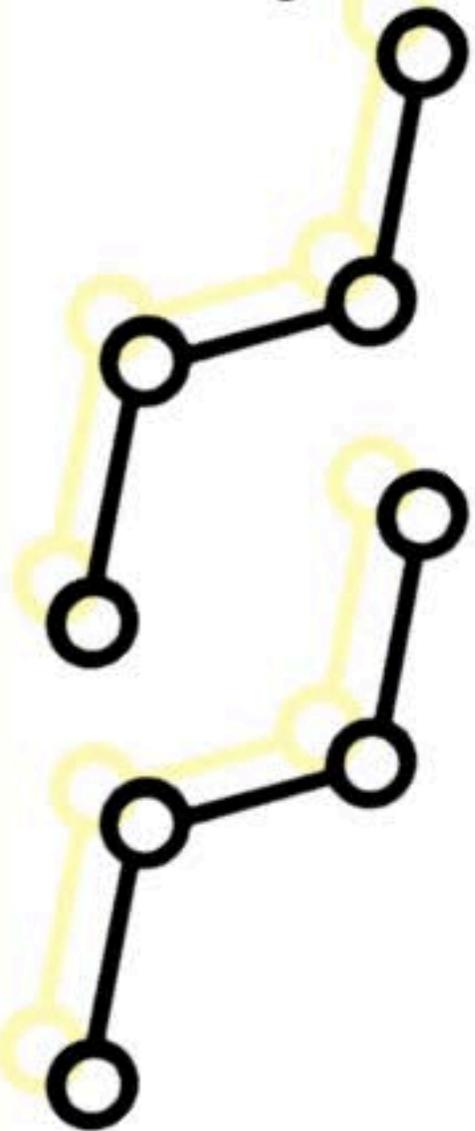


OUR
POSSIBLE
SELVES

Merrienne
Jimenez



The genres of sci-fi and horror are important because 1) they push the boundaries of entertainment, special effects, and our imagination, and 2) they provide crucial commentary about the reality of the world we live in. This project is a culmination of using a more critical lens by means of the theories of biopolitics and posthumanism superimposed on the figures of the Zombie and the Cyborg.



These monsters provide a space for projection of real-world problems that allow us to further understand and contemplate the consequences of the neoliberal landscape. The Zombie and the Cyborg are political personas that serve as a reflection of humanity and the struggle over the boundary between life and death.

These figures are manifestations of our possible selves in a neoliberal world that measures one's value in their economic contribution.



Our perceptions of progress are linear and tied to technology, presented through the Cyborg, but the way the world is organized puts the Zombie in a position of post-human.

FOUCAULT'S BIOPOLITICS

addresses the shift from disciplining individuals to securing populations and territories (254). The model of capitalism opens the door to greater disparities based on monetary value, which therein exposes populations to the challenges of surviving under the threat of starvation or unemployment.

Foucault points out these have shifted from problems that need a solution to rates that need to be monitored/calibrated (Vint 176). This division between who to "make live and let die" coincides with the division between who is human and who is not, ie what is human and what is monstrous.

MONSTERS

are ambiguous—or rather, ambiguity is made monstrous—because they don't fall under the binary constructions used to maintain order from above. To create further distance, the monster narrative comes into play, establishing a definitive human/good vs. non-human/bad. The abject is delegated to "the margins of the political order" (Guidotto 49). This puts them just outside the law, in a state of exception where rights can be suspended at any time, allowing the abject to become a space of violence, which includes inaction through a faulty system such as capitalism, that deems some disposable over others, ie without human worth.

AGAMBEN'S *MUSELMANN*

"a limit-figure of the human and inhuman" that shows this boundary's "insufficiency and abstraction" making their deaths "no longer death" (Mills 88).

This is represented in the Zombie as cogs of the economy, condemned to an overworked, underpaid existence, doomed to disadvantage at every instance in the job market, in natural disasters, etc. The lower-class, typically non-White population must work the most and contribute most to the capitalist endeavor, and in exchange, they are the most vulnerable and disposable.

The predatory nature of capitalism coincides with humans serving as cogs of the economy, where efficiency is the central goal—efficiency in their work as a means of maintaining the economy as top priority, centered on capital and profit by divisions across location, class, and ethnicity, benefitting some at the cost of most. The symbiotic relationship between capitalist hegemony and state racism align to the detriment of the masses. The population that keeps the economy afloat are not seen as human, but as disposable and replaceable parts of a machine.

"In Agambenian terms, zombies activate the 'state of exception,' the suspension of all juridical restraint or moral norm in the face of a perceived existential threat..." (Canavan 441).

This distinction between who lives and dies echoes the "civilized" vs. the "uncivilized" in the context of colonialism, similar to today's highly praised CEOs vs. their easily replaceable employees

"Zombies—lacking interior, lacking mind—cannot look; they are, for this reason, completely realized colonial objects. Zombies cannot be recognized, accommodated, or negotiated with; once identified, they must immediately be killed" (Canvan 437).

A hand holding a pen is positioned over the back of a zebra. The zebra's stripes are rendered in a wavy, optical illusion style. A pink triangle is superimposed on the top left, containing the text 'WHAT MAKES A'. Below the triangle is a pink rectangular box containing the text 'HUMAN?'.

WHAT
MAKES A

HUMAN?

Agamben also
differentiates
between

zoē

(simply living)

vs

bios

(living with human
essence)

according to Descartes
RATIONALITY = JUDGEMENT = THE
ABILITY TO DIFFERENTIATE
BETWEEN HUMAN AND NON-
HUMAN = CERTAIN INHERENT
RIGHTS OVER ANIMALS WHO DON'T
HAVE THIS RATIONALITY
(BADMINGTON 3).

Marx makes an excellent point that capitalism destroys the **spirit** or **essence** of the human, who is “kept alive, but in a state of injury” (Mbembe 21). For humans to survive, we must abide by an order that doesn’t recognize our humanity, and yet, there is definitive recognition between human and animal.

The neoliberal free-market model entails some are more valuable than others, rendering others disposable. Driven solely by profit, the goal of increasing efficiency paves the way for higher product output rather than easing the experience of the overworked and underpaid.

our core humanity



not a guarantee of human rights and fair treatment in our neoliberal world



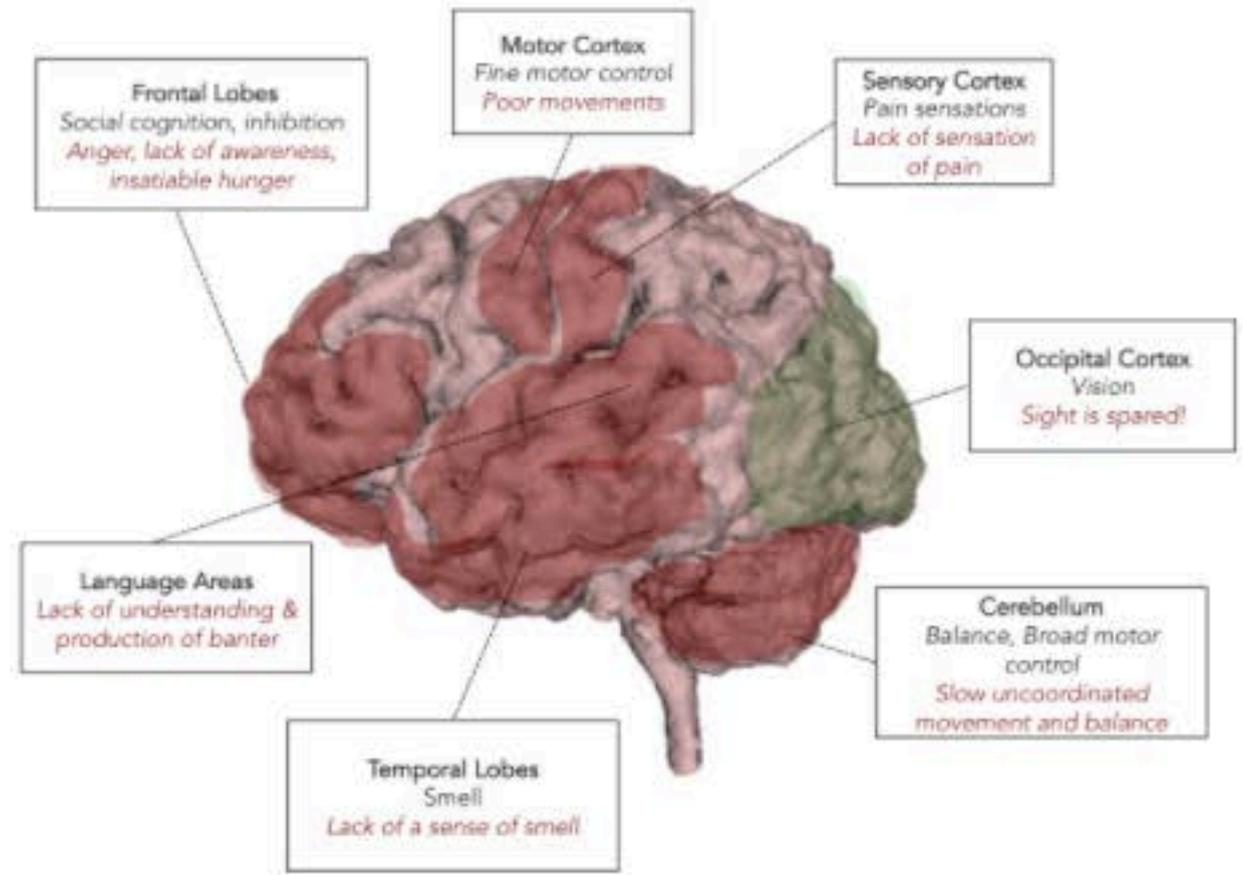
All the while, companies take advantage of the narratives of human essence and family as a means of keeping their workers happy, threading the idea that “we are all in this together” when it is clear some benefit over others. We are all human and gifted with rationality, but that doesn’t mean we are all equal and free to do as we please. This mentality has two major effects. 1) it manifests in forms of alienation and dehumanization to justify the acts of necropower that put certain populations at a disadvantage, and 2) it further drives the exploration of technology as a tool to compensate for human

Neuralink: A step closer to the Posthuman?



Besides our rationality, there is no concrete definition of "human." The varying interpretations reveals the problematization of such a border (Remshardt 137). The Cyborg instead serves as an expression of alternative identity, a "struggle over life and death [where] the boundary between science fiction and social reality is an optical illusion" (Haraway 6).

HUMAN VS. POST-HUMAN



Yet the Posthuman image has instilled within us the ideal of combining man and machine, a never-ending endeavor in reality and in sci-fi. The Posthuman point-of-view thus becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy (Hayles 2-3).

Our current reality presents the **ABJECT POSTHUMAN**: They are "surviving, but not really alive, they persist in a future without hope, a paradoxical future without a future" (Vint 172). This abject posthuman propped against a backdrop of **APOCALYPSE** creates an end/escape from global capitalism, where labor is a commodity, echoing the origins of the Zombie from Haiti and their colonial subjugation.

THE BOUNDARY BETWEEN HUMAN AND MONSTER DOES NOT EXIST

It is used as a means of maintaining order in the world: "The human is an ideal that exists only as a referent to define what deviates from it. Just as the monster is predicated on a judgment based upon what defines a normal human, so too, the human is a conceptualized idea that can be figured as a referent defined only through that which deviates from it" (MacCormack 523)



THE MONSTER REFLECTS US & OUR POSSIBLE PATHS UNDER THE CONSEQUENCES OF OUR SOC/POL/ECON CIRCUMSTANCES

The CYBORG seen as a positive possibility for the future; human DEFICIENCIES are fixed, we can further and better serve THE SYSTEM.

The ZOMBIE is seen in a more negative light, as DEGRADATION of future; DETERIORATION of our humanity at the hands of the system we live under.

CONCLUSION

If we're born into a system where humanism is the dominant mode of thinking, we can never really ever escape it. So posthumanism can claim to be beyond it, but can never really be beyond it because we're all products of scientific revolution and this line of thinking.

We also like to align Post-human with Progress, and Progress with Technology. We envision a post-human in the Cyborg. However, a more realistic post-human--if we had to name one--would be the figure of the Zombie. Rather than associating it with a step back (towards death), this monster reconstructs our experience of life as living undead, a condition of existence in a world that prioritizes profit over people.



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