates the mixed emotions and actions of most *anime* heroes. Too scared to follow Morpheus's phone orders to escape using the high-rise scaffold, Neo is captured by the Agents while Trinity watches from her motorcycle mirror. Later in the Construct, Neo fails again when he is unable to jump from one roof to another, disappointing the crew and questioning their faith in him as a potential savior. It is only at the end of the film, when Neo acts out of altruistic love for his mentor, friend, and surrogate father, that he proves himself a "hero."[lxxxi] Even then, his heroism contains a certain kind of receptive humility, which I will explore in more detail later. This softer but still strong version of masculine heroism differs noticeably from the "hard bodies" and hard actions of 1980s and early 1990s American male heroes, which Susan Jeffords has analyzed in *Hard Bodies* as fantastic projections of American masculine ideologies from the time period.

Neo's divergence from action heroes such as Superman, Rambo, and the Terminator is emphasized through his relationship with Trinity. Despite Trinity's ultimate containment, she opens the film as a tough, controlled, and utterly empowered woman. With her short, black, slicked back hair, her tight, muscular body encased in and accentuated by a black leather body suit, and dark sunglasses obscuring her soft eyes, Trinity visually defies the "little girl" label of the police supervisor, whose unit she proceeds to pummel with sophisticated "wire-fu" punches and kicks. In as much as

Reeves resembles the insecure and unsure male characters of many *anime* narratives*,* Moss embodies the stoic, androgynous, and dominatrix-like female characters that populate the medium.

In striking contrast to Trinity's stunning, action-filled introduction, we first encounter Neo sleeping in front of his computer screen, which flashes virtual news reports of terrorism in Chinese, Arabic, and English. The description of his apartment in the shooting script reveals how mired Neo is in technology. In the passage from the shooting script below, note especially the references to animal and plant bodies in the description of the computer equipment, which grotesquely melds the synthetic with the organic, the artificial with the natural:

> It is a studio apartment that seems overgrown with technology. Weed-like cable coils everywhere, duct-taped into thickets that wind up and around the legs of several desks. Tabletops are filled with cannibalized equipment that lay open like an autopsied corpse. At the center of this technological rat-net is NEO, a man who knows more about living inside a computer than outside one (Wachowski, "Script" 281).

Throughout the first act of the film and until the second turning point (when he and Trinity wielding "guns, lots of guns," storm the office building where Morpheus is being held captive), Neo's relationship to technology primarily is an unquestioning and receptive one. This helps develop the primary thematic thrust of the film and the trajectory of the protagonist from average Everyman to extraordinary Hero. At the same time, Neo's physical and emotional passivity also suggests a different form of masculinity, which is more stereotypically childlike and feminine and which depends on a much stronger and more active female counterpart.

Until the training scene, we see Neo in physically vulnerable positions relative to the camera, which demonstrate his defenseless exposure to the highly technologized environment. This vulnerability becomes most spectacularly apparent in three scenes during the exposition. In the first scene, Neo, representing all rebellious, anti-establishment youth, responds to the Agents' request for his cooperation by giving them the finger. As punishment, a layer of skin grows, like mucous, over his mouth, literally rendering him speechless. In the second scene, Trinity uses a device described as "a cross between a rib separator, speculum, and air compressor," to extract the techno-organic bug that the Agents have implanted in Neo ("Script" 296). And in the third scene, mercury swiftly crawls up Neo's skin after he touches a mirror while waiting for the red pill to take effect. Neo panics as the mercury reaches his face and threatens to transform him into a shiny, technological object – pure surface, like the mirror itself. The image is followed by a sharp cut of Neo waking up in his pod where he has been dreaming his so called life.

In all three scenes, Neo loses control over his body when it is violated and taken over by alien objects and substances. A certain kind of mind/body split occurs here. Neo, who has considered himself a human subject with free will, suddenly finds himself trapped in his own body, which – through the visualized intervention of technology – has become an enemy and a prison. Neo's body is paralyzed and his subject position threatened when he loses his ability to speak in the first scene and his ability to act in the second and third. The first scene ends with Neo cornered against the wall, sans mouth, by two Agents, who throw him shirtless on the examination table before they implant a metallic bug through his navel in a clear simulation of gang rape.

In the second scene Neo is forced again to take off his shirt and lie down while Trinity extracts the bug from his stomach with a huge, phallic instrument -- half laser

258

syringe and half microscope. The scene recalls the *Alien* series not only in the specific way that the alien survives and reproduces (as a parasite in the stomach of the human host), but also in its rare depiction of a capable, non-sexualized female leader. Trinity performs what amounts to an abortion on Neo, who unwittingly has functioned as a passive vessel and mediator for agents of the Matrix.

In the third scene Neo's passivity is overtly gendered by the appellations given him by Morpheus and Cypher: Alice of *Alice in Wonderland* and Dorothy of *The Wizard of* Oz, respectively. Both characters are lost and confused young girls who are trying to get back home. Home, for Neo, appears at the end of the rabbit hole. Again, the abortion trope frames Neo's nightmarish descent into the "real world" of the Matrix. This time Neo himself is aborted from the Matrix by Morpheus, who plays both his midwife and father. Unlike the earlier abortion scene, this one is framed in the terminology and iconography of rebirth as A. Samuel Kimball describes below:

> Until Neo is "snatched from the flow of waste" by Morpheus's machine "hovering inside the sewer main," Neo's birth threatens to be an abortion. Indeed, the scene thoroughly intermixes an imagery of intestinal evacuation with the imagery of parturition. If this imagery contaminates the very birthing that releases Neo from the matrix, the action of Morpheus and his crew in saving Neo from excremental oblivion purifies it, refiguring an abortion as a rebirthing (13).

Neo is reborn when he is unplugged from the Matrix and "wakes up" to the reality that he has been a slave to technology. It is telling that his chief rescuer is a dangerous black criminal, a hacker-terrorist shaking up the white dominated world of the Matrix. As mentioned earlier, Morpheus's physical blackness functions as a foil against Neo's ostensible whiteness. At the same time, however, Neo is associated with Morpheus to the extent that he identifies with and desires to be more like him. In *The Matrix* the color

black – whether displayed on one's skin or one's clothing – signifies radical difference from the stimulated, false, and colorless world of the Matrix.

The *mise-en-scène* of the film seamlessly combines the rebellious, anti-establishment connotations associated with black skin, black history, and black style with those of the black clothing preferred by working class anarchists and punks as well as by culturally elite artists, literati, and intellectuals. Alluding and appealing to all of these differently marginalized groups, blackness as trope provides a more attractive alternative to the deadly, sterile, and artificial whiteness of the Agents who stand for dominant culture. In as much as Morpheus's black body and fly fashion sense define him as a romantic symbol of youth rebellion, Agent Smith's (Hugo Weaving) 1950s Organization Man image, completely identical with those of the other Agents, constitute him as the decidedly unromantic icon of the government and corporate status quo.

Throughout the film, Neo falls between these two stylized racial poles. The description of Neo's double life, which Agent Smith provides during the interrogation sums up his liminal position, between computer programmer and hacker, dominant culture and subculture, white and black:

> It seems that you have been living two lives. In one life, you are Thomas A. Anderson, program writer for a respectable software company. You have a social security number, you pay your taxes, and you help your landlady carry out her garbage. The other life is lived in computers where you go by the hacker alias Neo, and are guilty of virtually every computer crime we have a law for. One of these lives has a future. One of them does not ("Script "292).

If, according to Dyer, *Blade Runner*'s Deckard epitomizes the "dark white man," then Neo suggests a subtle extension and inversion of this type in his projection of what I will call the "white dark man." From the beginning of the film, we are led to understand that

Neo is different than those around him. Neo follows the text instructions on his computer and the tattooed white rabbit to the S&M cyber club where he meets Trinity. She articulates his difference as a desire for something he has not experienced but feels: "I know why you're here, Neo. … I know why you hardly sleep, why you live alone and why, night after night, you sit at your computer. … The answer is out there, Neo. It's looking for you and it will find you, if you want it to" (185-186). Later Morpheus tells Neo,

> You have come because you know something. What you know you can't explain but you feel it. You've felt it your whole life, felt that something is wrong with the world. You don't know what, but it's there like a splinter in your mind, driving you mad (300).

The vague sense of discontent that Trinity and Morpheus describe constitutes the internal, invisible tinge of "darkness" in Neo, which draws him to Morpheus and consequently, to his destiny.

In the shock of being unplugged from the Matrix and thus "waking up" from the dream of false consciousness, Neo is rendered a "free" human subject. He becomes aware visually and viscerally of his individual enslavement and the collective enslavement of humankind by technology. However, Neo is not able to accept fully his subject position and its responsibilities until he can translate awareness into action. It is only when he consciously accepts and embraces his internal difference (which has been projected onto and through the differences represented by Trinity and Morpheus, respectively) that Neo becomes truly "free," truly "human." Importantly, freedom also requires Neo's repudiation of the technological other represented by the Matrix and its chief representative, Agent Smith (Hugo Weaving). Neo does not realize his potential as the

One until he renames himself in his final fight with Smith. As I will show in my reading of this scene later, Neo's rejection of Smith ironically requires an identification and consequent doubling between the two characters -- one that demonstrates the complex relationship between race and technology in the film which is filtered through oriental style.

RACE AND TECHNOLOGY IN THE MATRIX

I will begin outlining this relationship by reiterating a few key points that I made earlier about *Blade Runner* which will act as points of contrast. Once again, *Blade Runner* appears to blur the human/non-human binary narratively (through Roy's glorification and Rachel's assimilation) but not visually (demonstrated by the foregrounding of the white replicants against a background of orientalized others). As I argued, however, story and space are in fact closely connected. The liberal humanist viewpoint latent in the narrative manifests in the *mise-en-scène* through the racial similarity between the replicants and the primary human characters. Ideologically, the film elides "racial" oppression with class oppression. It does so by associating the replicants' struggles, not with those of the contemporary invisible racial others that dominate the streets, but rather, with the past enslaved experiences of African Americans *whose bodies never even enter the picture.* To put it simply, in *Blade Runner* the technological other and the racial other are separate entities; the former is destroyed or given some form of subjectivity while the latter remains in the film as objectified background.

Conversely, *The Matrix* clearly upholds the human/non-human binary in its narrative, but constantly questions it visually and viscerally. A product of new filmmaking technologies – from its "bullet-time" sequence to its green-screened

262

backgrounds – the movie promulgates a distinctly anti-technological and socially prophylactic message. New technology which is represented explicitly in the form of props and implicitly in that of special effects grounds the story materially; however, the reliance of the storytelling process on technology is erased at the narrative level. At no point in the film is the audience supposed to root for the Sentinels or the Agents, which are merely patrolling computer programs -- virtual (unreal) police keeping (real) human slaves contained in the prison of the Matrix.

While *Blade Runner* thematically suggests the potential for communication and understanding between human and non-human, *The Matrix* celebrates the borders between human and machine as natural and necessary for distinguishing the "good" (self/human) from the "bad" (other/technology). After learning that the world as he knows it is not "real," Neo is exposed to another, bleaker world that is presented as most definitely "real": the two spaces are connected through a liminal training space appropriately called the Construct. Divisions between real and unreal spaces are clearly delineated, leaving the ways in which these spaces inform each other unexplored. The same goes for divisions between the human and the non-human. The film never questions the humanness of the ostensibly human (but unawake) subjects that are trapped in the Matrix. To put it a bit differently, the film leads one to assume that there is an essential human being, extricable from the technological web that constitute his or her social and historical contexts.

However, this humanist theme is contradicted repeatedly in the film's *mise-en-scène.* Along with the overwhelming presence of computer generated (CGI) effects and the reliance of the principal characters on various forms of advanced technology, the biological and cultural "humanity" of those characters is never totally established. For example, a certain irony lies in the audience's acceptance of the protagonists as "human"

263

since most members of Morpheus' crew, including Neo, do not qualify strictly as such. We are told that except for Tank and Dozer, the two black brothers who were born "naturally" of a mother in Zion, the last human city, all of the principal "human" characters are actually products of genetic engineering. The shocking image of a white fetus intravenously being fed human remains which Morpheus shows Neo during his TV history lesson makes it apparent that the bodies of these "humans" are themselves *things* made to be consumed by the machines.

The appearance, beliefs, and actions of Morpheus and his crew must differ noticeably from those trapped in the Matrix in order to counter their cyborg status. In this context, the racial diversity of the crew in contrast to the predominantly white racial composition of the Agents and those trapped in the Matrix takes on new significance. Again, following Nishime's formulation of Neo as metaphorically biracial, one could posit that as "Thomas Anderson" he is white in the Matrix and as "Neo" he is black in the "real world." After Neo chooses the red pill and learns through his body to distinguish between truth and appearance, he enters a rigorous training period in which Morpheus tries to reprogram his mind to follow suit. Here it is significant that a stately black male leader (played rather portentously by Fishburne) educates Neo and the audience on the historical roots of humankind's current oppressed state. The figure – and later the body – of this particular character links mass technological subjugation in the future with the historical experience of black slavery in the US, a specific form of racialized subjugation which is consigned to the past.

Ideologically then both *Blade Runner* and *The Matrix* reflect dominant liberal views regarding racial difference. They appropriate the moral power of the slave position without acknowledging or dealing with its historical baggage. And they reduce the brutal, colonialist roots of slavery to an easy affective strategy whose purpose is to secure

264

audience identification with certain characters. The difference is that in *The Matrix* the specter of African enslavement is embodied in and addressed directly by black actors. Along with Morpheus, the Oracle and the two "homegrown" brothers visually embody what *Blade Runner* only metaphorized through the hyper-white, artificial bodies of the replicants.

Where then, in this picture, is oriental style? And what does that style have to do with the relationship between racial and technological others in the film just described?

As I suggested in the previous chapter, the use of *anime* and martial arts in *The Matrix* signals a noticeable shift in the representation of racial and technological others in Hollywood via the presence of the mediated Oriental Other. The shift reflects some important ways in which cinematic projections of multiculturalism, the Orient, and technology have changed in the US from the early 1980s to the present. In the remainder of this chapter, I will provide readings of two crucial action scenes in which Neo begins to assume his identity as the One. The first is his sparring session with Morpheus after he has learned martial arts by having programs of combat moves downloaded into his brain; the second is his climatic fight with Agent Smith in the subway station in which he dies and is reborn a second time, this time as the One. My readings focus on the implicitly and explicitly racialized ways in which the characters interact with each other verbally and physically. From my observations, I will attempt to draw some conclusions about how Asian, African, and Anglo American identities in the film are constructed through the popular discourse of Orientalism.

TURNING BLACK: NEO FIGHTS MORPHEUS

The first scene opens with Neo lying in his chair in the Nebuchadnezzar, eyes moving rapidly under their lids, as he learns combat skills through a training program that

265

Tank downloads into his brain. The computer screen flashes titles such as Savate, Jujitsu, Ken Po, and Drunken Boxing. When Morpheus asks how Neo is doing, Tank responds, "Ten hours straight. He's a machine." When Neo wakes up, he looks more awake than he has so far in the film. According to the description in the shooting script, "Neo's body spasms and relaxes as his eyes open, breath hissing from his lips. He looks like he has just orgasmed" (317).

Morpheus initiates Neo into his new body and self in a virtual Japanese dojo that resembles similar spaces in videogames like *Mortal Kombat* and *Virtua Fighter 4*. Both characters are dressed in traditional *ghi* – Morpheus in black, and Neo in white with a black belt. The lighting is soft and serene; after medium close ups of the characters in shot reverse shot, the camera cuts to a long, still shot of the figures in profile as they assume their stances. In its sparseness and static composition, the image strongly resembles still, blocked scenes from Noh drama. The effect is broken by the sound of a gong, which is followed by New Age influenced Asian music. Neo warms up like a boxer, looking pronouncedly cocky in response to Morpheus's "hit me, if you can."

Neo's moves are fast and intense, "like a Jackie Chan movie at high speed" while Morpheus's are smooth and graceful, blocking the strikes effortlessly (318). Morpheus throws Neo down to the ground. As he gets up, the music shifts to loud industrial; the camera cuts to the ship where the crew members have left their dinners to watch the fight on the screen.[lxxxii] During the fight, the camera cuts in closely and frequently on Neo's movements, illustrating his neophyte speed and energy. Despite his technical skills however, Neo eventually is beaten by Morpheus after both engage in some spectacular slow motion wire kung fu. The gong sounds again as Neo runs up the wall and does a back flip only to land on Morpheus's fists and the floor. Where is the "Orient" in this

scene and what role does it play in developing the primary characters and their relationship with each other?

Here I return the idea of yellowface which I introduced earlier. Robert Lee defines this term as follows:

> Yellowface marks the Asian body as unmistakably Oriental; it sharply defines the Oriental in a racial opposition to whiteness. Yellowface exaggerates 'racial' features that have been designated as 'Oriental,' such as 'slanted' eyes, overbite, and mustard-yellow skin color. Only the racialized Oriental is yellow; Asians are not. … What does Yellowface signify? Race is a mode of placing cultural meaning on the body. Yellowface marks the Oriental as *indelibly alien* (2, emphasis added).

Lee draws an implicit parallel here between "blackface" and "yellowface" by stressing the role of the excessively racialized physical body in these performances. Asian American scholars such as Joseph Won and Jeffrey Ow also have noted that while blackface is no longer socially tolerable in the post-Civil Rights US, yellowface continues to be an acceptable mode of representing people of Asian descent. Striking examples of racial and ethnic stereotyping such as the buck-toothed caricatures of Chinese laundrymen featured in a recent line of Abercrombie & Fitch tee shirts and Halloween costumes at Walmart titled "Kung Fool" and "Mail Order Bride," would fall under this category of yellowface as a form of anti-Asian racism, which attempts to masquerade as harmless entertainment.

It is important, however, to distinguish between the kind of cultural interpretation, translation, and disidentification at work in these yellowface representations and the yellowface that Reeves and Laurence are performing in this scene. The serious manner in which the characters execute their kung fu moves, the self-consciously virtual nature of the dojo in which the scene is set, and the important narrative function of the scene in the

film's plot and the development of Neo's character all suggest a more complex blend of cultural and racial appropriation and homage than allowed by present definitions of yellowface.

How then does racial and cultural difference signify in the orientalized virtual space of this particular scene? I think it can be safely assumed that most viewers acquainted with Hollywood cinema would read the fight sequence as an iteration of the mentor/student relationship in adventure bildungsroman like *Star Wars* and *The Karate Kid* where the student is a young white male and the teacher is some kind of racial or alien other. In this formula, the teacher functions both as a surrogate parent and a sort of technological prosthetic – his exotic, esoteric knowledge is transferred to his All-American student who, we know, ultimately will surpass the teacher by blending his inherent talents with the teacher's knowledge and/or by fulfilling his preordained destiny using that knowledge.

While the idea of the mentor as prosthetic and parent generally holds in this instance, it is challenged slightly by alternative interpretations of the scene by those Asian American viewers (and dedicated Keanu Reeves fans of all races), who are aware of Reeves's mixed Asian ancestry. In this case, Neo might be seen simultaneously as non-white and white. His phenotype hints at the trace of Asian blood while his narrative and symbolic role as the slacker hacker codes him as white in dominant cinematic and cybernetic discourses. In either case, the scene shows Neo shaking off his old self and poised at the brink of becoming something different and better. In this scene, Neo becomes symbolically black in two ways: first *through* his close association with Morpheus as mentor and surrogate father, and second, *against* his former identity which was symbolically coded white through its association with the Matrix. In the process of sparring with Morpheus, Thomas Anderson of the predominantly white dominant culture

is initiated as Neo of the predominantly black underground Resistance. This conversion significantly occurs through the active filter of oriental style which is demonstrated through the kung fu moves, the costumes, the music, and the setting of this scene.

TURNING ORIENTAL: NEO FIGHTS AGENT SMITH

In the second scene, Neo has matured considerably: he has risked his life to save Morpheus's even after the Oracle has told him he is not the "One." Both Morpheus and Trinity have escaped the Matrix safely, and Neo is about to follow suit when he is stopped by Agent Smith. Instead of running, Neo decides to stay and fight: "in his eyes we see something different, something fixed and hard like a gunfighter's resolve. There is no past or future in these eyes. There is only what is" ("Script" 381). The camera looks up at Neo, reflecting his increased power and confidence and cuts to a close up of Smith before reverting to a set up that clearly alludes to the spaghetti westerns of Sergio Leone. We get an extreme closeup of Neo's hand on his gun at hip level which cuts to a long shot of Smith and Neo facing each other in the classic pose of the Western duel. Western composition meets Eastern action as the characters rush at each other in slow motion "bullet-time," firing their guns simultaneously. The shot ends in an obvious homage to John Woo with each character pressing his gun to the other's head. The sadistic homoerotic undertones of the fight are spelled out in the following description of this pose: "They freeze in a kind of embrace; *Neo sweating, panting, Agent Smith machine-calm*. Agent Smith smiles" ("Script" 381, emphasis added).

His smile fades as it becomes clear they are both out of bullets and on somewhat equal footing. Smith throws his gun to the side; Neo follows. The two fight hand to hand, displaying the cinematic kung fu of choreographer Yuen Wo Ping. Neo delivers a high kick to Smith, breaking his sunglasses. We see his eyes, "ice blue" (382). Smith rises and

269

fights Neo with more fervor; soon Neo is hurt, his mouth spouting blood. In another obvious homage – this time to Bruce Lee – he gets up, wipes the blood, assumes his stance and repeats the famous come hither hand signal that Morpheus used earlier in the Construct. The fight resumes. Neo appears to have lost as Smith pummels him against the wall with blurred fists and throws him into the tracks as a train is about to arrive. We hear its sound, "like an animal cry, a burst of high-speed metal grinding against metal" (*Ibid*). The train functions as a symbol of technology – another extension of the Matrix – which threatens to kill Neo. In response to Smith's prediction of his (and humankind's) death to the machines ("Good-bye, Mr. Anderson"), Neo rises up, declares his new identity ("My name is Neo") and throws Smith on the tracks instead.

Like the monster in a horror movie, Smith is not killed. Another chase sequence, this time through Chinatown – in not so explicit reference to a similar scene in *Ghost in the Shell* as well as *Cape Fear* (Scorcese 1991) – ensues before the final showdown between protagonist and antagonist, "black" racial other and white technological other. The chase ends when Neo opens the door in an abandoned apartment to face Smith, who shoots him, first in the stomach then progressively in the chest and the head as the camera cuts to a long shot. Neo's monitor goes flat in the ship, signaling his death. Trinity, however, refuses to believe this, using the logic that the One she loves cannot be dead. And of course it is her faith in her love for Neo, and his reciprocal love for her, that brings him back to life a second time, this time as the all powerful One.

The One has some pretty amazing powers: he can stop a stream of bullets in midair and block the Agents' mechanical punches effortlessly, all through his newfound ability to see the "real" world of the Matrix which is comprised of computer code: "Neo looks out, now able to see through the curtain of the Matrix. For a moment, the walls, the floor, even the Agents become a rushing stream of code" ("Script" 391). Later, the One

270

destroys Smith by entering his body through the navel as a streak of blinding white light and shattering him from the inside. Lumps move under Smith's skin followed by a kind of implosion, which sends bits of the former Agent flying, leaving the One standing calmly, flexing his new muscles. The scene reenacts the earlier violation of Neo's body in the interrogation room when the Agents slipped the grisly techno-organic bug in Neo, again through the navel. This time, however, the roles are reversed. Neo, the Human, has defeated the Matrix, the Machine.

Or has he? Even as this sequence references and replays the narrative convention of man overcoming monster, it also hints that the man himself is part of the monster and vice versa. In the subway fight the script describes Smith as "machine-calm"; a similar kind of calm settles over Neo after he has reawakened as the One. Meanwhile, Smith, whose machine qualities have started degenerating through his contact with Morpheus, becomes increasingly emotional, and is indeed hysterical, by the time the One enters and kills him (at least until he is resurrected for the sequels). Reinforcing the link between the natural and technological world, hybrid imagery is used not only to describe the train that almost kills Neo (its sound an "animal cry") but also the bullets that Neo stops in midair (like "a cloud of obedient bees") (*Ibid*). In this light, not much seems to have changed: the world has not become a Luddite fantasy with the coming of the One. The terms of the game remain the same. Technology remains an integral part of the fight. The difference is that the One exercises control over the Technological Other in a way that his previous incarnations, Thomas Anderson and Neo, could not.

Neo's ability to defeat the machines *by thinking and acting like them* fulfills a key techno-orientalist stereotype, one which conflates the Technological Other with the Oriental Other. Historically, this stereotype has expressed and reinforced overt imperialist attitudes toward Asians and Asian Americans, as for instance the Yellow Perilist attitudes

271

that underlay the Chinese Exclusion Acts and the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II. The stereotype, however, seems to signify somewhat differently here. Like earlier Hollywood representations of Chinese coolies and Japanese kamikaze pilots, Neo is a hybrid of human and machine. Existing initially as "food" for the machines, he is inextricably linked to them, through the plugs that remain in the back of his head, his extraordinary hacker skills, and his doubling with Agent Smith which plays out further in the sequels. However, unlike past techno-orientalist representations of Asian American masculinity, Neo comes to stand in for the very figure of the Human, in large part *due to* – rather than despite – his racially and ontologically hybrid status. To be more specific, what distinguishes Neo from Morpheus and the other rebels – and ultimately convinces everyone that he is indeed, the One – is his ability to see the world of the Matrix for what it is, namely, computer code.

This requires an ability to mimic and pass as the enemy Other – a character trait central to many racial stereotypes specific to Asians in the US Once he is able to *experience* the code as mere data, Neo, the consummate hacker, can control and contain his enemies effortlessly – a position of power usually given to the white, male protagonist in cyberpunk narratives. In other words, it is precisely the trait of mutability – the ability to cross racial, social, and here, ontological boundaries epitomized in the conditional cultural status of the Model Minority – that this film upholds as one that will save the Human race. That race, incidentally, looks less and less white in subsequent versions of the Matrix as I will show in my third and final reading which does not come from the film but from one of its ancillary texts, *The Animatrix.*

ADDENDUM: "THE FINAL FLIGHT OF THE OSIRIS"

As mentioned in the previous chapter, *The Animatrix* is a collection of animated shorts that was released June 3, 2003 to promote *The Matrix: Reloaded,* which bowed on June 15th. This short film, which opens the collection, literally performs the blurred boundary between the real and the virtual, with its CGI format and "synthespian" actors. Andy Jones, who animated *Final Flight of the Osiris*, also was the chief animator of *Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within* (Sakaguchi and Lee 2001), the CGI film adaptation of Square's RPG videogame series, *Final Fantasy*. In that film, protagonist Aki Ross (voiced by Asian American actress Ming Na) passed physically as white, like Keanu.

In this short, Aki has become recognizably East Asian in the body of Jue (Pamela Segall), the first officer of the hovership Osiris. The piece opens with the camera focusing on Jue's slim, shapely body, which is clothed in a short red silk robe. She is blindfolded, and her hair tied up in a high ponytail. She wields a long elegant samurai sword and moves with precision and grace despite the blindfold. Her partner, Thadeus (Kevin Richardson), a well-built black male, is also blindfolded, carries a sword, and wears a black *ghi*. The two circle around each other with their swords to New Age Asian music, slicing off bits of each other's clothing until the man is shirtless, and the woman is left in nothing but a thong and a bra. The scene ends with the two characters about to kiss when the alarm goes off. Frustrated but drawn to their duties, they leave the now obvious Construct program to join their crew in the main cabin.

On surface, the erotically charged sparring scene between a black male captain and his first officer, an Asian American female, appears to celebrate racial diversity and gender equality. The "beautiful" bodies are those of color, and they belong to the story's protagonists. The East Asian female is physically strong and technically competent, clearly aware of her sexual power and able not only to meet but to assume the male gaze.

273

The black male, likewise, seems physically, intellectually, and emotionally superior to his white male crew members.

In other words, Thadeus and Jue make an attractive couple within the hyper heteronormative logic of the film. But the question is, for whom? The sexualized bodies of the yellow woman and the black man here perform a variation of yellowface, which melds Reeves and Fishburne's more "straight" performance with the exoticized representations of East Asians in Hollywood films. The camera fetishizes their bodies, which are further eroticized for the viewer through orientalized motion: the dangerous courtship dance of martial arts. Regardless of the racial identity of the viewer, she or he is forced – by the camera's movements (fragmentation of body parts, lingering close ups on erotic zones, and length of cuts) – to assume a white male liberal gaze that simultaneously accesses two forms of pleasure: the public, moral pleasure of being politically correct and the private, guilty pleasure of consuming age-old images of the exotic and erotic racial other.

CONCLUSION

This scene from the *The Animatrix* like those described in *The Matrix* demonstrates the dynamic, dialectical relationship between the Occident and the Orient, between whiteness and non-whiteness which has always existed in Orientalism. It also exemplifies increasingly complex modes of representing the relationship between oriental, racial, and technological others in popular culture which reflect the fractures, alliances, and contradictions of contemporary racial attitudes and relations in the US

As I hope my readings have shown, forms of Orientalism currently appearing in Hollywood derive from and reproduce but also rework some of the imperialist tendencies of the West which have been well-documented and analyzed by scholars in postcolonial

theory and Ethnic Studies. My research supplements this body of work by addressing a critical silence around the ambivalences that fundamentally structure and shape orientalist discourse. Here I am referring primarily to two modes of orientalist expression that I see at work in Asian-set and themed films such as *Lost in Translation* (Coppola 2003) and *The Last Samurai* (Zwick 2003) as well other contemporary films that incorporate Asian signifiers in the vein of *The Matrix*, such as *Charlie's Angels* or *Kill Bill*. The first mode occurs when imperialist tendencies are expressed in the clothing of liberal multiculturalism; the second, when such tendencies appear to be absent or even subtly critiqued. It is important to note that the two modes are not mutually exclusive. By this I mean that references to East Asia in the *mise-en-scène* of contemporary Hollywood films continue to be expressed through a Western perspective – whether oriental styles are used to express the desire of the perceived audience for an exoticized locale or people (as in *Lost in Translation* and *The Last Samurai*) or to indicate the same audience's ease and familiarity with East Asian cultures which becomes a form of cultural capital in itself (as in *The Matrix* and the *Kill Bill* series).

A film that for many "brought back" the dying genre of cyberpunk in an appropriately subversive way (i.e. in the guise of the Hollywood blockbuster), *The Matrix* illustrates the eminent marketability of both modes in subtly representing racial difference through oriental style. The movie appealed to a broad audience base, from college youth who were drawn to the fast-paced action *mecha anime* template to their professors who were excited to see Baudrillard, Plato, and Lao Tzu referenced in a popular mass medium. Its originality, based to a large extent on its appropriation of East Asian popular media and culture – from Japanese animation and videogames to Chinese martial arts and John Woo's hardboiled action films – was attributed primarily to the

filmmakers' ability to translate this mediated Orient for the Hollywood audience which continued to be perceived as Western and American.

In the past five years, *The Matrix* has popularized oriental styles based on martial arts choreography and *anime* in the US While this increased visibility of hybridized East Asian popular culture suggests greater opportunities for cultural, artistic, and commercial exchange between East Asia and the United States through the visual entertainment industry, it also limits the ways in which East Asia is perceived in the US and the rest of the world. After listening to a condensed version of this chapter at a job talk, an undergraduate Asian American student asked me if I thought *The Matrix* signaled a positive step for Asian American representation in the US. Drawing from my bag of teaching tricks, I deflected the question back at him, asking him what *he* thought. The student answered that since the film and others of its ilk have come out, he has been asked more than ever by non Asian peers if he knows kung fu. He didn't think *The Matrix* was such a good thing since, even as it rendered him visible – and some might say in a not *necessarily* negative way – this visibility was limited to the question: "do you know kung fu?"

As I mentioned in the last chapter, media producers like the Wachowskis, Tarantino, and others may be reflecting and constructing new, perhaps more positive modes of relating to East Asia for Anglo Americans. Yet it is telling that the oriental styles they have chosen to popularize that derive from *anime* and martial arts emphasize violence, technology, and a rather inhumane (if ultrahip) future. Such oriental styles influence not only how Americans of all races perceive Asia but also how people of Asian descent are led to see themselves, as this student's question made clear. While *The Matrix* makes an earnest attempt to show a world "without boundaries," ultimately it is unable to do so in its sequels, its videogame, its toys, and its fashion. What may be

needed instead as I suggested in my response to the student's important question, is the production and distribution of more films that exhibit *many different* "oriental" styles by people for whom those styles carry deep historical, cultural, and personal meanings. Perhaps, if the stories behind the styles are told honestly and well enough, they may give us a glimpse of past, present, and future worlds that *The Matrix* can hardly begin to imagine.

Conclusion

MOVING TOWARD ANSWERS

In the Introduction I promised to answer the following question through my analyses of *Blade Runner* and *The Matrix*: "If, in these celluloid visions of a dark, urban, and computerized future, technology is depicted in ways similar to those in which East Asians historically have been represented, how does that signify for current and future cultural constructions of East Asians and Asian Americans in the US?" Now nearing the end, I find myself at a loss for clear answers. Happily, this does not preclude me from making some educated guesses. In the following pages, I will summarize the major points from the previous chapters. Drawing from the conclusions reached in each chapter, I will speculate on how cultural formations around the Techno-Oriental Other may be impacting the perceived role of East Asia and Asian Americans in the United States at the present time. I will end with directions for future revisions of this work, and some brief concluding remarks.

SUMMARIES

I opened the dissertation in Chapter One with a definition of Edward Said's concept of Orientalism, noting the ways in which my study both draws and diverges from his formulation of this concept and his methods in locating and analyzing orientalist expressions in European literature, philosophy, history, and government. To reiterate: this dissertation takes as its starting point, Said's broad definition of Orientalism as the West's ongoing cultural repository of Asia as its racial and cultural Other, an inventory that has had and continues to have important political consequences on national and

international relations of power and material consequences on those whose bodies and conditions of life bear the effects of that power. In its emphasis on close reading of narratives within their sociopolitical contexts, my study resembles Said's work methodologically as well. However, it differs from *Orientalism* in the following three ways: its objects of study (popular media, specifically Hollywood movies rather than the Western literary canon), its geographical and temporal contexts (present-day US rather than Europe in the past tense), and its emphasis on the construction of an East Asian Orient, rather than a Middle Eastern one.

In Chapter One, I began setting the stage for the film analyses to follow by showing the connections between the histories of East Asian immigration to the United States and East Asian representations in Hollywood. In the process, I pointed out how certain, recognizable East Asian stereotypes originated, entered, and became part of the US orientalist inventory. I ended the chapter by reiterating the resemblances between stereotypes of the Oriental Other and the Technological Other which I had discussed earlier in the Introduction.

Building on these histories of US Orientalism, in Chapter Two I introduced the orientalized aspects of the Technological Other in cyberpunk fiction and cinema. I discussed David Morley and Kevin Robins' notion of techno-orientalism and its recent applications in Asian American studies, noting a general trend toward critical emphasis on the Yellow Perilist strands of techno-orientalism over the less clearly imperialist ways of recognizing East Asian bodies and cultures which also inform this particular mode of reading the contemporary Orient. I then went on to describe cyberpunk culture as one that foregrounds these less acknowledged, ambivalent attitudes toward both the Occidental Self and the Oriental Other. I described the roots of the cyberpunk literary movement and subsequent critiques of its gender, sexual, class, and racial politics which focused on the

279

ways in which this subculture has privileged the white male subject. As a subgenre of SF fiction heavily influenced by the styles of 1980s popular technologies, cyberpunk fiction, aesthetically and ideologically, found a perfect counterpoint in Hollywood cinema, specifically in a subgenre of SF films from the 1980s to the present that I grouped under the rather porous category of "cyberpunk cinema."

In Chapters Three and Four I provided a snapshot of 1980s cyberpunk cinema through a multi-pronged analysis of *Blade Runner* which I chose as an example of the cyberpunk films of this period based on its general style, narrative, and representations of racial difference, technology, and the Oriental Other. Chapter Three provided an analysis of the industrial and critical contexts of the film. It discussed *Blade Runner* as representative stylistically and politically not only of cyberpunk cinema but also 1980s New Hollywood cinema. In particular I noted the superficial postmodern treatment of racial difference in *Blade Runner* as well as in much of the academic criticism on the film.

Chapter Four discussed why and how the *Blade Runner* city was conceptualized by the director and production crew as predominantly East Asian. It then went on to locate expressions of the Oriental Other in the *mise-en-scène*. I argued that the Oriental Other exists in and as the visual middle ground of the film caught between invisible black bodies and hyper-visible white bodies. I further explored the relationship between space, race, and power in the *mise-en-scène* by examining the physical positioning of differently raced, gendered, and classed bodies in the film. The chapter ended with descriptions of three manifestations of the Oriental Other in the cityscape – as human commodity in the Asiatic secondary characters, as commodified style in the image of the Orient performed by Zhora and the electronic geisha, and as the Model Minority in the plight of the

replicants who resemble the orientalized city in their liminal ontological and racial position between human and non-human, white and non-white.

Chapters Five and Six catapulted the reader into cyberpunk cinema of the late 1990s with its analyses of *The Matrix* and its representations of East Asian culture as oriental style. Chapter Five introduced *The Matrix* as a film that in many ways echoes the style and themes of *Blade Runner* but received a contrasting critical response, due in part to its successful incorporation of East Asian popular culture forms. It summarized the reception history of two such forms in the United States, Hong Kong action cinema and Japanese animation from the 1990s to the present, in order to provide a context for the analyses of these forms as oriental style in *The Matrix* in the last chapter.

Chapter Six linked the ideological function of oriental styles in *The Matrix* to shifts in racial attitudes since the early 1980s. It noted thematic continuities and difference between *Blade Runner* and *The Matrix* and made the argument that whereas *Blade Runner* in its representations of the principal replicants as Model Minorities ideologically upholds the notion of the white liberal human subject, *The Matrix* through its *mise-en-scène* and the explicitly and implicitly racialized bodies of its principal characters, questions the social construction of that subject at the visual, if not narrative, level.

I showed how this contrast appears in the film through readings of Keanu Reeves's Neo as a different kind of multiracial hero that is simultaneously raced and not-raced, human and machine. And I ended by comparing the multiracial subject represented by Neo and Olmos's Gaff in *Blade Runner.* I noted that while the two ambiguously raced characters are similar in functioning as embodiments of the orientalized *mise-en-scène* in their respective films, they differ in their narrative roles and their ability or inability to pass racially.

In some ways, the similarities and differences between the depictions of the ambiguously raced, Oriental Other in Gaff and Neo could be seen to reflect larger shifts in US attitudes toward racial difference generally and East Asian difference specifically from the early 1980s to the present. One could suggest for instance that the nightmare of the racial future as multicultural dystopia which is exemplified in Gaff and the *Blade Runner* city has given way to the dream of the future as imminent multiracial utopia in *The Matrix,* which is embodied in Neo's ability to move easily between differently racialized spaces via his assumption of a multicultural, humanist position. Of course this generalization is too easy and seamless, and can – and should – be troubled in the future by analyses of other cyberpunk films that were released during this period.

FUTURE STEPS

This brings me to future directions for my project. As it stands, the dissertation consists of in-depth case studies from two discrete periods. When I revise it into a book, I plan to flesh out and connect these periods by adding analyses of more Hollywood cyberpunk films from the early 1980s to the present. Included in this list will be low- and high-budget movies coeval with *Blade Runner* and *The Matrix* as well as "cyber" films from the mid 1990s. The book will follow a fairly straightforward historical trajectory. I will begin by tracing the origins of oriental imagery to cyberpunk films such as *Metropolis, Alphaville, 2001, A Clockwork Orange* (Kubrick 1971), *Westworld* (Crichton 1973), *Dune, Alien,* and others. This will lead to a more comprehensive look at cyberpunk cinema in the early to late 1980s with readings of films such as *Escape from New York, Liquid Sky, Tron* (Lisberger 1982), *Videodrome, Repo Man, Dreamscape, The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai, Aliens,* and others along with *Blade Runner.* I will consider the ways in which the delineation of technological and racial others in these

films speak to the growing visibility of East Asian cultures and peoples in the US in the 1980s – a visibility that to a large extent, stemmed from and was perpetuated by public discourse around the economic prowess of Japan during this period. This discourse fluctuated between fear and admiration; often it was tellingly ambivalent about the familiarization of the "foreign" presence of Japanese technological consumer goods and East Asians in the US.

Such ambivalence became even more pronounced in the US during the 1990s, a decade marked not only by increasing interest in Asian cinema, animation, and videogames by North American youth, but also the end of the Cold War; the growing cache of and emphasis on "multiculturalism" in education, business, the arts, and other domains; and the advent of the Internet which ushered in a more technological, futuristic aesthetic in all forms of media. Hollywood blockbusters became slicker, more spectacular, and more expensive even as independent cinema paradoxically became more visible in dominant culture. Filmmakers from both camps embraced the new technologies of digital filming and editing, incorporating the visual culture of the computer and the Internet with more traditional modes of cinematic production. In their representations of technological and racial others, films such as *Judge Dredd, Tank Girl, Total Recall, The Lawnmower Man, Demolition Man, Strange Days, Johnny Mnemonic, Hackers, The Fifth Element, Gattaca, Dark City,* and *Blade* show how cyberpunk cinema negotiated shifts in national attitudes toward technology, race, gender, and class that accompanied these developments.

The book will end with a look at the cyberpunk scene in Hollywood in the early twenty-first century, focusing on *The Matrix* and its sequels and ancillary products. Other films from this period that I will examine include *eXistenZ, The Thirteenth Floor* (Rusnak 1999), *Artificial Intelligence: AI, Blade 2,* and *Minority Report.* By examining the

representation of technology and race in these films, I will consider the ways in which cyberpunk cinema as a subgenre may be losing its social resonance and cultural appeal as its themes, narratives, and modes of production seem more and more to reflect a simulacral sense of reality.

Methodologically, this study was limited in its emphasis on the cultural and narrative contexts of the films over industrial contexts of production and reception. To that end in my revisions, I will address the latter contexts more fully, focusing particularly on increased co-productions between East Asian and US filmmakers and synergy between cinema and ancillary media forms such as television, the Internet, and videogames.

FINAL WORDS

In this dissertation I attempted to put into dialogue the intertextual systems of Orientalism and Hollywood cinema in order to look at the relationship between Self and Other, the West and the so-called Rest, less as a binary and more as a *dialectical process*. To do this, I looked at how under-theorized elements in the study of Orientalism such as fascination, complicity, and multilateral circuits of exchange played out in representations of racial and cultural difference in *Blade Runner* and *The Matrix*. My analyses juxtaposed theoretical models from Cultural Studies, Postcolonial Theory, and Critical Race Theory with industrial and political economy approaches to popular media in order to better understand the ideological contradictions and connections in the oriental imagery within these narratives.

My methodology, which gestures toward Social Science approaches even as it remains entrenched in the Humanities, brings together two broad areas of study that have not always had much contact in the academy – Asian American Studies and Film and

Media Studies. As the product of an interdisciplinary union, my dissertation joins a much larger conversation in which all of us in the Humanities and the Social Sciences are engaged at some level. That conversation pivots around the important and often subtle ways that cultural representations are *made to matter*. By this, I mean how we *use* the representations given us to understand ourselves and our relationships with others, to help create the various real and imagined spaces that we all share.

So much of who we eventually become can be traced to the stories that we have been told repeatedly – about the worlds that we are allowed and not allowed to inhabit in our fantasies, which in strange and uncanny ways resemble our realities. As the "dream factory," not only for the US but for an increasingly mediated planet linked through the narrative shorthand of style and image, Hollywood plays a significant role in shaping who we think we are and want to be. For this reason, it is important to take seriously the oriental styles that are becoming more and more visible in US popular culture generally and Hollywood's visions of the future specifically. Such styles erase certain histories of East Asian racial struggle in the US even as they celebrate the arrival of a new multicultural, multiracial order in which that history does not seem to have a place.

In *Race and Resistance* Viet Nguyen notes the clash between constructions of Asian American identity and community within and without the province of Asian American Studies, which continues to privilege the idealized resistant Asian American "bad subject" of 1960s and 1970s political struggles. He argues that in contrast, its counterpart, the figure of the "model minority," which reflects the class status and neoconservative political stance of many Asian Americans remains neglected in the scholarship. According to Nguyen, continued silence around this ideological split will result in an academic definition of Asian America which does not accurately reflect the

complex changes that characterize this community in the early twenty-first century (and I would add the US racial order at large):

> the inaccuracy that is inherent in the discourse of the bad subject prevents Asian American intellectuals from recognizing the ability of late capitalism to transform Asian American racial identity into a commodity and Asian America into a niche market for that commodity … the discourse of the bad subject is, in many ways, not prepared to address the possibility of changes in racial identity and perception that are antithetical to its own assumption (145, 170).

He goes on to note the fundamental paradox that underlies the visibility of Asian America in dominant culture thus:

> a definitive Asian American culture implies the transformation of Asian American from a racial group predicated upon the need for political defensiveness to an ethnic group predicated upon a successfully completed assimilation into American pluralism – a complete transformation, in other words, of the very nature of the Asian American politic (145, 170).

In this study I have tried to show how the production of oriental styles, a particular stylistic pattern in Hollywood cyberpunk cinema as well as US popular culture in general, reflects the contradictions in this transformation of Asian America from "bad subject" to "model minority," from a politicized race to a commodified ethnicity. Having reiterated the binaries that Nguyen posits in his book, I want to point out that they are complicated by sometimes not so evident crossings between bad subject and model minority, race and ethnicity. These crossings define the complex nature of Asian American identity and racial identity as a whole in the US at the present historical moment.

Given this, what will the future nation look like with regards to race, and what place will Asian America have in that picture? Will the future resemble the dystopia of Cynthia Kadohata's novel, *In the Heart of the Valley of Love* in which an explicitly racialized class war pits black and brown "have-nots" against white and yellow "haves?" Will it resemble the city in *Blade Runner* in which privileged white males find themselves dislocated in a suddenly foreign, predominantly East Asian urban "cesspool"? Will it resemble *The Matrix* sequels in which the leaders of Zion, the last human city, are mostly black and brown, the villains conservative white men (who are not even human), and the décor, music, action sequences, and secondary characters East and South Asian? Or will the future look like all and none of these visions, having gone the way of present day Los Angeles and New York City as many social scientists predict?

Bringing it back to oriental style, bodies, and cities outside LA and New York, I will end with two personal anecdotes culled from my experiences as a Korean American woman growing up and living primarily in the South and Southwest. In the first story, I am a ten year old on the school bus in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. One of the school children, an older black male student, is charged with taking a racial quota of how many students on the bus are white and how many are black. He comes to my name on the list and asks me what I am. Unsure how to answer, I remember that we buy our food at a place called the "Oriental Market" so without thinking, I blurt out "oriental." Everyone laughs, and the student proceeds to put a big "O" next to my name. I feel humiliated without quite knowing why.

In the second story, I am a twenty seven year old doing research at the primary library on campus. A white male student gets on the elevator with me. He gives me a huge, friendly smile and booms "Ni hao!" When I respond that I am not Chinese, he apologizes then tells me he is taking a Chinese language class because he loves martial

287

arts. Earlier that week, a white female friend has told me I am lucky to be an Asian woman because we are so "in," and a few weeks later, well-meaning white colleagues at a party assure me that I am "white" in their eyes. Again as with my experience on the school bus, I remain puzzled about how to respond to these comments that clearly have everything to do with my raced, sexed, and classed body. Like the oriental styles the ideological origins, functions, and effects of which I have been trying to grasp through this study, the experience of both having and being an Asian American body in the US is a highly charged and ambivalent one at the present moment. Like the development of oriental imagery in Hollywood since the 1980s, my personal experience reflects the complex ways in which the boundaries of race, gender, sexuality, and class categories continue to shift dramatically yet also imperceptibly in the US

I began my Introduction with a memory of the day that I became a US citizen. Two years later, I wonder in what ways I remain an alien, in what ways I have become a citizen, and in what ways I am and always will be neither. In the same way that I am not sure about the sort of lasting social, political, and cultural impact that oriental styles will have in the US, I don't quite know how to interpret the changes I have experienced in the past twenty years in others' responses to me as an Asian American woman. The current situation with oriental styles in US popular culture is eerily similar to my position as someone who is perceived as simultaneously raced and not-raced. On the one hand, there is growing acceptance in dominant culture of oriental style – as products to consume, perform, wear, and display. On the other hand, it is almost always an acceptance and a visibility based on the terms of that culture.

If East Asian bodies, cultures, and spaces are recognized and celebrated *only* as oriental style, what remains are simply empty images that are appropriated and consumed by everyone (including Asians and Asian Americans) and ultimately known by no one. In

an ideal world, oriental styles would be made to signify a different kind of future – one in which difference is not about consuming but rather trying to understand the Other, in which the Other is not perceived as a stylish product to enhance one's lifestyle but instead, as cultures, groups, and individuals with riveting stories and histories of their own beyond the constricting frames of their commodified image. Will Hollywood get us closer to that ideal world? Probably not -- but only time will tell.

Introduction

[i] This study focuses on East Asian imagery with roots (real or imagined) in primarily Japanese, Chinese, and Korean cultures. As Jigna Desai (2004), Jack Shaheen (2001) and others have described, South Asian and Middle Eastern influences have a long history in Hollywood, and this Asian imagery continues to play an important role in configurations of the Orient in US popular culture. An examination of the connections between how South Asian, Middle Eastern, and East Asian cultures and peoples are orientalized in US film would make an excellent study. Unfortunately, however, such a comparison lies beyond the scope of my dissertation.

[ii] For more details on these articles and on the origins of the Model Minority myth, see Robert Lee, *Orientals: Asian Americans in Popular Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1999) 149-151 and Viet Nguyen, *Race and Resistance: Literature and Politics in Asian America* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002) 146-147.

[iii] I am highly indebted to my friend, Doug Norman for this notion of the Oriental Other as prosthetic.

Chapter 1

[v] *Ballad of East and West* (New York: M.F. Mansfield and A.Wessels, 1899) 1.

[vi] "Turning Japanese," *New Clear Days* (Capt Oi/Mod Ska, 1980).

Chapter 2

[vii] "Cyberpunk in the Nineties," *Interzone* 48 (1991): 40.

[viii] See Hamid Naficy, *The Making of Exile Cultures: Iranian Television in Los Angeles* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); Hamid Naficy, ed., *Home, Exile, Homeland: Film, Media, and the Politics of Place* (New York: Routledge, 1999); Gina Marchetti, "*The Wedding Banquet:* Global Chinese Cinema and the Asian American Experience," *Countervisions: Asian American Film Criticism,* ed. Darrell Hamamoto and Sandra Liu (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 2000) 275-297; Julian Stringer, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora in Contemporary Hong Kong Cinema" *Countervisions: Asian American Film Criticism,* ed. Darrell Hamamoto and Sandra Liu (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 2000) 298-312; S. R. Melkote and D.J. Liu, "The Role of the Internet in Forging a Pluralistic Integration: A Study of Chinese Intellectuals in the United States" (*Gazette* 62 (2000): 495-504), E. Jung and C. Lee, "Social Construction of Cultural Identity: An Ethnographic Study of Korean-American Students" (forthcoming *Atlantic Journal*).

[ix] "Hacker" has several meanings, including "someone who plays golf poorly," "one who enthusiastically pursues a game or sport," and "one who works hard at boring tasks." Its meaning in this dissertation is the following: "One who is proficient at using or programming a computer; a computer buff. One who uses programming skills to gain illegal access to a computer network or file … The term 'hacker' also tends to connote membership in the global community defined by the net. For discussion of some of the basics of this culture, see the How To Become a Hacker (http://www.tuxedo.org/~esr.faqs.hacker-howto.html) FAQ" ("Hacker," Dictionary.com, 20 Feb. 2004 <http://dictionary.reference.com/search?q=hacker>).

[x] See Bruce Sterling, Preface, *Mirrorshades: The Cyberpunk Anthology* (New York: Arbor House, 1986) vii and Larry McCaffery, "Interview," *Storming the Reality Studio: A Casebook of Cyberpunk and Postmodern Science Fiction,* ed. McCaffery (Durham and London: Duke UP, 1991) 279.

[xi] See Jean Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge,* trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984); Fredric Jameson, *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern, 1983-1998* (London and New York: Verso, 1998); Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation,* trans. Sheila Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994).

[xii] For more definitions of cybernetics, see "Cybernetics: A Definition," Pangaro, Incorporated <http://www.pangaro.com/published/cyber-macmillan.html> and Francis Heylighen, "Cybernetics and Systems Theory," Principia Cybernetica Web, <http://pespmc1.vub.ac.be/CYBSYSTH.html>.

[xiii] Women have played an instrumental role in punk from its inception; however, punk usually has been associated with men in popular culture and popular music scholarship. For articles on women in punk, see Lucy O'Brien, "The Woman Punk Made Me," *Punk Rock: So What? The Cultural Legacy of Punk,* ed. Roger Sabin (London: Routledge, 1999) 186-198 and Joy Press, "Shouting out Loud: Women in UK Punk," *Trouble Girls: The Rolling Stone Book of Women in Rock,* ed. Barbara O'Dair (New York: Random House, 1997) 293-301.

[xiv] Herb Lightman and Richard Patterson, "Blade Runner: Production Design and Photography," *American Cinematographer* (1982) 715.

[xv] One notable exception is an article by Rick Instrell, "*Blade Runner*: The Economic Shaping of a Film," *Cinema and Fiction: New Modes of Adapting, 1950-1990*, ed. John Orr and Colin Nicholson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1992) 160-170.

[xvi] Google, 10 January 2003 <http://www.google.com>.

[xvii] Internet Movie Database, 10 January 2003 <http://www.imdb.com>.

[xviii] As common is the trope of the child-android becoming human: the title character in the folk tale, *Pinocchio,* Data in the television series, *Star Trek: The Next Generation,* and David in the film, *Artificial Intelligence: A.I.* are some prominent examples. In both cases, the feminized or infantilized Other is depicted as a non-normative innocent that becomes normative – i.e. loses innocence and is properly socialized – when its love for a human being (parent or lover) is reciprocated.

[xix] The unofficial history begins in 1974 when the book was optioned by Herb Jaffe Associates, and a script written by Jaffe's son, Robert. Nothing came of the venture, however. The company went on to make *Demon Seed* (Cammell 1977)*,* and the option on *Android* ran out after a few years (Sammon 23).

[xx] The term is derived from "replicating," the technical process of duplicating clones.

[xxi] Thanks to Lee Sparks for this information.

[xxii] *Star Wars* set the trend: the movie took over $500 million at the box office but generated much more in ancillary markets such as network and cable television, videos and DVDs, books, music, videogames, clothing and toys (Thomas Schatz, "The New Hollywood," *Film Theory Goes to the Movies,* ed. Jim Collins, Hilary Radner, and Ava Preacher Collins. New York and London: Routledge, 1993. 1-36.).

[xxiii] Thanks to John D. H. Downing for this very apt metaphor.

[xxiv] Also see Kobena Mercer, *Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies* (New York: Routledge, 1994) 171-220 and Suren Lalvani, "Consuming the Exotic Other," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 12 (1995): 263-286.

[xxv] For a general overview of criticism on *Blade Runner* see Judith Kerman, ed., *Retrofitting* Blade Runner: *Issues in Ridley Scott's* Blade Runner *and Philip K.Dick's* Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? (Bowling Green: Bowling Green UP, 1991) and Scott Bukatman, *Blade Runner* (London: British Film Institute, 1997). William Kolb provides a comprehensive annotated bibliography of popular criticism on the film in "Blade Runner: An Annotated Bibliography," *Retrofitting Blade Runner: Issues in Ridley Scott's* Blade Runner *and Philip K. Dick's* Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*?*, ed. Judith Kerman (Bowling Green: Bowling Green UP, 1991) 19-70. For analyses that use a cultural studies approach to examine urban space in the film see Douglas Kellner, Flo Leibowitz, and Michael Ryan, "*Blade Runner:* A Diagnostic Critique," *Jump Cut* 29 (1984): 6-8; David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, Ltd., 1989); and Mike Davis, "*Chinatown,* Part Two? The 'Internationalization' of Downtown Los Angeles," *New Left Review* 164 (1987): 65-86. For articles using a psychoanalytic approach to focus on the film's gender and sexual dynamics see Janet Bergstrom, "Androids and Androgyny," *Camera Obscura* 15 (1986): 37-64 and Kaja Silverman, "Back to the Future," *Camera Obscura* 27 (1991): 109-132. Finally for essays that focus on the film's form and aesthetics see Giuliana Bruno, "Ramble City: Postmodernism and *Blade Runner,*" *Alien Zone: Cultural Theory and Contemporary Science Fiction Cinema,* ed. Annette Kuhn *(*London and New York: Verso, 1990) 183-195; Marcus Doel and David Clarke, "From Ramble City to the Screening of the Eye," *The Cinematic City,* ed. Clarke (London and New York: Routledge, 1997) 141-167; and Susan Doll and Greg Faller, "*Blade Runner* and Genre: Film Noir and Science Fiction," *Literature/Film Quarterly* 14 (1986): 89-100.

Chapter 4

[xxvi] "How Much of Blade Runner Has Come True?" *BBC News*, 6 Feb. 2001 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/1154662.stm>.

[xxvii] Robert Reinhold, "City of Nightmares: A Terrible Chain of Events reveals Los Angeles Without its Makeup," *New York Times* 3 May 1992, LexisNexis Academic, 13 Aug. 2003 <http://80-web.lexis-nexis.com.content.lib.utexas.edu>.

[xxviii] "At the Cutting Edge of Blade Runner World," *The Guardian Online,* 30 Dec. 1999, LexisNexis Academic, 13 Aug. 2003 <http://80-web.lexis nexis.com.content.lib.utexas.edu>.

[xxix] The movie was to have been set in the year 2020, but the date was changed to 2019 to avoid unintended associations with the idea of 20/20 vision.

[xxx] The noir connection exists on a physical level, too. The film was shot in the Burbank Studios New York lot, where many classic Warner Bros. noir films also had been shot, including *The Maltese Falcon* (Huston 1941) and *The Big Sleep* (Hawks 1946).

[xxxi] Two exceptions to this rule are *The Last Seduction* (Dahl 1994) and *Bound* (Wachowskis 1996).

[xxxii] Huge thanks go out here to Jim Lee for making me think hard about this absence until I was forced to come up with a critical explanation.

[xxxiii] See for instance, Jacquelin Burgess and John Gold, ed., *Geography, the Media, and Popular Culture* (London and Sydney: Croom Helm, 1985); Stuart Aitken and Leo Zonn, ed., *Place, Power, Situation, and Spectacle: A Geography of Film* (London and Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1994); James Donald, *Imagining the Modern City* (London: The Athlone Press, 1999); and John Downey and Jim McGuigan, *Technocities* (London and Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1999).

[xxxiv] We never see the officer's face but assume he is Korean since the two words he utters are in Korean.

[xxxv] Thanks to Domino Perez for this insightful connection.

[xxxvi] Thanks to Lisa Nakamura for clarification on this point.

[xxxvii] See Denise Noe, "All About the Mata Hari," 15 Mar. 2003 <http://www.crimelibrary.com/spies/mata-hari>.

[xxxviii] "Loy's auburn hair photographed dark, and the combination of her striking features-sleepy blue eyes, prominent, upturned nose, pursed lips, and strong chin-gave her an exotic allure interpreted most frequently by filmmakers as being Oriental in nature ... Many of her early sound-film characterizations were Oriental or Mexican vamps, as in *The Black Watch, The Desert Song*, *The Bad Man*, *Under a Texas Moon, Rogue of the Rio Grande*, *The Mask of Fu Manchu* and *13 Women*" ("Myrna Loy," "Biography from Leonard Maltin's Movie Encyclopedia Internet," "Biography for Myrna Loy," Internet Movie Database, 10 Mar. 2002 <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0001485/bio>.

[xxxix] For more on Anna May Wong, see Cynthia W. Liu's article, "When Dragon Ladies Die, Do They Come Back as Butterflies?" *Countervisions: Asian American Film Criticism,* ed. Darrell Hamamoto and Sandra Liu (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 2000) 23-39.

xl Thanks to Lee Sparks for this observation.

[xli] Other white Hollywood actresses who performed in yellowface included Lana Turner, Dorothy Lamour, Loretta Young, Kathryn Hepburne, and Luise Rainer. *Slaying the Dragon* (Gee 1988).

Chapter 5

[xlii] Jeffrey Ressner, "Popular Metaphysics: In the Matrix, the Wachowskis Make a Hit Film out of the Bible, Cyberpunk and Higher Math," *Time,* 19 Apr. 1999, Expanded Academic ASAP, 22 Apr. 2003 <http://80-web6.infotrac.galegroup.com>.

[xliii] Many thanks to Henry Puente for this data.

[xliv] See for instance, Pat Mellencamp, "The Zen of Masculinity – Rituals of Heroism in *The Matrix*," *The End of Cinema as We Know It,* ed. Jon Lewis (New York: New York UP, 2001) 83-94; Peter Feng, "False and Double Consciousness: Race, Virtual Reality and the Assimilation of Hong Kong Action Cinema in

The Matrix," *Aliens R Us: The Other in Science Fiction Cinema,* ed. Ziauddin Sardar and Sean Cubitt (London: Pluto Press, 2002) 149-163; and William Irwin, ed. *The Matrix and Philosophy: Welcome to the Desert of the Real* (Chicago and La Salle: Open Court, 2002).

xlv Martial arts action sequences also began appearing on television in the 1990s, in shows marketed primarily to younger adult audiences such as *Xena: Warrior Princess* (1995-2001), *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003)*, Charmed* (1998-present), *Dark Angel* (2000-2002), and *Alias* (2001-present).

xlvi This trend is most glaringly apparent in comedy. For instance, consider the Fox Network's history of stereotyping Asians – from Tracy Ullman's caricatures of Asian women on *The Tracy Ullman Show* (1987-1990) to the Ms. Swan character on *Mad TV* (1995-present) to the recent show, *Banzai* (2003) which spoofs Japanese game shows.

xlvii According to Fredric Dannen and Barry Long, "in sheer numbers, Jackie Chan is surely the most recognized movie star on the planet. 'In Asia,' he [Chan] says, 'I am *Jurassic Park.* I am *E.T.*'" *Hong Kong Babylon: An Insider's Guide to the Hollywood of the East* (New York: Hyperion and Miramax Books, 1997) 3.

xlviii See Peter Biskind, *Easy Riders, Raging Bulls: How the Sex-Drugs-and Rock n'Roll Generation Saved Hollywood* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998) and Ed Guerrero, *Framing Blackness: The African American Image in Film* (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1993).

xlix According to Fredric Dannen, *The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles,* was produced by Golden Harvest. Founded in 1970 by Raymond Chow, Golden Harvest is one of the foremost film studios in Hong Kong, having represented the two biggest stars in the industry: Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan. (Dannen 3).

l For a good historical overview of *gung fu,* see "History of the Shaolin Temples," 1997-2003, Shaolin Gung Fu Institute, 30 Oct. 2003 <http://www.shaolin.com/page.asp?content_id=1007>.

li See Eric Yim, "An Introduction to Wuxia," 13 Feb. 2001, *Once Upon a Time in China,* 31 Oct. 2003 <http://www.heroic-cinema.com/eric/xia.html>.

lii Many thanks to Janet Staiger and Lee Sparks for this information.

liii Watkins cites as examples of black radicals' references to and use of Asian cultures John Coltrane's interest in non-western music, Martin Luther King's interest in Ghandi, and the Black Panthers' use of Frantz Fanon (Email to author, 1 Mar. 2004).

liv "Brown" also destabilizes the Black/white racial binary as has been pointed out by scholars in Latino Studies. See in particular Gloria Anzaldua's *Borderlands: La Frontera* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1999); Jose David Saldivar's *Border Matters: Remapping American Cultural Studies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); and Antonia Dardar and Rodolfo Torres's *Latino Studies Reader: Culture, Economy, and Society* (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 1998).

lv The significance of *CTHD*'s success does not lie so much in that it was a Chinese film marketed toward an American audience since Fifth Generation directors' work already had been targeted to the US arthouse audience. Rather the surprise came from its ability to cross over into the mainstream American audience. Echoing the box office success of Jackie Chan and John Woo's vehicles, the film exemplifies the simultaneous blurring of two binaries: first, that of the independent art film and the commercial blockbuster movie; second, that of the domestic film and the foreign film.

lvi For more on Japanese theater, see Benito Ortolani, *The Japanese Theatre* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1995). For a gorgeous and informative website on *Ukiyo-E,* see "The Floating World of Ukiyo-E: Shadows, Dreams, and Substance," Exhibition Notes, 23 June 2003, Library of Congress, 1 Nov. 2003 <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/ukiyo-e>.

lvii Political and economic factors figured in these two East Asian emigrations. In the case of Hong Kong, many emigrants left due to anxiety over the future of the country after the handover to mainland China in 1997. In the case of Japan, youth immigrated to the US, faced with dismal job prospects in the economic recession

lviii See Annalee Newitz, "Anime Otaku: Japanese Animation Fans Outside Japan," *Bad Subjects* 13 (1994): 1-12; Susan Napier, *Anime from* Akira *to* Princess Mononoke (New York: Palgrave, 2001) 239-256; and Hills, Matt, "Transnational *Otaku*: Japanese Representations of Fandom and Representations of Japan in Anime/Manga Fan Cultures." Media in Transition2 International Conference, Boston, MA, 11 May 2002, MIT2: Globalization and Convergence, 15 Jan. 2003 <http://cms.mit.edu/conf/mit2/Papers.html>.

[lix] Pornographic *anime* is another popular subgenre, which my work does not cover. For an analyses of *anime* porn, see Susan Pointon, "Transcultural Orgasm as Apocalypse: *Urotsukidoji: The Legend of the Overfiend,*" *Wide Angle* 19.3 (1997): 41-63 and Napier 63-83.

Chapter Six

[lx] "Orienting Orientalism, or How to Map Cyberspace," *Asian America.Net: Ethnicity, Nationalism, and Cyberspace,* ed. Rachel Lee and Sau-ling Cynthia Wong (New York and London: Routledge, 2003) 16.
[lxi] "Cyberpunk and Neuromanticism," *Storming the Reality Studio: A Casebook of Cyberpunk and Postmodern Science Fiction,* ed. Larry McCaffery (Durham and London: Duke UP, 1991) 185.
[lxii] The short story is "We Can Remember it For You Wholesale" in Philip Dick, *Collected Stories of Philip K. Dick: We Can Remember it for You Wholesale* (New York: Citadel Trade, 1990).
[lxiii] Many thanks to Jennifer Rodgers for this reference.
[lxiv] *What is Cinema,* tr. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967); *Hollywood: The Dream Factory* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1950).
[lxv] Romantic relations between the historical Pocahontas and Smith were highly unlikely given that the former was only ten years old when and if she "saved" the latter. The rescue story itself is suspect since Smith publicized it only after Pocahontas became famous in England as a representative of the Virginia colony and its chief export, tobacco. She was forced to assume this role by her husband, John Rolfe, a prominent tobacco merchant who married Pocahontas after Jamestown colonists kidnapped her to extract ransom from her father, Chief Powhatan. ("Pocahontas Myth," Powhatan Renape Nation, Rankokus Indian Reservation, 10 Jan. 2004
<http://www.powhatan.org/pocc.html>.)
[lxvi] A similar pattern can be seen in perceptions of Jewish Germans and Austrians in the imaginary of the Judeophobes as John Downing has noted (Email to the author, 27 Jan. 2004).
[lxvii] "Biography for Keanu Reeves," Internet Movie Database, December 28, 2003.
[lxviii] The film was based on the 1927 Jerome Kern-Oscar Hammerstein musical, which was based on Edna Ferber's novel *Showboat.*
[lxix] The film was based on Oscar Hammerstein's 1943 stage adaptation of Bizet's opera, *Carmen.*
[lxx] The fact that the Asian identity takes the second position in these semantic combinations reflects the continued marginalization of Asian Americans in the US racial imagination.
[lxxi] In 1967 the US Supreme Court struck down laws against interracial marriage in *Loving v. Virginia.*
[lxxii] Diesel is half black and half white. In his autobiographical short film, "Multi-Facial," which was screened at Cannes and sparked his Hollywood career by catching the eye of Steven Spielberg, Diesel shows the experiences of a biracial actor whose image defies racial categories. Johnson, a former football player turned wrestling star, has Anglo, Asian (Samoan), and African American roots ("Biography for The Rock," Internet Movie Database, 30 Dec. 2003 <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0425005/bio>).
[lxxiii] Cain is Japanese and Anglo-American. Woods is African American and Thai. Alba is French, Danish, Mexican, American Indian, and Spanish. Kreuk is Dutch and Chinese (See biographies of actors on Imdb.com).
[lxxiv] "In the 1980s MTV consistently ran permanent dance parties where post-racial seemed the order of the day" (Downing, Email to author, 27 Jan 2004). We see the evolution of such parties in the Zion dance sequence in *The Matrix: Reloaded.*
[lxxv] Michael Lind, *The Next American Nation: The New Nationalism and the Fourth American Revolution* (NY: Free Press, 1995); Leon Wynter, *American Skin: Pop Culture, Big Business, and the End of White America* (NY: Crown, 2002); Paul Gilroy, *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Color Line* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).
[lxxvi] John Downing notes the absence of critical scholarship on the responses of Black viewers, especially the large numbers of stably employed Black working class families that fit neither the categories of ghetto-dwellers and minor bourgeoisie; he also stresses that it is important to celebrate the almost miraculous achievement of the show in eliciting positive response from so many segments of the television-viewing population within the constraints of the US commercial television industry (Email to author, 27 Jan. 2004).

[lxxvii] On race politics in Brazil see Stanley R. Bailey, "The Race Construct and Public Opinion: Understanding Brazilian Race Relations," *The American Journal of Sociology* 108 (September 2002): 406-441 and "Out of Eden: Race in Brazil" *The Economist* 5 July 2003: 32. The most popular area of correction continues to be the eye (addition of the eyelid fold to make the eye look larger and more Western) followed by the nose (raising the bridge for a more Western profile), and cheeks (shaving Asiatic high cheekbones). See T. Kim, "Neo-Confucian Body Techniques: Women's Bodies in Korea's Consumer Society," *Body & Society,* 9 (2003): 97-114; Chisu Ko, "Kids Gotta Have It, Too: Peer Pressure Plastics," *Time International,* 5 Aug. 2002: 53; and "Japan Goes Under the Knife," *Business Asia,* September 2002: 4.

[lxxviii] Here one must note the presence of *Enter the Matrix* (2003), the videogame based on the *Matrix* films. A comparative analysis between the films and the game undoubtedly would prove useful in further investigations on this point. Unfortunately, that analysis is beyond the scope of this current study.

[lxxix] On April 5, 2003 the Supreme Court ruled that race could be used as a criterion in college admissions ("Split Ruling on Affirmative Action: High Court Rules on Race as Factor in University Admissions," 5 Apr. 2003, NPR, 14 Feb. 2003 <http://www.npr.org/news/specials/michigan/>).

[lxxx] According to John Downing, there was a similar public/private discursive divide regarding Jews, Central Asians, and Transcaucasus people in the former USSR.

[lxxxi] Other young American would-be heroes, most notably Luke Skywalker, also experience periods of self doubt when they are tested and found wanting. The difference between Skywalker and Neo again lies in their performances of masculinity. Skywalker – much like the white teen neophyte who appears in the *Matrix* sequels – is overeager to prove himself and very much *wants* to be a hero, whereas Neo continually has mixed feelings about his destiny.

[lxxxii] The script compares the group to spectators watching the videogame *Mortal Kombat* (Larry and Andy Wachowski, "*The Matrix*: Shooting Script, August 12, 1998," *The Art of the Matrix* (New York: Newmarket Productions, 2000) 319).

Filmography

2001: A Space Odyssey (Stanley Kubrick, MGM, 1968)
28 Days Later (Danny Boyle, Canal, 2002)

Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the 8th Dimension (W. D. Richter, 20th Century
      Fox, 1984)
Alphaville (Jean-Luc Godard, Athos Films, 1965)
Akira (Katsuhiro Ôtomo, Tokyo Movie Shinsha Co. Ltd., 1988)
Aladdin (Ron Clements and John Musker, Walt Disney Pictures, 1992)
Artificial Intelligence: AI (Steven Spielberg, Warner Bros., 2001)
Alien (Ridley Scott, 20th Century Fox, 1979)
Apocalypse Now (Francis Ford Coppola, Zoetrope Studios, 1979)

The Bad Sleep Well (Akira Kurosawa, Toho Company Ltd., 1960)
Ben-Hur (William Wyler, MGM, 1959)
Better Luck Tomorrow (Justin Lin, MTV Films, 2002)
The Big Sleep (Howard Hawks, Warner Bros., 1946)
Big Trouble in Little China (John Carpenter, 20th Century Fox, 1986)
Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure (Stephen Herek, Interscope Communications, 1989)
The Birth of a Nation (D. W. Griffith, David W. Griffith Corp., 1915)
The Bitter Tea of General Yen (Frank Capra, Columbia Pictures Corporation, 1933)
Black Belt Jones (Robert Clouse, Sequoin Films, 1974)
Black Rain (Ridley Scott, Paramount Pictures, 1989)
Blade (Stephen Norrington, New Line Cinema, 1998)
Blade II (Guillermo del Toro, New Line Cinema, 2002)
Blade Runner (Ridley Scott, the Ladd Company, 1982)
Body Heat (Lawrence Kasdan, The Ladd Company, 1981)
Bonnie and Clyde (Arthur Penn, Warner Brothers/Seven Arts, 1967)
Bound (Larry and Andy Wachowski, Dino De Laurentiis Productions, 1996)
Boyz n the Hood (John Singleton, Columbia Pictures Corporation, 1991)
Branded to Kill (Seijun Suzuki, Nikkatsu Corporation, 1967)
The Bride with White Hair (Ronnie Yu, Mandarin Films Co. Ltd., 1993)
Brazil (Terry Gilliam, Universal Pictures, 1985)
Breakfast at Tiffany's (Blake Edwards, Paramount Pictures, 1961)
Bridge to the Sun (Etienne Périer, MGM, 1961)
Broken Arrow (John Woo, 20th Century Fox, 1996)
Broken Blossoms (D. W.Griffith, D. W. Griffith Productions, 1919)
Bulletproof Monk (Paul Hunter, Lakeshore Entertainment, 2003)

Cape Fear (Martin Scorcese, Universal Pictures, 1991)
Carmen Jones (Otto Preminger, 20th Century Fox, 1954)
Casablanca (Michael Curtiz, Warner Bros., 1942)

Charlie's Angels (McG, Columbia Pictures, 2000)
Charlie's Angels: Full Throttle (McG , Columbia Pictures Corporation, 2003)
The Cheat (Cecil B. De Mille, Jesse L. Lasky Feature Play Company, 1915)
China Girl (Abel Ferrara, Vestron Pictures, 1987)
Chinatown (Roman Polanski, Paramount Pictures, 1972)
Chungking Express (Kar Wai Wong, Jet Tone Production Company, 1994)
Citizen Kane (Orson Welles, RKO Radio Pictures Inc., 1941)
Cleopatra Jones and the Casino of Gold (Charles Bail, Warner Bros., 1975)
A Clockwork Orange (Stanley Kubrick, Warner Bros., 1971)
Close Encounters of the Third Kind (Steven Spielberg, Columbia Pictures, 1977)
Cradle 2 the Grave (Andrzej Bartkowiak, Silver Pictures, 2003)
The Crimson Kimono (Samuel Fuller, Columbia Pictures Corporation, 1959)
Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon (Ang Lee, Sony Pictures Classics, 2000)

Dark City (Alex Proyas, New Line Cinema, 1998)
Deep Thrust – the Hand of Death (Feng Huang, Golden Harvest Company Ltd., 1972)
The Deer Hunter (Michael Cimino, Universal Pictures, 1978)
Demolition Man (Marco Brambilla, Warner Bros., 1993)
Die Another Day (Lee Tamahori, MGM, 2002)
Disclosure (Barry Levinson, Warner Bros., 1994)
Double Indemnity (Billy Wilder, Paramount Pictures, 1944)
Dragon Seed (Harold Bucquet and Jack Conway, MGM, 1944)
Dreamscape (Joseph Ruben, Bella Productions, 1984)
The Duellists (Ridley Scott, Scott Free Productions, 1977)
Dune (David Lynch, Universal Pictures, 1984)

Easy Rider (Dennis Hopper, Columbia Pictures Corporation, 1969)
Equilibrium (Kurt Wimmer, Dimension Films, 2002)
Escape from New York (John Carpenter, AVCO Embassy Pictures, 1981)
E.T.: The Extraterrestrial (Steven Spielberg, Universal Pictures, 1982)
eXistenZ (David Cronenberg, Alliance Atlantis Communications, 1999)
The Exorcist (William Friedkin, Warner Bros., 1973)

Face/Off (John Woo, Paramount Pictures, 1997)
Farewell My Concubine (Kaige Chen, Beijing Film Studio, 1993)
The Fast and the Furious (Rob Cohen, Original Film, 2001)
The Fifth Element (Luc Besson, Gaumont, 1997)
First Blood (Ted Kotcheff, Carolco Pictures Inc., 1982)
Fists of Fury (Wei Lo, Golden Harvest Company Ltd., 1971)
Five Fingers of Death (Chang Ho Cheng, Shaw Brothers, 1973)
Flower Drum Song (Henry Koster, Universal International Pictures, 1961)
Freejack (Geoff Murphy, Morgan Creek Productions, 1992)
Full Metal Jacket (Stanley Kubrick, Warner Bros., 1987)

Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai (Jim Jarmusch, JVC Entertainment, 1999)

Ghost in the Shell (Mamoru Oshii, Bandai Visual Co. Ltd., 1995)
The Godfather (Francis Ford Coppola, Paramount Pictures, 1972)
God's Stepchildren (Oscar Micheux, Micheaux Pictures Corporation, 1937)
The Good Earth (Sidney Franklin and Victor Fleming, MGM, 1937)
Goonies (Richard Donner, Warner Bros., 1985)
The Graduate (Mike Nichols, Embassy Pictures Corporation, 1967)
Gung Ho (Ron Howard, Paramount Pictures, 1986)

Hackers (Iain Softley, United Artists, 1995)
High and Low (Akira Kurosawa, Toho Company Ltd., 1962)
The Hulk (Ang Lee, Universal Pictures, 2003)

The Ice Storm (Ang Lee, Good Machine, 1997)
I'm the One that I Want (Lionel Coleman, Cho Taussig Productions, 2000)
Imitation of Life (John Stahl, Universal Pictures, 1934; Douglas Sirk, Universal
        International Pictures, 1959)
Impostor (Gary Fleder, Dimension Films, 2002)
Invincible Asia 2 (Siu-Tung Ching and Raymond Lee, Golden Harvest Company, 1992)

Japanese War Bride (King Vidor, 20th Century Fox, 1952)
Jaws (Steven Spielberg, Universal Pictures, 1975)
Johnny Mnemonic (Robert Longo, TriStar Pictures, 1995)
The Joy Luck Club (Wayne Wang, Hollywood Pictures, 1993)
Judge Dredd (Danny Cannon, Hollywood Pictures, 1995)
Jurassic Park (Steven Spielberg, Universal Pictures, 1993)
Just Imagine (David Butler, Fox Film Corporation, 1930)

Karate Kid (John Avildsen, Columbia Pictures Corporation, 1984)
Karate Kid (John Avildsen, Columbia Pictures Corporation, 1986)
Karate Kid (John Avildsen, Columbia Pictures Corporation, 1989)
Kill Bill: Volume I (Quentin Tarantino, Miramax Films, 2003)

L.A. Confidential (Curtis Hanson, Warner Bros., 1997)
The Lady from Shanghai (Orson Welles, Columbia Pictures Corporation, 1947)
The Lawnmower Man (Brett Leonard, New Line Cinema, 1992)
Lara Croft: Tomb Raider (Simon West, Paramount Pictures, 2001)
The Last Samurai (Edward Zwick, Warner Bros., 2003)
The Last Seduction (John Dahl, Incorporated Television Company, 1994)
The Lion King (Roger Allers and Rob Minkoff, Walt Disney Pictures, 1994)
Liquid Sky (Slava Tsukerman, Z Films, 1982)
Little Buddha (Bernardo Bertolucci, CiBy 2000, 1993)
Logan's Run (Michael Anderson, MGM, 1976)
Love is a Many-Splendored Thing (Henry King, 20th Century Fox, 1955)
Lost in Translation (Sofia Coppola, American Zoetrope, 2003)

Mad Max (George Miller, Kennedy Miller Productions, 1979)
Mad Max 2: The Road Warrior (George Miller, Kennedy Miller Productions, 1985)
The Maltese Falcon (John Huston, Warner Bros., 1941)
The Manchurian Candidate (John Frankenheimer, M.C. Productions, 1962)
MASH (Robert Altman, 20th Century Fox, 1970)
The Mask of Fu Manchu (Charles Brabin and Charles Vidor, MGM, 1932)
The Matrix (Larry and Andy Wachowski, Village Roadshow Pictures, 1999)
The Matrix: Reloaded (Larry and Andy Wachowski, Warner Bros., 2003)
The Matrix: Revolutions (Larry and Andy Wachowski, Warner Bros., 2003)
Memento (Christopher Nolan, Newmarket Capital Group LLC, 2000)
Metropolis (Fritz Lang, Universum Film A.G., 1927)
Metropolis (Rintaro, Bandai Visual Co. Ltd., 2001)
Minority Report (Steven Spielberg, 20th Century Fox, 2000)
Mission Impossible II (John Woo, Paramount Pictures, 2000)
Moulin Rouge! (Baz Luhrmann, Bazmark Films, 2001)
Mulan (Tony Bancroft and Barry Cook, Walt Disney Pictures, 1998)
Multi-Facial (Vin Diesel, 1994)
My Own Private Idaho (Gus Van Sant, New Line Cinema, 1991)

The Net (Irvin Winkler, Columbia Pictures, 1995)

Once Upon a Time in China (Hark Tsui, Film Workshop Ltd., 1991)
The One (James Wong, Revolution Studios, 2001)

Paycheck (John Woo, Paramount Pictures, 2004)
Platoon (Oliver Stone, Herndale Film Corporation, 1986)
Pinky (Elia Kazan and John Ford, 20th Century Fox, 1949)
Pocahontas (Mike Gabriel and Eric Goldberg, Walt Disney Pictures, 1995)
Princess Mononoke (Hayao Miyazaki, Studio Ghibli, 1997)
Pulp Fiction (Quentin Tarantino, Miramax, 1994)
Purple Rain (Albert Magnoli, Warner Bros., 1984)

Raiders of the Lost Ark (Steven Spielberg, Paramount Pictures, 1981)
Raise the Red Lantern (Yimou Zhang, Century Communications, 1991)
Rambo: First Blood Part II (George Costmatos, Carolco Entertainment, 1985)
Repo Man (Alex Cox, Edge City, 1984)
Resident Evil (Paul Anderson, Constantin Film Produktion GmbH, 2002)
Returner (Takashi Yamazaki, Toho, 2002)
Rising Sun (Philip Kaufman, 20th Century Fox, 1993)
River's Edge (Tim Hunter, Hemdale Film Corporation, 1986)
RoboCop (Paul Verhoeven, Orion Pictures, 1987)
Robocop 2 (Irvin Kershner, Orion Pictures, 1990)
Robocop 3 (Fred Dekker, Orion Pictures, 1993)
Romeo Must Die (Andrzej Bartkowiak, Warner Bros., 2000)
Ronin (John Frankenheimer, MGM, 1998)

Running Man (Paul Glaser, TAFT Entertainment Pictures, 1987)
Rush Hour (Brett Ratner, New Line Cinema, 1998)
Rush Hour 2 (Brett Ratner, New Line Cinema, 2001)
Rushmore (Wes Anderson, Touchstone Pictures, 1998)

Sayonara (Joshua Logan, Pennebaker Productions, 1957)
Scanners (David Cronenberg, Canadian Film Development Corporation, 1981)
The Scorpion King (Chuck Russell, Universal Pictures, 2002)
Screamers (Christian Duguay, Allegro Films, 1995)
The Searchers (John Ford, Warner Bros., 1956)
Sense and Sensibility (Ang Lee, Columbia Pictures Corporation, 1995)
Shampoo (Hal Ashby, Columbia Pictures Corporation, 1976)
Shanghai Express (Joseph von Sternberg, Paramount Publix Corporation, 1932)
The Shanghai Gesture (Joseph von Sternberg. Arnold Pressberger Films, 1940)
Shanghai Knights (David Dobkin, Touchstone Pictures, 2003)
Shanghai Noon (Tom Dey, Touchstone Pictures, 2000)
The Shining (Stanley Kubrick, Warner Bros., 1980)
Short Circuit (John Badham, PSO, 1986)
Showboat (Harry Pollard, Universal Pictures, 1929; James Whale, Universal Pictures, 1936; George Sidney, MGM, 1951)
Shrek (Andrew Adamson and Vicky Jenson, DreamWorks SKG, 2001)
Signs (M. Night Shyamalan, Touchstone Pictures, 2002)
The Sixth Sense (M. Night Shyamalan, Spyglass Entertainment, 1999)
Solaris (Andrei Tarkovsky, Mosfilm, 1972)*,
The Sound of Music (Robert Wise, 20th Century Fox, 1965)
Speed (Jan de Bont, 20th Century Fox, 1994)
Spirited Away (Hayao Miyazaki, Studio Ghibli, 2002)
Stand and Deliver (Ramón Menéndez, Warner Bros., 1988)
Star Wars (George Lucas, Lucasfilm Ltd., 1977)
Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace (George Lucas, 20th Century Fox, 1999)
Star Wars Episode II: Attack of the Clones (George Lucas, Lucasfilm Ltd., 2002)
Strange Days (Kathryn Bigelow, Lightstorm Entertainment, 1995)
The Stepford Wives (Bryan Forbes, Palomar Pictures, 1975)
Superfly (Gordon Parks, Jr., Warner Bros., 1972)

Tank Girl (Rachel Talalay, Trilogy Entertainment Group, 1995)
Taxi Driver (Martin Scorsese, Columbia Pictures Corporation, 1976)
Teahouse of the August Moon (Daniel Mann, MGM, 1956)
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (Steve Barron, New Line Cinema, 1990)
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles II (Michael Pressman, New Line Cinema, 1991)
The Terminator (James Cameron, Herndale Film Corporation, 1984)
Terminator 2: Judgment Day (James Cameron, Carolco Pictures, 1991)
The Thief of Baghdad (Raoul Walsh, Douglas Fairbanks Pictures, 1924)
Thoroughly Modern Millie (George Roy Hill, Universal Pictures, 1967)
Three the Hard Way (Gordon Parks, Jr., Allied Artists Pictures Corporation, 1974)

A Time to Kill (Joel Schumacher, Warner Bros., 1996)
Titanic (James Cameron, Paramount Pictures, 1997)
Tokyo Drifter (Seijun Suzuki, Nikkatsu Corporation, 1961)
Total Recall (Paul Verhoeven, TriStar Pictures, 1990)
The Transporter (Louis Leterrier and Corey Yuen, TF1 Films Productions, 2002)
Tron (Steven Lisberger, Walt Disney Pictures, 1982)
The Truman Show (Peter Weir, Paramount, 1998)
Twelve Monkeys (Terry Gilliam, Universal Pictures, 1995)

Videodrome (David Cronenberg, Universal Pictures, 1983)
Virtuosity (Brett Leonard, Paramount Pictures, 1995)
Volcano High (Tae-gyun Kim, Sidus, 2001)

The Wedding Banquet (Ang Lee, Good Machine, 1993)
Westworld (Michael Crichton, MGM, 1973)
The Wicked City (Tai Kit Mak, Golden Princess Film Production Limited, 1992)
Windtalkers (John Woo, MGM, 2002)
The World of Suzie Wong (Richard Quine, Worldfilm, 1960)

X2 (Bryan Singer, 20th Century Fox, 2003)
XXX (Rob Cohen, Revolution Studios, 2002)

Year of the Dragon (Michael Cimino, MGM, 1985)
Youngblood (Peter Markle, United Artists, 1986)

Zu: The Warriors of Magic Mountain (Hark Tsui, 1983)

Television Shows

Alias (ABC, 2001-present)
All-American Girl (ABC, 1994)
Ally McBeal (FOX, 1997-2002)
Amos 'n Andy (CBS, 1951-1953)
Astro Boy (1963-1966)
Banzai (FOX, 2003)
Barney Miller (ABC, 1975-1982)
Battle of the Planets (1972/1978)
The Bernie Mac Show (FOX, 2001-present)
Beulah (ABC, 1950-1953)
Bonanza (NBC, 1959-1973)
Buffy the Vampire Slayer (WB and UPN, 1997-2003)
Charmed (WB, 1998-present)
The Cosby Show (NBC, 1984-1992)
Dark Angel (FOX, 2000-2002)

Gilmore Girls (WB, 2000-present)
The Goldbergs (CBS, 1949-1954)
Happy Days (ABC, 1974-1984)
Hong Kong Phooey (ABC, 1974-1975)
I Remember Mama (RKO, 1948)
I Spy (NBC, 1965-1968)
Introducing Dorothy Dandridge (Martha Coolidge, HBO, 1999)
Jackie Chan Adventures (WB, 2000-present)
Julia (1968-1971)
Kung Fu (ABC, 1972)
Life with Luigi (1952)
Mad TV (FOX, 1995-present)
The Mighty Morphin Power Rangers (Fox Kids Network, 1993-1996)
The Nat King Cole Show (NBC, 1956)
Pokemon (Kids WB, 1998 to present)
The Power Puff Girls (Cartoon Network, 1998-present)
Roots (Marvin Chomsky, ABC, 1977)
Samurai Jack (Cartoon Network, 2001)
Sidekicks (1986-1987)
The Simpsons (FOX, 1989-present)
South Park (Comedy Central, 1997-present)
Speed Racer (1967-1968)
The Tracy Ullman Show (FOX, 1987-1990)
Transformers (1984-1987)
Voltron (1984)
Xena: Warrior Princess (WB, 1995-2001)
Yu-Gi-Oh (Kids WB, 1998 to present)

Videos

The Animatrix (Peter Chung, Andy Jones, et. al., 2003)
Bubblegum Crash (Hiroyuki Fukushima and Hiroshi Ishiodori, 1991)
Guyver (Hiroshi Watanabe, 1986)

Documentaries

The Art of Action: Martial Arts in the Movies (Starz Encore Entertainment, 2003)
Color Adjustment (Marlon Riggs, 1991)
The Day After Trinity (Jon Else, KTEH San Jose, 1980)
On the Edge of Blade Runner (Andrew Abbott, Channel 4 Television Corporation, 2000)
Slaying the Dragon (Deborah Gee, 1988)

References

Abelmann, Nancy, and John Lie. *Blue Dreams: Korean Americans and the Los Angeles Riots.* Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1995.

Aitken, Stuart, and Leo Zonn, ed., *Place, Power, Situation, and Spectacle: A Geography of Film.* London and Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1994.

Allison, Anne "A Challenge to Hollywood?: Japanese Character Goods Hit the US." *Japanese Studies* 20 (2000):67-88.

Altman, Rick. "A Semantic/Syntactic Approach to Film Genre." *Film Genre Reader II.* Ed. Barry Keith Grant. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995. 26-40.

Anzaldua, Gloria. *Borderlands: La Frontera.* San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1999.

"At the Cutting Edge of Blade Runner World," *The Guardian Online,* 30 Dec. 1999, LexisNexis Academic, 13 Aug. 2003 <http://80-web.lexis nexis.com.content.lib.utexas.edu>.

Bailey, Stanley R. "The Race Construct and Public Opinion: Understanding Brazilian Race Relations." *The American Journal of Sociology* 108 (September 2002): 406 441.

Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulacra and Simulation.* Trans. Sheila Glaser. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994.

Bazin, Andre. *What is Cinema.* Trans. Hugh Gray. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967.

Beltrán, Mary. *Bronze Seduction: The Shaping of Latina Stardom and Hollywood Film and Star Publicity.* Diss. The University of Texas at Austin, 2002. Ann Arbor: UMI, 2002.

Bergstrom, Janet. "Androids and Androgyny." *Camera Obscura* 15 (1986): 37-64.

Bleecker, Julian. "Urban Crisis: Past, Present, and Virtual." *Socialist Review* 24 (1995): 189-221.

Benson, Sheila. "Los Angeles in a Future Tense." *Los Angeles Times.* 25 June 1982:
    Section VI, 1, 4. "*Blade Runner*: An Annotated Bibliography" by William
    M. Kolb. *Retrofitting* Blade Runner: *Issues in Ridley Scott's* Blade Runner *and
    Philip K.Dick's* Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? Ed. Judith Kerman.
    Bowling Green: Bowling Green UP, 1991. 21.

Berg, Charles Ramírez. *Latino Images in Film: Stereotypes, Subversion, and Resistance.*
    Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002.

Berlant, Lauren. *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and
    Citizenship.* Durham: Duke UP, 1997.

Bernstein, Matthew, and Gaylyn Studlar, ed. *Visions of the East: Orientalism in Film.*
    New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1997.

Bhabha, Homi. *The Location of Culture.* London and New York: Routledge, 1994.

"Biography for The Rock." Internet Movie Database. 30 Dec. 2003
    <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0425005/bio>.

Biskind, Peter. *Easy Riders, Raging Bulls: How the Sex-Drugs-and Rock n'Roll
    Generation Saved Hollywood.* New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998.

Rev. of *Blade Runner,* by Michael Dempsey. *Film Quarterly* 36 (1983-1984): 33-38.

Bloom, David. "Inside Move: Dick Still Beaming." *Variety.* 9 June 2002. Variety.com.
    12 December 2002<http://www.variety.com/index.asp?layout=advanced_search>.

Borges, Jorge. "On Exactitude in Science." *The Maker. Jorge Luis Borges: Collected
    Fictions.* Tr. Andrew Hurley. New York: Penguin Books, 1998. 325.

Bruce, Franklin. "Future Imperfect." *American Film* 8 (1983): 46-49, 75-76. "*Blade
    Runner*: An Annotated Bibliography" by William M. Kolb. *Retrofitting* Blade
    Runner: *Issues in Ridley Scott's* Blade Runner *and Philip K.Dick's* Do Androids
    Dream of Electric Sheep? Ed. Judith Kerman. Bowling Green: Bowling Green
    UP, 1991. 32.

Bruno, Giuliana. "Ramble City: Postmodernism and *Blade Runner.*" *Alien Zone:
    Cultural Theory and Contemporary Science Fiction Cinema.* Ed. Annette Kuhn.
    London and New York: Verso, 1990. 183-195.

Bunnell, Charlene. "The Gothic: A Literary Genre's Transition to Film." *Planks of
    Reason: Essays on the Horror Film.* Ed. Barry Grant. Metuchen and London: The
    Scarecrow Press, 1984. 79-100.

Bukatman, Scott. *Terminal Identity: The Virtual Subject in Postmodern Science Fiction.* Durham and London: Duke UP, 1993.

_____. *Blade Runner.* London: British Film Institute, 1997.

_____. "Zooming Out: The End of Offscreen Space." *The New American Cinema.* Ed. Jon Lewis. Durham: Duke UP, 1998. 248-274.

Burgess, Jacquelin, and John Gold, ed., *Geography, the Media, and Popular Culture* London and Sydney: Croom Helm, 1985.

Bzdek, Vincent. "Philip K. Dick's Future is Now: Long after the Sci-Fi Writer's Death, Hollywood Embraces his Dark World." *The Washington Post.* 28 July 2002. LexisNexis Academic. 26 January 2003 <http://80-web.lexis-nexis.com.content.lib.utexas.edu.>.

Castoriadis, Cornelius. "Reflections on Racism." *Thesis Eleven* 32 (1992): 1-12.

"Census Bureau Facts for Features." 5 May 2000. U.S. Census Bureau. 23 Nov. 2003 <http://www.census.gov/Press Release/www/2000/cb00ff05.html>.

Chan, Sucheng. *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History.* New York: Twayne Publishers, 1991.

"Charlie's Angels' Shocker: Lucy Liu's Dad is White!" 11 Feb. 2003. Media Action Network for Asian Americans. 1 Feb. 2004 <http://www.manaa.org/>.

Cheng, Anne. *The Melancholy of Race.* New York: Oxford UP, 2001.

Chun, Wendy. "Orienting Orientalism, or How to Map Cyberspace." *Asian America.Net: Ethnicity, Nationalism, and Cyberspace.* Ed. Rachel Lee and Sau-ling Cynthia Wong. New York and London: Routledge, 2003. 3-36.

Clements, Jonathan, and Helen McCarthy. *The Anime Encyclopedia: A Guide to Japanese Animation Since 1917.* Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 2001.

Corliss, Richard. "His Dark Vision of the Future is Now." *Time* 24 June 2002: 63.

"Maximizing the Matrix." Rev. of *The Matrix,* by N'gai Croal and Devin Gordon. *Newsweek* 19 Apr. 1999: 64.

Cripps, Thomas "'Amos 'n' Andy' and the Debate over American Racial Integration." *American History/American Television.* Ed. John E. O'Connor. NY: Ungar, 1987 35-50.

Croal, N'Gai. "Synergy: Attacking on All Fronts: Team 'Matrix' is Launching Not Only
        Two Sequels, but a Multimedia Offensive with Videogames and *Anime*."
        Newsweek 30 Dec. 2002: 89.

Csicsery-Ronay, Jr., Istvan. "Cyberpunk and Neuromanticism." *Storming the Reality
        Studio: A Casebook of Cyberpunk and Postmodern Science Fiction.* Ed. Larry
        McCaffery. Durham and London: Duke UP, 1991. 183-193.

"Cybernetics." The American Heritage Dictionary. 4th ed. Dictionary.com. 16 Feb.
        2004 <http://dictionary.reference.com/search?q=cybernetics>.

"Cybernetics: A Definition." Pangaro, Incorporated. 16 Feb. 2004
        <http://www.pangaro.com/published/cyber-macmillan.html>.

"Cyberpunk Era." *Whole Earth Review* 63 (1986): 78-83.

Dannen, Fredric, and Barry Long. *Hong Kong Babylon: An Insider's Guide to the
        Hollywood of the East.* New York: Hyperion and Miramax Books, 1997.

Davis, Mike. "*Chinatown,* Part Two? The 'Internationalization' of Downtown Los
        Angeles." *New Left Review* 164 (1987): 65-86.

_____. *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles.* New York: Vintage
        Books, 1992.

DeAngelis, Michael. *Gay Fandom and Crossover Stardom: James Dean, Mel Gibson,
        and Keanu Reeves*. Durham: Duke UP, 2001.

Desai, Jigna. *Beyond Bollywood: The Cultural Politics of South Asian Diasporic Film.*
        New York: Routledge, 2004.

Desser, David. "Race, Space and Class: The Politics of Cityscapes in Science-Fiction
        Films." Ed. Annette Kuhn. *Alien Zone II: The Spaces of Science Fiction Cinema.*
        London and New York: Verso, 1999. 80-96.

_____. "The Kung Fu Craze: Hong Kong Cinema's First American Reception."
        The Cinema of Hong Kong: History, Arts, Identity. Ed. Poshek Fu and Desser.
        New York: Cambridge UP, 2000. 19-43.

Dick, Philip. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep.* New York: Ballantine Books, 1996.

Doel, Marcus, and David Clarke. "From Ramble City to the Screening of the Eye." *The
        Cinematic City,* ed. Clarke (London and New York: Routledge, 1997) 141-167.

Doll, Susan, and Greg Faller. "*Blade Runner* and Genre: Film Noir and Science Fiction." *Literature/Film Quarterly* 14 (1986): 89-100.

Donald, James. *Imagining the Modern City.* London: The Athlone Press, 1999.

Downey, John, and Jim McGuigan. *Technocities.* London and Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1999.

Downing, John. *Internationalizing Media Theory: Transition, Power, Culture.* London: Sage, 1996.

_____. Email to the Author. 27 Jan. 2004.

Dower, John. *War Without Mercy.* New York: Pantheon Books, 1986.

Dyer, Richard. *White.* London and New York: Routledge, 1997.

Ebert, Roger. "*Blade Runner* Runs on Its Stunning Visuals." *Chicago Sun-Times.* 25 June 1982: Weekender, 45. "*Blade Runner*: An Annotated Bibliography" by William M. Kolb. *Retrofitting* Blade Runner: *Issues in Ridley Scott's* Blade Runner *and Philip K.Dick's* Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? Ed. Judith Kerman. Bowling Green: Bowling Green UP, 1991. 31.

Elley, Derek. "Asia to 'Tiger': Kung-Fooey." *Variety.* 7 Feb. 2001. Variety.com. 27 Aug. 2003 <http://www.variety.com/index.asp?layout=advanced_search>.

Elsaesser, Thomas. "The Blockbuster: Everything Connect, but Not Everything Goes." *The End of the Cinema as We Know It: American Film in the Nineties.* Ed. Jon Lewis. New York: New York UP, 2001. 11-22.

Featherstone, Mike, and Roger Burrows, ed. *Cyberspace/Cyberbodies/Cyberpunk: Cultures of Technological Embodiment.* London: Sage, 1995.

Feng, Peter. "False and Double Consciousness: Race, Virtual Reality and the Assimilation of Hong Kong Action Cinema in *The Matrix.*" *Aliens R Us: The Other in Science Fiction Cinema.* Ed. Sardar, Ziauddin, and Sean Cubitt. London and Sterling: Pluto Press, 2002. 149-163.

_____. *Identities in Motion: Asian American Film and Video.* Durham: Duke UP, 2002.

_____, ed. *Screening Asian Americans.* New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 2002.

Fernández, Carlos. "Testimony of the Association of MultiEthnic Americans Before the Subcommittee on Census, Statistics, and Postal Personnel of the U.S. House of Representatives." *American Mixed Race: The Culture of Microdiversity.* Ed. Naomi Zack. Landham and London: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1995: 191-210.

"The Floating World of Ukiyo-E: Shadows, Dreams, and Substance." Exhibition Notes. 23 June 2003. Library of Congress. 1 Nov. 2003 <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/ukiyo-e>.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison.* Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Pantheon Books, 1977.

Gibson, William. *Neuromancer.* New York: Ace Books, 1984.

_____. Afterword. *The Art of the Matrix.* New York: Newmarket Press and WB Worldwide Publishing, 2000. 451.

_____. "The Future Perfect: How did Japan Become the Favored Default Setting for so Many Cyberpunk Writers?" *Time International* 30 April 2001: 48.

_____. "Since 1948." 6 November 2002. William Gibson Official Website. 10 February 2004 <http://www.williamgibson books.com/source/source.asp>.

Giles, Freda Scott. "From Melodrama to the Movies: The Tragic Mulatto as a Type Character." *American Mixed Race: The Culture of Microdiversity.* Ed. Naomi Zack. Landham and London: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1995. 63-80.

Paul Gilroy. *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Color Line.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000.

Goldberger, David. "Film View: Architectural Visions, Celluloid Frames." *New York Times.* 7 Jan. 1996. LexisNexis Academic. 13 Aug. 2003 <http://80-web.lexis-nexis.com.content.lib.utexas.edu>.

Gordon, Devin. "The Matrix Makers." *Newsweek.* 30 Dec. 2002. LexisNexis Academic. 15 Jan. 2003 <http://80-web.lexis-nexis.com.content.lib.utexas.edu>.

Gray, Herman. "The Politics of Representation in Network Television." *Television: The Critical View.* 6th ed. Ed. Horace Newcomb. New York and Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000. 282-305.

Greenfield, Karl Taro. *Speed Tribes: Days and Nights with Japan's Next Generation.* New York: HarperCollins, 1994.

Guerrero, Ed. *Framing Blackness: The African American Image in Film.* Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1993.

Hamamoto, Darrell. *Monitored Peril: Asian Americans and the Politics of TV Representation.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994.

"Hacker." Dictionary.com. 20 Feb. 2004 <http://dictionary.reference.com/search?q=hacker>).

Harris, Cheryl. "Whiteness as Property." *Harvard Law Review* 106 (June 1993): 1707 1791.

Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity*: *An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change.* Oxford: Basil Blackwell, Ltd., 1989.

Hayles, N. Kathryn. *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics.* Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1999.

Haraway, Donna. *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature.* New York: Routledge, 1991.

Hebdige, Dick. *Subculture: The Meaning of Style.* London and New York: Methuen, 1988.

Francis Heylighen. "Cybernetics and Systems Theory." Principia Cybernetica Web. 16 Feb. 2004 <http://pespmc1.vub.ac.be/CYBSYSTH.html>.

Hills, Matt. "Transnational *Otaku*: Japanese Representations of Fandom and Representations of Japan in Anime/Manga Fan Cultures." Media in Transition2 International Conference. Boston, MA. 11 May 2002. MIT2: Globalization and Convergence. 15 Jan. 2003 <http://cms.mit.edu/conf/mit2/Papers.html>.

Hing, Bill Ong. *Making and Remaking Asian America through Immigration Policy, 1850 1990.* Stanford: Stanford UP, 1993.

"History of the Shaolin Temples." 1997-2003. Shaolin Gung Fu Institute. 30 Oct. 2003 <http://www.shaolin.com/page.asp?content_id=1007>.

hooks, bell. "Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance." *Black Looks: Race and Representation.* Boston: South End Press, 1992. 21-39.

"How Much of Blade Runner Has Come True?" *BBC News*. 6 Feb. 2001. 9 Jan. 2003 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/1154662.stm>.

Instrell, Rick. "*Blade Runner*: The Economic Shaping of a Film." *Cinema and Fiction: New Modes of Adapting, 1950-1990*. Ed. John Orr and Colin Nicholson. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1992. 160-170.

Internet Movie Database. <http://www.imdb.com>.

Irwin, William, ed. *The Matrix and Philosophy: Welcome to the Desert of the Real.* Chicago and La Salle: Open Court, 2002.

Iwabuchi, Koichi. *Recentering Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism.* Durham and London: Duke UP, 2002.

Jameson, Fredric. "Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism." *New Left Review* 146 (1984): 52-96.

_____. *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern, 1983-1998.* London and New York: Verso, 1998.

"Japan Goes Under the Knife." *Business Asia.* September 2002: 4.

Jeffords, Susan. *Hard Bodies: Hollywood Masculinity in the Reagan Era.* New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1994.

Jhally, Sut, and Justin Lewis. *Enlightened Racism:* The Cosby Show, *Audiences, and the Myth of the American Dream.* New York: Routledge, 1991.

Kael, Pauline."The Current Cinema: Baby the Rain Must Fall." *The New Yorker.* 12 July 1982: 82-85. "*Blade Runner*: An Annotated Bibliography" by William M. Kolb. *Retrofitting* Blade Runner: *Issues in Ridley Scott's* Blade Runner *and Philip K. Dick's* Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? Ed. Judith Kerman. Bowling Green: Bowling Green UP, 1991. 35.

Kamenetz, Anya. "Extreme Makeovers: The Fine Art of Picking a Shtick," *Village Voice,* August 27-September 2, 2003. Village Voice Online. 29 Aug. 2003 <http://www.villagevoice.com/issues/0335/kamenetz.php>.

Kellner, Douglas, Flo Leibowitz, and Michael Ryan. "*Blade Runner:* A Diagnostic Critique." *Jump Cut* 29 (1984): 6-8.

Kim, T. "Neo-Confucian Body Techniques: Women's Bodies in Korea's Consumer Society." *Body & Society,* 9 (2003): 97-114

Kimball, A. Samuel. "Not Begetting the Future: Technological Autochtony, Sexual Reproduction, and the Mythic Structure of The Matrix." *Journal of Popular Culture* Winter 35 (2001): 175-204.

King, Geoff. *New Hollywood Cinema: An Introduction.* New York: Columbia UP, 2002.

Kipling, Rudyard. *The Ballad of East and West.* New York: M.F. Mansfield and A. Wessels, 1899.

Kittleson, Mary. The New American Hero: Made in Japan." *The Soul of Popular Culture: Looking at Contemporary Heroes, Myths, and Monsters.* Ed. Kittleson. Chicago and La Salle: Open Court, 1998. 68-83.

Klein, Christina. *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945 1961.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.

Klein, Norman. *The History of Forgetting: Los Angeles and the Erasure of Memory.* London and New York: Verso, 1997.

Ko, Chisu "Kids Gotta Have It, Too: Peer Pressure Plastics." *Time International.* 5 Aug. 2002: 53.

Kondo, Dorinne. *About Face: Performing Race in Fashion and Theater.* New York: Routledge, 1997.

La Brutto, Vincent. *By Design: Interviews with Film Production Designers.* Westport and London: Praeger, 1992.

Laing, Dave. *One Chord Wonders: Power and Meaning in Punk Rock.* Philadelphia: Open UP, 1985.

Landon, Brooks. *The Aesthetics of Ambivalence: Rethinking Science Fiction Film in the Age of Electronic (Re)production.* Westport: Greenwood Press, 1992.

Lalvani, Suren. "Consuming the Exotic Other." *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 12 (1995): 263-286.

Leary, Timothy. "Personal Computers/Personal Freedom." Deepleaf Productions. 20 Feb. 2004 <http://www.deepleafproductions.com/wilsonlibrary/texts/learycomputers.html>.

Lee, Rachel, and Sau-ling Cynthia Wong, ed. *Asian America.Net: Ethnicity, Nationalism, and Cyberspace.* New York and London: Routledge, 2003.

Lee, Robert. *Orientals: Asian Americans in Popular Culture.* Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1999.

Leong, Russell, ed. *Moving the Image: Independent Asian Pacific Media Arts.* Los Angeles: UCLA Asian American Studies Center, 1991.

Levi, Antonia *Samurai from Outer Space: Understanding Japanese Animation.* Chicago and La Salle: Open Court, 1999.

Lightman, Herb and Richard Patterson. "Blade Runner: Production Design and Photography." *American Cinematographer.* July 1982: 684-725.

Lind, Michael. *The Next American Nation: The New Nationalism and the Fourth American Revolution.* NY: Free Press, 1995.

Linn, Charles. "Blade Runner Sill on the Cutting Edge, Familiar as it is." *Architectural Record.* Oct. 1994: 27.

Lipsitz, George. *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990.

_____. *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People from Identity Politics.* Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1998.

Liu, Cynthia W. "When Dragon Ladies Die, Do They Come Back as Butterflies?" *Countervisions: Asian American Film Criticism.* Ed. Darrell Hamamoto and Sandra Liu. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 2000. 23-39.

Locke, Brian. "Three's a Crowd: The Racial Triangle of 'White,' 'Black,' and 'Asian' Men in Post-World War Two United States Culture." Diss., Brown University, 1996. Ann Arbor: UMI, 1996.

Lowe, Lisa. *Critical Terrains: French and British Orientalisms.* Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1991.
_____. "Heterogeneity, Hybridity, Multiplicity: Marking Asian American Differences." *Contemporary Asian America: A Multidisciplinary Reader.* Ed. Min Zhou and James Gatewood. New York: New York UP, 2000. 677-697.

_____. *Immigrant Acts.* Durham: Duke UP, 1996.

Lyman, Rick. "Job Openings in Hollywood: Heroes Wanted." *New York Times.* 4 Aug. 2002. LexisNexis Academic. 5 Dec. 2002 <http://80 web.lexisnexis.com.content.lib.utexas.edu>.

Lyotard, Jean. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge.* Trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

Ma, Sheng-mei. *The Deathly Embrace: Orientalism and Asian American Identity.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000.

MacLuhan, Marshall. "Television in a New Light." *The Meaning of Commercial Television.* Ed. Stanley Donner. Austin and London: University of Texas Press, 1966. 87-107.

Marchetti, Gina. *Romance and the "Yellow Peril": Race, Sex, and Discursive Strategies in Hollywood Fiction.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

_____. "*The Wedding Banquet*: Global Chinese Cinema and the Asian American Experience." *Countervisions: Asian American Film Criticism.* Ed. Darrell Hamamoto and Sandra Liu. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 2000. 275-297

Maslin, Janet. "The Reality is All Virtual, and Densely Complicated." *The New York Times* 31 Mar. 1999. LexisNexis Academic. 5 July 2002 <http://80-web.lexis nexis.com.content.lib.utexas.edu:2048/universe/>.

McCaffery, Larry. "Introduction: The Desert of the Real." *Storming the Reality Studio: A Casebook of Cyberpunk and Postmodern Science Fiction.* Ed. McCaffery. Durham and London: Duke UP, 1991. 1-16.

_____. "An Interview with William Gibson." *Storming the Reality Studio: A Casebook of Cyberpunk and Postmodern Science Fiction.* Ed. McCaffery. Durham and London: Duke UP, 1991. 263-285.

McChesney, Robert. *Rich Media, Poor Democracy: Communication Politics in Dubious Times.* New York: New Press, 1999.

McGray, Douglas. "Japan's Gross National Cool." *Foreign Policy.* May 2002: 44-55.

McNamara, Kevin. "*Blade* Runner's Post-Individual Worldspace." *Contemporary Literature* 38 (1997): 422-446.

Melkote, S. R., and D.J. Liu, "The Role of the Internet in Forging a Pluralistic Integration: A Study of Chinese Intellectuals in the United States." *Gazette* 62 (2000): 495-504.

Mellencamp, Pat. "The Zen of Masculinity – Rituals of Heroism in *The Matrix*." *The End of Cinema as We Know It.* Ed. Jon Lewis. New York: New York UP, 2001. 83-94.

Mercer, Kobena. *Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies.* New York: Routledge, 1994.

Meyers, Richard. *The Great Science Fiction Films.* Secaucus: Citadel Press, 1984.

Miller, Daryl. "*Blade Runner*: An Old Story in Fun, Futuristic Set." *The Arizona Daily Star*. 29 June 1982. "*Blade Runner*: An Annotated Bibliography" by William M. Kolb. *Retrofitting* Blade Runner: *Issues in Ridley Scott's* Blade Runner *and Philip K. Dick's* Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? Ed. Judith Kerman. Bowling Green: Bowling Green UP, 1991. 43.

Miller, Toby, Nitin Govil, John McMurria, and Richard Maxwell. *Global Hollywood.* London: British Film Institute, 2001.

Morley, David, and Kevin Robins. *Spaces of Identity: Global Media, Electronic Landscapes and Cultural Boundaries.* London: Routledge, 1995.

"Movie-Fair Premiere Scheduled for Hong Kong." 30 October 1996. Hong Kong Trade Development Council. 20 Nov. 2003. <http://www.tdctrade.com/tdcnews/9610/96103001.htm>.

Mura, David. *The Body Meets Memory: An Odyssey of Race, Sexuality and Identity.* New York: Anchor Books, 1996.

"Myrna Loy." "Biography from Leonard Maltin's Movie Encyclopedia Internet," "Biography for Myrna Loy." Internet Movie Database. 10 Mar. 2002 <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0001485/bio>.

Naficy, Hamid. *The Making of Exile Cultures: Iranian Television in Los Angeles.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993

_____, ed. *Home, Exile, Homeland: Film, Media, and the Politics of Place.* New York: Routledge, 1999.

Nakamura, Lisa. *Racial Types: Race, Ethnicity, and Identity on the Internet.* New York and London: Routledge, 2002.

_____. "'If You Could See What I've Seen with Your Eyes'": Techno-Orientalism in *Minority Report*." Society for Cinema and Media Studies Annual Conference. Minneapolis, MN. 8 March 2003.

Napier, Susan. *Anime from* Akira *to* Princess Mononoke: *Experiencing Contemporary Japanese Animation*. New York: Palgrave, 2001.

Naremore, James. *More than Night: Film Noir in its Contexts*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.

Neale, Stephen. "Issues of Difference: *Alien* and *Blade Runner.*" *Fantasy and the Cinema: A Reader.* Ed. Donald James. London: British Film Institute, 1989. 213-225.

_____. *Genre and Hollywood.* London: Routledge, 2000.

Newitz, Annalee "Anime Otaku: Japanese Animation Fans Outside Japan." *Bad Subjects* 13 (1994): 1-12.

Nguyen, Viet. *Race and Resistance: Literature and Politics in Asian America.* Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002.

Nishime, LeiLani. "Is Keanu Reeves a Cyborg: APAs at the Century's End." Society for Cinema Studies Annual Conference. Philadelphia, PA. 2001. 1-9.

Nixon, Nicola. "Cyberpunk: Preparing the Ground for Revolution or Keeping the Boys Satisfied?" *Science-Fiction Studies* 19 (1992): 219-235.

Noe, Denise. "All About the Mata Hari." 15 Mar. 2003 <http://www.crimelibrary.com/spies/mata-hari>.

O'Brien, Lucy. "The Woman Punk Made Me," *Punk Rock: So What? The Cultural Legacy of Punk.* Ed. Roger Sabin. London: Routledge, 1999. 186-198

Omatsu, Glen. "Fists of Legend and Fury: What Asian American College Students Can Learn from Jet Li and Bruce Lee." *Pacific Ties* 1998: 231-232.

Omi, Michael, and Harold Winant. *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1980s.* New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986.

Ong, Paul, and John Liu. "U.S. Immigration Policies and Asian Migration." *Contemporary Asian America: A Multidisciplinary Reader.* Ed. Min Zhou and James Gatewood. New York: New York UP, 2000. 155-174.

Ong, Paul, Edna Bonacich, and Lucie Cheng. *The New Asian Immigration in Los Angeles and Global Restructuring.* Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1994.

Ortolani, Benito. *The Japanese Theatre.* Princeton: Princeton UP, 1995.

"Out of Eden: Race in Brazil." *The Economist* 5 July 2003: 32.

Ow, Jeffrey. "The Revenge of the Yellowfaced Cyborg Terminator: The Rape of Digital Geishas and the Colonization of Cyber-Coolies in 3D Realms' *Shadow Warrior. Asian America.Net: Ethnicity, Nationalism, and Cyberspace.* Ed. Lee, Rachel, and Sau-ling Cynthia Wong. New York and London: Routledge, 2003. 249-266.

Pearson, Ian. "At the Cutting Edge of Blade Runner World." *The Guardian Online.* 30 Dec. 1999. LexisNexis Academic. 13 Aug. 2003 <http://80-web.lexis nexis.com.content.lib.utexas.edu>.

Pearson, Kim. "Gook." 2003. Interactive Dictionary of Racial Language. English 597 and English 307. The College of New Jersey. 24 Feb. 2004. <http://kpearson.faculty.tcnj.edu/Dictionary/gook.htm>.

Peary, Danny. "Blade Runner." *Cult Movies 3: Fifty More of the Classics, the Sleepers, the Weird, and the Wonderful*. New York: Fireside, 1988. 32-37. "Blade Runner: An Annotated Bibliography" by William M. Kolb. *Retrofitting Blade Runner: Issues in Ridley Scott's* Blade Runner *and Philip K. Dick's* Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*?* Ed. Judith Kerman. Bowling Green: Bowling Green UP, 1991. 46.

Perkins, William Eric, ed. *Droppin' Science: Critical Essays on Rap Music and Hip Hop Culture.* Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1996.

"Pocahontas Myth," Powhatan Renape Nation, Rankokus Indian Reservation, 10 Jan. 2004 <http://www.powhatan.org/pocc.html>.

Pointon, Susan. "Transcultural Orgasm as Apocalypse: *Urotsukidoji: The Legend of the Overfiend.*" *Wide Angle* 19.3 (1997): 41-63.

Powdermaker, Hortense. *Hollywood: The Dream Factory*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1950.

Press, Joy. "Shouting out Loud: Women in UK Punk," *Trouble Girls: The Rolling Stone Book of Women in Rock.* Ed. Barbara O'Dair. New York: Random House, 1997. 293-301.

Prince, Stephen. "World Filmmaking and the Hollywood Blockbuster." *World Literature Today.* Oct-Dec 2003: 3-7.

Prashad, Vijay. *Everybody was Kung-Fu Fighting: Afro-Asian Connections and the Myth of Cultural Purity.* Boston: Beacon Press, 2001.

Pratt, Douglas. "Do Disc Owners Dream of Letterboxed Sheep?" *The Laser Disc Newsletter.* 41 January 1988: 1. "Blade Runner: An Annotated Bibliography" by William M. Kolb. *Retrofitting Blade Runner: Issues in Ridley Scott's* Blade Runner *and Philip K. Dick's* Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*?* Ed. Judith Kerman. Bowling Green: Bowling Green UP, 1991. 47.

Price, Shinobu "Cartoons from Another Planet: Japanese Animation as Cross-Cultural Communication." *Journal of American & Comparative Cultures* Spring-Summer 2001: 153-170.

Ressner, Jeffrey. "Popular Metaphysics: In the Matrix, the Wachowskis Make a Hit
Film out of the Bible, Cyberpunk and Higher Math." *Time* 19 Apr. 1999.
Expanded Academic ASAP. 22 Apr. 2003 <http://80-
web6.infotrac.galegroup.com/content:lib.utexas.edu:2048>.

Reinhold, Robert. "City of Nightmares: A Terrible Chain of Events reveals Los Angeles
Without its Makeup," *New York Times.* 3 May 1992. LexisNexis
Academic. 13 Aug. 2003 <http://80-web.lexis- nexis.com.content.lib.utexas.edu>.

"Ridley Scott's Tightrope." *Variety.* 9 July 1980: 6, 22. "Blade Runner: An Annotated
Bibliography" by William M. Kolb. *Retrofitting Blade Runner: Issues in Ridley
Scott's* Blade Runner *and Philip K. Dick's* Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*?*
Ed. Judith Kerman. Bowling Green: Bowling Green UP, 1991. 50.

Robins, Kevin. "Prisoners of the City: Whatever Could a Postmodern City Be?" *New
Formations* 15 (1992): 1-22.

Root, Maria P. P. "Multiracial Asians: Models of Ethnic Identity." *Amerasia Journal* 23
(1997): 29-41.

Rose, Tricia. *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America.*
Hanover: Wesleyan UP, 1994.

Rosenthal, Pam. "Jacked In: Fordism, Cyberpunk, Marxism." *Socialist Review* 21 (1991):
79-104.

Ross, Andrew. *Strange Weather: Culture, Science, and Technology in the Age of Limits.*
London: Verso, 1991.

Ryan, Michael, and Douglas Kellner. *Camera Politica: The Politics and Ideology of
Contemporary Hollywood Film.* Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP,
1988.

Said, Edward. *Orientalism.* New York: Vintage Books, 1979.

Saldivar, Jose David *Border Matters: Remapping American Cultural Studies.*
Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.

Sammon, Paul. *Future Noir: The Making of Blade Runner.* New York: HarperPrism,
1996.

Sardar, Ziauddin. Introduction. *Aliens R Us: The Other in Science Fiction
Cinema.* Ed. Sardar and Sean Cubbitt. London and Sterling: Pluto Press, 2002.
1-17.

Schatz, Thomas. *Hollywood Genres: Formulas, Filmmaking, and the Studio System.* Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1981.

_____. *Old Hollywood/New Hollywood: Ritual, Art, and Industry.* Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1983.

_____. "The New Hollywood." *Film Theory Goes to the Movies.* Ed. Jim Collins, Hilary Radner, and Ava Preacher Collins. New York and London: Routledge, 1993. 1-36.

_____. "Hollywood and Hong Kong: Appropriation, Recombination, and Cultural Exchange." International Communication Association Conference. Seoul, Korea. 2002.

Seger, Linda. *Making a Good Script Great.* 2nd ed. Hollywood: Samuel French Trade, 1994.

Seiler, Andy. "Something to Offend Everyone: Minority Groups Say Hit Films Fill Screens with Stereotypes. *USA Today.* 28 June 1999. Lexis Nexis Academic. 24 February 2002 <http://80-web.lexis-nexis.com.content.lib.utexas.edu.>.

Shaheen, Jack. *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People.* New York: Olive Branch Press, 2001.

Sharrett, Christopher. "Virtual Horrors of Today's Cybercinema." *USA Today.* November 1995. Lexis Nexis Academic. 15 Jan. 2003. <http://80-web.lexis nexis.com.content.lib.utexas.edu>.

Shay, Don. "Blade Runner: 2020 Foresight." *Cinefex* July 1982: 6-71.

Shohat, Ella. "The Struggle Over Representation: Casting, Coalitions, and the Politics of Identification." *Late Imperial Culture*, ed. Román de la Campa, E. Ann Kaplan, and Michael Sprinker. London and New York: Verso, 1995. 166-178.

Silver, Alain, and Elizabeth Ward. *Film Noir: An Encyclopedia Reference to the American Style, Third Edition.* Woodstock, NY: The Overlook Press, 1992.

Silverman, Kaja. "Back to the Future." *Camera Obscura* 27 (1991): 109-132.

Slide, Anthony. *The American Film Industry: A Historical Dictionary.* Westport and London: Greenwood Press, 1986.

Sobchack, Vivian. *Screening Space: The American Science Fiction Film.* 2nd ed. New Brunswick and London: Rutgers UP, 2001.

"Split Ruling on Affirmative Action: High Court Rules on Race as Factor in University Admissions." 5 Apr. 2003. NPR. 14 Feb. 2003 <http://www.npr.org/news/specials/michigan/>).

Staiger, Janet. "Future Noir: Contemporary Representations of Visionary Cities." *Alien Zone II: The Spaces of Science Fiction Cinema.* Ed. Annette Kuhn. London and New York: Verso, 1999. 97-122.

Sterling, Bruce. Preface. *Mirrorshades: The Cyberpunk Anthology.* New York: Arbor House, 1986. vii-xiv.

_____. "Cyberpunk in the Nineties." *Interzone* 48 (1991): 39-41.

Stringer, Julian. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora in Contemporary Hong Kong Cinema." *Countervisions: Asian American Film Criticism.* Ed. Darrell Hamamoto and Sandra Liu. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 2000. 298-312

Suvin, Darko. "On Gibson and Cyberpunk SF." *Foundation* 46 (1991): 39-41.

Takaki, Ronald. *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans.* Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1989.

Tatsumi, Takayuki. "Eye to Eye: An Interview with William Gibson." *Science Fiction EYE* 1 (1987): 6-17.

Tchen, John Kuo Wei. *New York Before Chinatown: Orientalism and the Shaping of American Culture, 1776-1882.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1999.

Thompson, Richard. *The Yellow Peril: 1890-1924.* New York: Arno Press, 1978.

Torres, Rodolfo. *Latino Studies Reader: Culture, Economy, and Society.* Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 1998.

Tuan, Yi-Fu. *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977.

The Vapors, "Turning Japanese." *New Clear Days.* Capt Oi/Mod Ska. June 1980.

Wachowski, Larry and Andy. "*The Matrix*: Shooting Script, August 12, 1998." *The Art of the Matrix.* New York: Newmarket Productions, 2000. 273-394.

Warner, Michael. *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life.* New York: Free Press, 1999.

Wasko, Janet. *Hollywood in the Information Age: Beyond the Silver Screen.* Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994.

Watkins, Craig. *Representing: Hip Hop Culture and the Production of Black Cinema.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998.
_____. Email to Author. 1 Mar. 2004.

What is the Matrix. The Official Matrix Website. <http://www.whatisthematrix.com>.

Williams, Teresa Kay. "Race-ing and Being Raced." *Amerasia Journal* 23(1997): 61-65.

_____. "The Theater of Identity: (Multi-)Race and Representation of Eurasians and Afroasians." *American Mixed Race: The Culture of Microdiversity.* Ed. Naomi Zack. Landham and London: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1995: 79-96.

Winant, Howard. "Whiteness at Century's End." *The Making and Unmaking of Whiteness.* Ed. Birgit Rasmussen, Eric Klinenberg, Irene Nexica, and Matt Wray. Durham: Duke UP, 2001. Home page. 3 Jan. 2004 <http://www.soc.ucsb.edu/faculty/winant/White_Racial_Projects. html>.

Wood, Robin. *Hollywood From Vietnam to Reagan.* New York: Columbia UP, 1986.

Won, Joseph. *Yellowface Minstrelsy: Asian Martial Arts and the American Popular Imaginary.* Diss. University of Michigan, 1996. Ann Arbor: UMI, 1996.

Wong, Eugene Franklin. *On Visual Media Racism: Asians in the American Motion Pictures.* New York: Arno Press, 1978.

Woolley, Benjamin. *Virtual Worlds: A Journey in Hype and Hyperreality.* London: Penguin Books, 1993.

Wu, Frank. *Yellow: Race in America Beyond Black and White.* New York: Basic Books, 2002.

Wu, William. *The Yellow Peril: Chinese Americans in American Fiction 1850-1940.* Hamden: Archon Books, 1982.

Wyatt, Justin. *High Concept: Movies and Marketing in Hollywood.* Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994.

Wynter, Leon. *American Skin: Pop Culture, Big Business, and the End of White America.* NY: Crown, 2002.

Xing, Jun. *Asian America through the Lens: History, Representations, and Identity.* Walnut Creek: Alta Mira Press, 1998.

Yamamoto, Traise. *Masking Selves, Making Subjects: Japanese American Women, Identity, and the Body.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.

Yang, Jeff, Dina Gan, Terry Hong, & the staff of *A. Magazine. Eastern Standard Time: A Guide to Asian Influence on American Culture: From* Astro Boy *to Zen Buddhism.* Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1997.

Yau, Esther. Introduction. *At Full Speed: Hong Kong Cinema in a Borderless World.* Ed. Yau. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2001. 1-28.

Yim, Eric. "An Introduction to Wuxia." 13 Feb. 2001. *Once Upon a Time in China.* 31 Oct. 2003 <http://www.heroic-cinema.com/eric/xia.html>.

Young, Iris Marion. *Justice and the Politics of Difference.* Princeton: Princeton UP, 1990.

Yu, Henry. *Thinking Orientals: Migration, Contact, and Exoticism in Modern America.* New York: Oxford UP, 2001.

Zhou, Min, and James Gatewood. "Introduction: Revisiting Contemporary Asian America." *Contemporary Asian America: A Multidisciplinary Reader.* New York: New York UP, 2000. 1-48.

Vita

       Chi Hyun Park was born September 25, 1973 in Seoul, Korea to Jung Won Huh and Hai Geun Park. She received a B.A. from Brown University in 1995 and a M.A. from the University of California, Irvine in 1997 both in English.

Permanent address: 11340 Eaglebend Lane, Frisco, TX 75035

This dissertation was typed by the author.