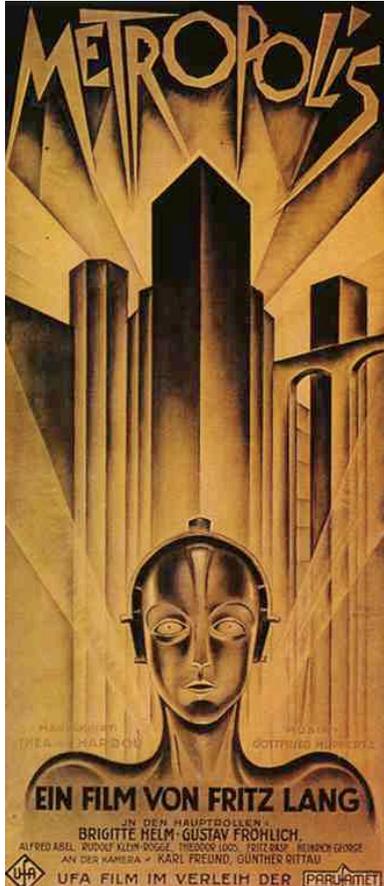


THE DARK SIDE OF DESIRE

Don Kunze / Architecture / Integrative Arts



In dystopia films, the condition of watching films is materialized in terms of themes planted diagetically in the film itself: collapse of distance, automation of desire, cooption of fantasy by the Other. Could this be an ideological condition, a form of visual eugenics?

The real contribution of the French Revolution, in addition to the invention of new ways to make quick government reductions, was its articulation of the idea of free choice. While this idea had been around for quite some time, thanks to the spread of Enlightenment Reason (Voltaire, Spinoza, etc.), it was not popularized in terms of images that violated the old orders of church and state. The new packaging of the free choice idea, however, came with an expanded idea that made it useful in the service of ideology — this is precisely the old Lacanian idea of 'desire is the desire of the Other', the notion that in thinking we are using our own ideas and choices, we are inadvertently and unconsciously establishing the desire of the Other. What Other? This is more, I would argue, than the subject's partly unconscious construction of a watchful Eye or Unseen Hand, a mandate from the good old Super Ego, a varied conglomerate of parents, rulers, priests, etc. This is a more generic and — in the context of modern Capitalist consumer society — more sinister function. To use a metaphor from computer usage, it allows anyone with the expertise to hack in to our systems anonymously and to plant 'worms' that satisfy their independent aims. In other words, it is our desire itself that makes subjectivity vulnerable to hostile takeover by the desire of the Other. This goes beyond the anti-Reformation's wildest dreams of resisting the threat of Protestant-style free choice and political democracy. The Jesuits' efforts at propaganda through imagery, preaching, and missionary work could not have come close to the potentialities made possible by the opposition itself. In short, it is free choice that makes possible the most effective kind of 'mind control', something on the order of what happened to Frank Sinatra in *The Manchurian Candidate*,

where injections and hypnosis created a Korean assassin in the unaware body and mind of a returning prisoner of war. In a sense this is another case of how popular culture 'tells us the whole truth and nothing but the truth' but we fail to de-code its real meanings.

The use of imagery in this conversion of free choice to its opposite was evident, already, in the French Revolution. The first crowds who stormed the Bastille carried pikes, and on the top of the pikes were not real human heads but plaster busts and other images of the heroes the Revolution had quickly determined as central poster people. But, pikes being what they are materially, the idea of hero

promotion was easily converted into its opposite, traitor display. The pikes were discovered to be equally useful for carrying the heads of execution victims. This is a demonstration of the power of metonymy, that form of metaphor that facilitates but does not join directly in the creation of meaning effects. It is a system open to multiple applications. It doesn't care whether the effect is about happiness or horror, it's just concerned about the emotional impact of raw grammar.

What do we think, then, about films that scare the bejesus out of us by predicting futures unfit for human habitation? Isn't the first (Lacanian) question one about the metonymy that operates 'in the background' to give metaphor a clear path to our psyches? Shouldn't we ask: 'Who is having pleasure through our pain?' or, 'How is the film "enjoying us" at the same time we are "enjoying it"?' Who, in other words, operates behind the scenes, commanding us to 'Enjoy!' while at the same time using our free choice in the matter to establish ideology. The idea of enjoyment here should be refreshed. I am thinking of the German expression, somewhat crude, *Sie können mit uns Gern haben* — You can do what you like with us. *Gern* is the kind of pleasure that gives the pleasure-taker a kind of *carte blanche* with a sinister lack of oversight. This is the opposite of the legal principle of 'usufruct' — the idea that you can use something without owning it, with the understanding that you must not abuse the privilege. *Gern* would be in the courts, charged with overstepping the privileges accorded through usufruct. The kind of pleasure the Other takes in us pretends to obey the conditions of usufruct, but since we are unconscious of this kind of pleasure, we never know. We fear that usufruct has been usufr****d.

'Bad Futures' films are apocalyptic fantasies about death.¹ There is a whole field of theological studies dedicated to eschatology, and perhaps these films are a part of their curriculum. Eschatology's 'four last things' are death, judgment, heaven, and hell. In effect, the subject is not allowed to die but, rather, forced to submit to a sorting process. This is true not just for the moralizing Christian culture but for all cultures that have imagined that there are two deaths, one physical one and a later, symbolic death. In the separate world created by the apocalypse, those 'left behind' (i.e. not culled out on account of spiritual purity) must duke it out with the forces of evil. Like cartoon characters who suffer dismemberment, explosion, and crushing but are continually revived, the characters of apocalyptic films are commanded to 'pull themselves together' and face up to monsters of one kind or another. That the fantasy belongs primarily to the Other is clear in films such as Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove*, whose ex-Nazi scientist, Strangelove, reveals the survival plan reserved for governmental elites and the super rich. In this them-us scheme, it is clear that the death of the planet is not to great a price to pay for their obscene survivalism.

¹ Credits: 'Bad Futures' is the title of the film series produced by the Institute for the Arts and Humanities, Penn State University, October 2010. Films in the series included *Blade Runner*, *La Jetée*, *Fahrenheit 451*, *Blade Runner*, *A Clockwork Orange*, *Brazil*, *Sleeper*, *Children of Men*, *Gattaca*, *District 9*, *Code 46*, *The Matrix*, *Fail-Safe*, *28 Days Later*, *Metropolis*, and *2001: A Space Odyssey*. This paper was written in response to a call from Prof. Michael Berubé, Director, and Daniel Willis, Associate Director, for a panel discussion following the films.

What do we get out of it? 'We' (i.e. the automatons constructed to be the production sites of the Other's desire) become the suspended bodies in a matrix of the Real, who provide power to the idea that there are exceptions to be made in the process of global destruction, that destruction after all is a



Automatons remind us of how our desire is automated in the general process of watching films, any films — this provides the media with unprecedented power as an ideological device.

purification process that leaves some behind, a final though somewhat extreme step that must be taken on behalf of eugenics. This is clear in the statements of Slobodan Milošević, who stressed 'ethnic cleansing', or in the Tutsi rhetoric in Rwanda. Cleansing and death go together. It is important however to realize the audience's role as automaton. Audiences are by their very physical condition reduced to a state of death. Immobilized and silent in the darkness of the auditorium, they receive and are forbidden, officially at least, to respond. In movie theaters, even applause is slightly out of place. Their only allowed activity is enjoyment, but here the element of desire means that the Other is enjoying

through them. The audience is an enjoyment machine. This means that primarily the film plays an ideological role. The audience is optimized through the Enlightenment's ideal of free choice. Pleasure isn't pleasure, after all, unless we are maximally free to choose it, but the choice is a 'forced choice'. It is the positive version of *Sophie's Choice*, where the prisoner is forced to choose which one of her children is to be shot. In the positive version, the command to 'Enjoy!' is given (as the giant advertisements in *Blade Runner* announce) but the instruction sheet is missing. We are asked to enjoy without having an object to enjoy: 'Coke is it!' summarizes this strategy. Or, like the famous Marlboro Man, we are given a whole lifestyle and geographical region to enjoy as a field for the enjoyment of inhaled tobacco. And, as in the case of tobacco, it is the addiction of the nicotine that is the real, ideological factor, a global system for the marketing of drugs. It operates within us as a parasite. The desire of the Other does not need conscious recognition; in fact, it requires our unconsciousness to survive.

Now, what is it that we 'buy in to' when we watch apocalyptic films? Forget about the anxiety created that can be symbolically attached to future plagues, earthquakes, tsunamis, or Mayan calendar collapse. This allows us to anesthetize the real mandate of these films by interpreting the final catastrophe as the natural end-result of present bad behavior — neglecting global warming, being unfair to the homeless or ethnic minorities, disturbing nature by clear-cutting or deep-water oil drilling, etc. Like the shark in *Jaws*, these things are only signifiers set up as a center about which other signifiers swirl and combine. They organize other things but remain apart. They seem to be the cause, but they are both cause and effect.

This buy-in has to do with the unconscious. In *The Matrix*, Neo stumbles on to the conspiracy of a real Other through his computer hacking. Captured, he is given the alternative of two pills, a blue one to return to reality as he knows it, a red one to confront the universal Real, a Real in which machines have converted humans into energy sources while supplying them with fantasies that they are experiencing an ordinary life. Like Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*, the Moloch-machines must be destroyed by those who have escaped their narcotic spell. The ideology is clear: we only think we think what we think; our freedom is an illusion. The difference between *The Matrix* and our present-day reality is that our reality is even more insidiously exploited by the Other of ideology: we are commanded to 'Enjoy!' *as a necessary and sufficient cause* of the Other's pleasure, not as a compensating anesthetic. That is, the relationship between ideology and pleasure is even more tightly locked together! Ideology is the 'obverse' of pleasure, the *recto* to pleasure's *verso*.

But, as Maurice Merleau-Ponty observed, between the subject observed and the subject observing there is a small gap.² There are even two 'circular courses' that attempt to close this gap. Lacan would say that these two courses are related to anxiety and separation in the construction of fantasy, but this theory is for another occasion. It is sufficient to note that fantasy, any fantasy, is fundamentally apocalyptic. That is, apocalyptic films such as we have watched during this festival are the essence of the filmic experience of fantasy. They have forced us to play the audience's role as the classic hysteric, converting the pain of what we see into the pleasure of spectating. We are commanded to 'Enjoy!' — and we know this because of the serious social penalties imposed if we say we do not enjoy. It is a racial/racist requirement. *Not enjoying* is the cultivated distance of the critical view, the avoidance of the temptation to indulge in the concerns thematized on the screen. But, to taste you have to touch, and to touch you have to risk being burned. Slavoj Žižek has, in this regard, asked for a third pill. I take it that this is a pill that builds up an immunity to the temptation to interpret. 'What do these films mean?' is a question that is senseless unless we face the ideology of pleasure squarely. Just what are we enjoying when we watch the world collapse and everyone die?³ And, just *who* is enjoying? A model of the unconscious as automaton is required. Our situation is more extreme than that of the suspended subjects in *The Matrix*. Our free will is the food of the Other, the randomization needed to produce the crystalline patterns that, like those recursive numbers in mathematics, go nowhere because they go everywhere.

² 'If one wants metaphors, it would be better to say that the body sensed and the body sentient are as the obverse and the reverse, or again, as two segments of one sole circular course which goes above from left to right and below from right to left, but which is but one sole movement in its two phases.' Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. A. Lingis (Evanston, IN: Northwestern University, 1968), p. 138.

³ Do not forget Karlheinz Stockhausen's brutal treatment after his comment about the esthetic aspects of the World Trade Towers collapse on September 11, 2001. Stockhausen expanded on his remark that the collapse was the 'greatest work of art ever': 'What happened there spiritually, this jump out of security, out of the everyday, out of life, that happens sometimes *poco a poco* in art'. See http://www.osborne-conant.org/documentation_stockhausen.htm (last accessed October 17, 2010).

Some Examples

As a preface to these vignettes drawn from films in the series, 'Bad Futures', a more common-sense explanation should be given of what Lacan called the 'extimate' — one aspect of which is that the mind is not inside the head but in the physical world 'outside' the body. In other words, objects that are important for the subject are really 'subjectively objective'. They are 'out there' but also 'inside' subjectivity in a topological way. The brain, in the most scientifically reductionistic way of describing it, is also the nervous system. You don't know where to draw the line, although it is evident that you can lose large parts of your nervous system without losing your mind, but if you lose large parts of the sensory world as a consequence, this may not be considered compensation. Conversely, the mind reconstructs the body, even when parts are missing, as Gelb and Goldstein documented in their classic work on aphasia. The body is thus conceptually organized, but it is never unified. It is always, as Lacan put it, a 'body in pieces' (*morcelé*) paired with a spectral ego image provided early in life by the Mirror State. Issues of stereognosis (the body's awareness of the world) and proprioception (the mind's awareness of the body) continually disrupt unity. Binocular vision requires imbalance, etc. etc.

Nerves extend and in some sense *are* the mind; but the nerves are sentient and perceptive. They are the interface with the external world, about which they 'report'. The world is therefore a part of this sentient system and it is not far-fetched to say that the mind and the world constitute a kind of complex whole. When Lacan talked about the 'unconscious' of objects in the world, using his clever idea of 'extimacy' (*l'extimité*, or 'external intimacy', equally 'intimate externality'), he did not mean that objects were conscious beings with thoughts of their own but that human subjects perceive objects by investing them with *animus*. They are, in terms of the Aristotelian system of causes, *automata* — a form of chance reserved for objects, which by definition cannot *intend* to do what they do. This exclusion of the possible intentionality of matter is important. It sets aside objects used by the mind for thought as 'pure' in their lack of motive. We see this function as central to the practices of divination, where some natural object is 'put to the test'. When live animals are used, they are usually sacrificed in order to counter any natural intentionality; or, they are tricked through traps or other devices.

Automata are important for the fantasy of apocalyptic films, since the audience functions primarily through its *paralysis* of consciousness. This is nothing new; Coleridge articulated the principle as the 'willing suspension of disbelief'. But, Coleridge did not articulate the critical principle of automaton; he simply employed it, as in the dream-poem 'Kubla Khan', which was, apparently, dictated directly from a dream experience interrupted, unintentionally, by a 'person from Porlock', that is, an *unwilling* suspension of disbelief. The will, set free by the French Revolution, is renounced in the modern viewing of films. We give it back freely, willingly. We turn it over to the Other, who is on and behind the screen.

I don't expect anyone to believe this complex Lacanian theory. Rather, I rely on the proofs readily offered up by the films themselves. As if to confess their darkest secrets, the content of the 'Bad Futures' films is actually the secret put into large print.

'The truth is out there'. This saying of Agent Mulder in *The X-Files* is the structure of the Matrix in the film *The Matrix*: a network of conduits and wires conveying the energy of suspended humans to the central transformers of the machine that, in exchange, injects fantasies into its victims to mask the pain and plight of their condition. The brain of the machine is doubly interiorized, its victims being the ironic manifestation of the Lacanian 'subjective objects'. Hah hah. We can barely recover from this bad joke. When we get 'outside' in such fantasies as *Metropolis*, we discover it is an awful version of the inside: the depths of the workers' city, where gears, electronics, and other devices keep the slaves at their post, living out the destiny of zombies assigned to trudge submissively in and out.

What are we to make of these interiors? In *Blade Runner* we have torrents of rain drenching a future Los Angeles that is both high-tech and decrepit. In *La Jetée* the portion of humankind that has survived nuclear war is camped underground, forced to live on through the hopes of a lone dreamer. In *The Children of Men*, London is dirty and dangerous; in *28 Days After* as well, the countryside is menaced by roving houts. Terry Gilliam's *Brazil*, really London, is compacted, rusted, and infested with terrorism that is treated as no more than a momentary distraction.⁴ *Fahrenheit 451* is more open, but its spaces are devoid of civic qualities. The film takes place in insipid suburbs, and the only escape is to a ragged hinterland.

With most fantasy distance is created, and when fantasy collapses, distance collapses. In futuristic dystopias, we have a fantasy about the collapse of fantasy itself. Hence, *La Jetée* puts all its bets on a dreamer. *Brazil's* hero, Sam Lowry, dreams about winged encounters with the woman of his dreams but lives in an apartment crammed with appliances. *The Matrix's* human power supplies actually are suspended in a non-space; the only dimensions they enjoy are injected dreams. Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* is perhaps the most definite statement about the collapse of fantasy. Only replicants seem to have real dreams, constructed through *collage*-ing the memories of human models. The real humans are defective dreamers; their cramped quarters barely support room to respond to the giant Coke advertisements commanding them to 'Enjoy!' And, in the underground Moloch-shaped factory of *Metropolis*, Fritz Lang commends imagination to the deep — opaque, art-deco'd catacombs where workers turn out much the same product commandeered in *The Matrix*.

The loss of dimensionality is clearly related to the human fear of automatism, and automatism of fear. There are those who wish to reduce us to machines, as in the bodies used to supply power to *The Matrix*, or the elites of *Metropolis*, or the German-speaking scientists of *La Jetée*. Isn't this what is happening in the cinema space itself? Don't we sacrifice dimensionality by sitting down and remaining

⁴ A comparison should be made to the practice, in Israel, of cleaning up terrorist bombing sites as quickly as possible. The promotion of a political response to violence has been to treat it 'as if it never happened'.

quiet; don't we give up our own eyes for that of the camera (this may be the key to the eye shown for a fleeting moment at the very beginning of *The Matrix*)? Isn't in some sense the apparatus of film production a literal embodiment of dystopia? Being a movie-lover myself, I am reluctant to develop this formula. It brings fear too close to the real thing, and films naturally construct as well as destroy distance. We can rely on the Kantian formula for the sublime — that it positions viewers close to horror while insulating them from real danger. The second part of the sublime, that the issue of purposiveness cannot be as easily settled as in the case of beauty. Where beauty frees itself from use and intentionality, the sublime cannot. It points to what Freud might align with the uncanny's pole of the Undead: that which, officially dead, refuses to fully die; or the organ that, separated from the body, continues to act out its functions. We are here in the macabre presence of Dr. Strangelove's persistently Nazi arm, which salutes compulsively on its own when the scientist begins to speculate on the future escape of elites to underground shelters equipped with all earthly delights. In dystopias, the disembodied eye most often takes the form of surveillance cameras; in *Blade Runner*, the eye cannot help but tell the truth a replicant would conceal.⁵ Its intentionality has developed by itself, refusing to obey the general body's instructions. In *La Jetée*, the dreamer's eyes are colonized by the experimenting scientists. Naturally, *2001: A Space Odyssey's* computer eye, HAL, becomes the agent of murderous mutiny.

The message here seems to be about virtual reality. The disembodied eye is, after all, the agent; the computer interface is the site of production; the human becomes an automaton; symbolic relationships of a normal society have broken down; even the dimensions that would sustain the life of the imagination have collapsed — in other words, life becomes the cinema! — Not just the cinema of dystopian future films but the cinema *as such*, in its technical and social functioning. The mirror held up to the audience is, in this case, all too close. It does not afford the usual distance that allows judgments of like or dislike, musing or speculation. The dystopian futuristic film does not even offer the comfort of a prophetic warning that allows us some minimal time to change our ways. It is about a present that is hyper-immediate; it refuses even to accept the status of a representation. It is the Freudian 'thing'; the Kantian thing-in-itself; the Lacanian Real.

Happiness as a Racial Characteristic

It seems that, in the 1997 Andrew Niccol film *Gattaca*, that the mastery of gene manipulation and planned births has wiped out the old-fashioned practice of racial discrimination. Couples get tested, meet with counselors, and select the optimum gene combinations. Performance sets the standard by which any reproductive event can be optimized; accidents result in 'in-valids' — *Untermenschen* who are relegated to service jobs. The Aryan radiance of even the black and Asian actors contrasts with the

⁵ Nothing much has been made about *The Matrix's* opening image of an eye, the 'tell' of the film. Like the use of eyes and eye-like objects in Hitchcock films, the eye is the opening, the gap, between the viewer and the awful void of the Other, imagined geographically as an Elsewhere of indeterminate extent. This land beyond the eye is the filmic 'land' behind/beyond the screen, domesticated for 110 or so minutes to allow, as Todd McGowan would put it, relationships with the Real, a deployment of fantasy for coming to terms with the traumas of death and separation. Todd McGowan, *The Real Gaze: Film Theory after Lacan* (Albany NY: SUNY, 2007).

'immigrant peculiarities' of the in-valids. Strangely, this mirrors the American practice of film casting that favors a narrow margin of physical types and cultural stereotypes. Unlike films from, say Britain or France, where the standards of beauty are considerably wider and even homely people are regularly cast in leading roles, American actors are fit to a mold. Magazine racks at grocery stores could be considered eugenics self-help manuals: marriages are followed to their short, bitter ends; pregnancies are major news. American actors also seem to smoke for no good reasons, at a much higher rate than the general population, making it seem as if there is a subliminal dimension to advertise products on this side of the Atlantic.

For all its diversity, *Gattaca* is for me a profoundly racist film. This is not simply because of its emphasis on genetics but because of its unquestioned acceptance of the ideal of performance. The invalid hero's desire is to overcome his 'disability' and win a seat on a mission to Jupiter. His success is applauded, and this seems to refute the eugenics ethic; but in fact it endorses the dream-as-aim where, by winning the 'prize', the in-valid hero implicitly endorses the game. Aryan appearance and superman performance is the standard he has achieved; no one questions it. Alenka Zupančič has put this in terms of the 'racization' of happiness.⁶ Happiness is no longer an option within the range of experiences, it is an expectation, a right. Those who are not happy are cause for concern, even alarm. Interviews with artists, for example, do not talk about the artist's work or progress but, rather, about their life style, their adjustment to the artistic life, etc.

In reflection, there is a constant obsession within dystopian fiction for happiness as a racial goal, a matter of eugenics. The ultimate racial distinction is between humans and some other kind of being that, while it has feelings and even an advanced culture, cannot be considered as equal. This is the evident theme of *District 9*, where the aliens are disfigured 'prawns' with exoskeletons, but their weakened condition has allowed them to be ghettoed in the country adept at such social control, South Africa. In Woody Allen's *Sleeper*, happiness lies in a restoration of pre-future ideals. Just like *Fahrenheit 451*, where a trip to the future ends in a trip back to ideals of the present or earlier, the cryogenic time traveler condenses the problems of the future into a matter of bringing together the Oedipal couple. They argue, they fight, but in the end they kiss and unite. What could be more 'eugenic' than the family values in the face of global catastrophe? We are reminded of the worst examples of this genre, where the physical and cultural world collapses but somehow the family gets back together, sometimes with its original pets.

Racization of happiness is evident in *Code 46*, a curiously blank account of two lovers whose violation of the legal provision for preventing sex between genetically close individuals (the code 46 of the title), defuses the happiness issue through memory wipes. The Sphinx (an appropriate monster for regulating the happiness of Oedipal couples through the regulation of boundaries) regulates 'covers' by which those permitted to enter the 'inside' zones (London, Hong Kong, Seattle, etc.) are separated from other parts of the world (read 'third world'). This segregation goes unquestioned and even the

⁶ Alenka Zupančič, *The Odd One In: On Comedy* (Cambridge: MIT, 2008).

film seems to endorse the procedure as what fate and future have to offer. We think back to *Blade Runner* and *Children of Men* to realize that most of this dystopian filmwork has to do with location location location. People who are not where they want to be, usually because it has gone to hell in a hand-basket, need to immigrate into a safe zone. They are refused because they are (1) replicants as in *Blade Runner*, (2) aliens as in *District 9*, (3) in-valids as in *Gattica*, (4) not British, as in *Children of Men*, or (5) refusing to take their blue pill.

We are returned to the inner ideological legacy of the French Revolution. Free choice, not as a philosophical option but as a policy of government has a reverse blow-back. Specific choice, made across an open range of possibilities, at once is a marker of inner truth. It *shows who you are*, and futuristic dystopian films seem quick to intuit the genetic ground of choice. The subject is 'programmed', or as Lacan would say, 'barred'. But, Lacan would further explain that this binding is also a hinge between participation in the meaning effects created by metaphor and the unconscious structuring of metonymy. Language, not the body, sets up the bi-polar human world but then allows for gaps, fractures, escapes. Because they are themselves caught within this calculus, films use the theme of escape to define their geography of zones and districts that are prisons or havens. Within the spatial field of exile or anxiety, the end is not allowed to happen. 'England soldiers on', in most cases literally, since the only way to keep the subject suspended between two deaths, *Matrix* style, is through oppressive Orwellian tactics.

In Northrop Frye's prescient analysis, *1984* and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* were the two poles of dystopian fear.⁷ One was based on the over-presence of smothering concern, the other on an indulgence of freedom. Even then (1932), Huxley connected the idea of a free range of choice to genetic determinism and eugenics. It turns out that only the faces were different. *1984* is simply the obverse of *Brave New World*. They are two territories on the same planet, one an 'inside', the other a *District 9*. Free will and determinism need each other — more than that — they are the same thing, viewed from different angles. When determinism is put into eugenic-behavioral terms, freedom of some kind must provide the ground, the opportunities for choice, movement, and exception. Exception is what the films are about, and to condense this 'about' into the thing that makes films work or not, exception is the structure of the 'plot points' that spin action around tight fulcrums. A plot point is a chiasmus in miniature in that it generally uses only 'available materials' to effect a radical conversion or even reversal. The X logic ('He was a wit among dunces and a dunce among wits') shows that every statement — hence every idea, act, and being — contains its opposite, which can be released if the insulation separating the opposite poles of meaning frays and allows a short circuit. If this short circuit can be materialized into an exciting escape, as in *District 9*, all the better. Only rarely does the worker and the industrialist shake hands on this, as they do in *Metropolis*; more often they leave us with the

⁷ Northrop Frye, 'The Critical Path: An Essay on the Social Context of Literary Criticism', *Daedalus* 99, 2 (Spring 1970): 268-342.

fantasy of a family or couple reunited, as in *Sleeper*, *District 9*, *Blade Runner*, or *Gattica*.⁸ This is more in line with the idea of a genetic fix, a eugenics taken from the family planning charts of the military-industrial complex and returned to strangers whose eyes met across a crowded room. Their eyes met, and so did ours.

October 16, 2010

⁸ The conclusion of *Gattica* is a 'maternal' reunion of the hero with his *prima materia*, as we discover when the *Untermensch* Vincent Freeman voice-overs his destiny dream of traveling to Saturn. Since our bodies contain atoms that were originally formed in stars, space travel returns us to our origins.