



#3.2
2013
ISSN 2161-0010

Plaza: Dialogues in Language and Literature

Hicks, Charles Edgar. "Children of a Posthuman Realism: Alfonso Cuarón's Posthuman Adaptation of P.D. James's *The Children of Men*." *Plaza: Dialogues in Language and Literature* 3.2 (Spring 2013): 86-104. PDF.

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Children of a Posthuman Realism:

Alfonso Cuarón's Posthuman Adaptation of P.D. James's *The Children of Men*

By all accounts, P.D. James's 1992 novel *The Children of Men* falls into the category of dystopian fiction in the way that it critiques the social inequities and ecological decline of a futuristic England in order to comment on the pre-existing social conditions that might lead to such a landscape (Booker 3). James's novel, set in the year 2021, depicts a distinctly chaotic landscape where rampant infertility has plagued society since 1994, causing the oppressive government to institute cruel policies and establish penal colonies where accused individuals are sent to suffer without a jury. It is essentially the story of Dr. Theo Faron, an Oxford don who is approached by the revolutionary group the Five Fishes and charged with protecting a young pregnant woman named Julian. Throughout the course of the narrative, the reader not only learns of Theo's dark past, but also is presented with the devolution of human society in the face of a tyrannical government ruled by Theo's cousin, Xan Lyppiatt, the Warden of England, as he attempts to shelter unborn hope for humanity. As Nicole LaRose argues in "The Already Dead

and the Posthuman Baby,” the problem of infertility that has plagued the world of James’s novel is a metaphor for the loss of hope and the failure of neoliberal politics (7). This dilemma of impotency, though caused by mankind, is solved at the conclusion of the novel by the ascension of Theo Faron, the protagonist, as he assumes the role of Warden of England and protector/father of the infant child that will be the “hope of the world” (James 237). Through the use of first-person narration in the sections devoted to Faron’s diary, the novel takes the form of disjunctive *Bildungsroman*, where the ascension of Theo’s individuality from child to the hero of the human race becomes a microcosm for mankind’s struggle for supremacy in the face of nature. Due to its form the novel presents a purely anthropocentric view of reality where the tenets of Renaissance humanism, namely individualism and potentiality, provide a means to transcend the dystopian landscape (Andrew and Joubert-Laurencin 148).

At first glance, Alfonso Cuarón’s 2006 adaptation of the novel seems to adhere, at least thematically, to the humanist model of its literary precursor. Despite its completely different conclusion, we still see Theo Faron (Clive Owen) helping Kee (Claire-Hope Ashitey), who is pregnant with the first baby to be born in eighteen years, through a dystopian environment. Contrary to the novel, hope for humanity is not achieved by Theo becoming the ruler of England but through his self-sacrifice and death as he and Kee wait for the Human Project vessel *Tomorrow*. Nevertheless, the message of Cuarón’s film appears to be similar to James’s novel: human individuality and morality are capable of transcending societal and natural constraints.

However, just as James’s novel posits an anthropocentric view through the form of the *Bildungsroman*, so too does Cuarón’s film become something wholly different through the filmic techniques of what Andre Bazin labeled “cinematic realism.” When analyzed for the way in which it achieves a documentary film appearance through the utilization of sequence-shots, or

long takes, it becomes evident that Cuarón's film does not present a humanist perspective of reality, despite the fact that it adheres to many of the same themes as James's novel. Through the use of cinematic realism, especially during the long-shot sequences, Cuarón presents a wholly posthumanist representation of the source text. His use of sequence-shots allows him to represent theatrical depth of field, as well as spatial and temporal continuity, each of which destabilizes the human and non-human binary because neither is privileged and there is always a trace of one in the other in the mis-en-scene. Finally, he exploits the posthuman tenet of disembodiment through non-diegetic dialogue and digitally enhanced film sequences. Each of these aspects of cinematic realism presents the spectator with a view of reality that is neither human nor non-human, but a "posthumanist realism" that refuses abstraction (Buckland 67). The result is that the vision of reality posited by the film, though thematically similar to James's novel, is transformed by Cuarón's filmic technique and the message of hope at the conclusion of the film becomes one achieved through the transgression of the human/non-human distinction.

Before progressing towards a discussion of how Cuarón's adaptation of *The Children of Men* facilitates a posthuman agenda, it is necessary to provide a brief exposition regarding the nature and components of cinematic realism, as theorized by André Bazin, and the relation of cinematic realism to posthumanity. By and large, the medium of film itself, as opposed to the novel, is inherently posthuman in nature, namely in the way that it adheres to the "conception of information as a (disembodied) entity" that provides the opportunity for the "union of the human with the intelligent machine" (Hayles 2). For the purposes of this argument, the concept of posthumanity, with its numerous and varied definitions, can be allied with Donna J. Haraway's theory of the cyborg as a "cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction" (149). Cary Wolfe in *What is Posthumanism?*

combines the wide-ranging conceptions of the posthuman posited by theorists such as N.

Katherine Hayles, Donna Haraway, and Hans Moravec to characterize it as thus:

...it comes both before and after humanism: before in the sense that it names the embodiment and embeddedness of the human being in not just its biological but also its technological world, the prosthetic coevolution of the human animal with the technicity of tools and external archival mechanisms (such as language and culture)...and all of which comes before the historically specific thing called “the human” that Foucault’s archeology excavates. (xv)

In *What is Cinema*, Bazin claims that cinematic realism is “not certainly the realism of subject matter or realism of expression, but that realism of space without which moving pictures do not constitute cinema” (qtd. Andrew 137). Unlike his contemporary Sergei Eisenstein, who adhered to various forms of Soviet montage theory, which was symptomatic of silent films and relied on heavy editing techniques and the collision of seemingly unrelated images, Bazin endorsed a method of filming that involved sequence-shots, or long-takes, to achieve continuity and a documentary feel (138). Whereas the attempts of Soviet montage theory strove to have images “collide” in order to engender an emotional reaction from the spectator, Bazin’s cinematic realism expanded on Siegfried Kracauer’s version of realism by positing that cinema should focus on the “raw material of brute reality” in order to present the most objective view of reality (137).

The paradoxical nature of Bazin’s theory of cinematic realism is that its function is not to mystify the audience so that they forget they are watching a film, as the technique of montage was customarily employed to do, but make the mechanistic nature of film transparent to the viewer (Lapsley and Westlake 159). Because cinematic realism takes “brute reality” as its object

and uses techniques such as sequence-shots to convey the spatiality of the human characters and natural decor, it exposes the intervention of technology and the spectator becomes aware of the non-human element in the reproduction (Andrew 138). Bazin saw non-realist techniques such as montage as a manipulation and distortion of reality that needed to be avoided because it was restrictive in the way that it only produced a version of reality that the director desired.

Cinematic realism on the other hand, though it still relies on a large amount of editing, appears to be completely objective and organic, so that it presents an “inhuman portrait of the world” and becomes “not the media of man but the media of nature” in that it refuses the binary distinction between human and non-human through technological coupling (138). What the spectator is viewing is neither a completely human representation of reality, nor an attempt to distort reality as with montage, but a portrait facilitated by mechanical reproduction that always contains the trace of the human agent. The result is the perfect amalgamation between technology and human in the production of reality. In this way cinema becomes an “asymptote of reality” so that man and nature are co-dependent and it becomes increasingly difficult to abstract one from the other (140).

As stated before cinema, like photography, presents a pure example of the type of biological/technological hybridity addressed above. However, if we speak in regards to the *vision* of reality produced, then certain filmic practices that attempt to remove the audience from the fact that they are watching a reproduction of reality cannot be seen as postulating a posthuman agenda. These techniques, such as Eisenstein’s montages, rely on Surrealist techniques and privilege “the abstract as the Real” while minimizing the importance of material intervention (Hayles 13). On the contrary, Bazin’s cinematic realism, in calling attention to how the biological is supplemented by the technological, refuses to perpetuate the “materiality/information

separation” and actually demystifies for the audience the synthesis of human and non-human (12). In this way “Bazinian realism” promotes the posthuman agenda by destabilizing the hierarchy of man and machine (Buckland 72).

In contrast to the aforementioned posthuman vision of Bazinian cinema, P.D. James’s novel *The Children of Men*, although it addresses the impotency of the human race in the face of nature, nevertheless expresses the main humanist modalities of individual innovation and potentiality. At first glance, James’s novel, which is initiated by the death of Joseph Ricardo, “the last human being to be born on earth,” and openly proclaims that the human race “had lost for ever the power to reproduce” (3-4) seemingly challenges the tenets of biological anthropocentrism and the supremacy of mankind in regards to non-human entities (Vaughn and Dacey 34). The novel’s protagonist and occasional narrator Theo Faron is a historian at the University of Oxford and obsessed with the nostalgia of Victorian England (James 5). The plot is divided between Theo’s journal entries, which relate his childhood with Xan Lyppiatt, the Warden of England, and his attempts to aid and protect Julian, who is pregnant with the first child to be born in twenty-five years (4-5). He openly acknowledges in his diary the deeply rooted disillusionment and impotency felt by the human race at not being able to produce any offspring and goes as far as to comment that “for all our knowledge, our intelligence, our power, we can no longer do what the animals do without thought” (5-6).

The content of the novel completely destabilizes the supremacy of the human subject established by the Enlightenment tradition that, as A.O. Lovejoy illustrates in *The Great Chain of Being*, held a cosmological anthropocentric vision that humans provided the link between the ethereal and the material (103). In the novel, the inability to “produce fertile sperm” is coupled and paralleled by the increasingly xenophobic tendencies of England in regards to neighboring

countries and immigration, so that the reader is presented with a portrait of nature rebelling against the industrial progress of mankind (James 6-10). However, although James's novel does call into question the apparent supremacy of man in the face of nature, therefore exploding any semblance of biological anthropocentrism, it nevertheless perpetuates the separation of the human from the non-human throughout (Vaughn and Dacey 34). As Warren Buckland illustrates, one of the main distinctions of the posthuman paradigm is not the eradication of man itself, but of the ontological boundaries between the human and non-human (72). With this in mind, James's novel constantly reverts back to the human/non-human distinction in the way that it unfolds as a struggle of man against nature that reinforces the binary. Along with James's purely anthropocentric vision, is the formal structure of the narrative that promotes the ultimate centrality of the human subject in regards to the progression of history. The use of a first person narrative, as exhibited by Theo's diary, not only highlights mankind's struggle against impotence, but also imposes a humanistic logic on the natural world that perpetuates a humanist modality.

The most revealing humanistic quality of James's work is the way Theo's diary, complemented by the third-person narrative, takes the form of what can be labeled as a kind of *Bildungsroman*. Similar to the relationship between posthumanism and film, the novel as a form is inherently humanistic due to the fact that it affords the individual author the ability to create and reproduce reality through fiction. As Paul Sheehan claims in *Modernism, Narrative and Humanism*, the novel, as opposed to poetry, is the epitome of the Cartesian analogue because it allows the author to create purely from consciousness and constantly subordinates the natural world to the consciousness of the individual (2). The *Bildungsroman* as a genre that illustrates the "becoming" of the individual and man's ability to transcend in the face of natural and societal deterrents "draws heavily on the Renaissance model of humanism as *potentiality*, of the self

awaiting instruction in order to come into its own” (2). This argument does not mean to imply that James’s *The Children of Men* is a pure *Bildungsroman* in the tradition of Goethe, but only that the use of first-person narration in Theo’s diary creates a structure where the importance is placed on Theo’s personal progression, rather than a vision of the decline of man.

In Theo’s journal we learn that as a child he and his cousin Xan “had been brought up together” and that “from the age of twelve [they] spent the summer holidays together” (James 13). Theo, who was born into less than noble circumstances in Richmond Park and who was subjected to the death of his father in 1983, also faced his mother’s social anxiety surrounding the fact that her sister “had married a middle-aged baronet” and she was “a middle-grade civil servant” (14-25). Though these “paternalistic constraints” (Sheehan 2) of Theo resemble the traditional structure of the *Bildungsroman*, his escape is not to an urban setting, but to Xan’s manor house at Woolcombe (James 14). The self-struggle that he must overcome is his failed marriage and the death of his daughter, but also his impotency in the face of Xan’s success. Both of these obstacles of the individual are surpassed at the conclusion of the novel when Theo, who has successfully redeemed himself as a husband by assisting Julian, is able to overcome his failure as a father by becoming the protector of the child and transcend the limitations of his common upbringing by taking Xan’s place as Warden of England at the conclusion of the novel (239-41). This progression of Theo fits almost seamlessly into the theme of the *Bildungsroman*, which Georg Lukács defines as “the reconciliation of the problematic individual, guided by his lived experience of the ideal with concrete social reality” (qtd. in Sheehan 3). When looking at *The Children of Men* as a *Bildungsroman* we have what was formally a theme regarding the “end of mankind” transforming into the linear progression of Theo as the hero of the human race. From a purely formal level, the structure of the *Bildungsroman* itself subordinates reality to the

narrative of the individual which is controlled and manipulated by human consciousness. It is this supremacy of the individual and its autonomy from nature in James's novel that is subverted by the cinematic realism used by Alfonso Cuarón in his adaptation.

Though the posthuman quality of Cuarón's film is achieved through Bazinian cinematic realism that utilizes sequence-shots, or long-takes, this technique is multi-faceted. It is through the combination of sustained continuity and what Gilles Deleuze has labeled "depth of shot," or depth of field that cinematic realism slowly deconstructs the boundaries between human and non-human objects (qtd. in Andrew and Joubert-Laurencin 91). Initially it is necessary to explore how the depth of field created by the sequence-shot works toward undermining the human subject by creating a kind of democratic *mise-en-scène* where no object, human or non-human, is given precedence. This will ultimately be complimented by the sustained continuity of the sequence-shot that completely dissolves the distinction between human and non-human through an intensified temporal and spatial continuity that appears to unfold in "real" time. The result is that as the film progresses, the human subjects, Theo especially, slowly blend with the natural décor and the spectator comes to realization that what is being presented is not a portrait of reality from a solely human perspective.

It is in the opening scene when the audience is introduced to Alfonso Cuarón's method of sequence-shots and where the subjectivity of Theo begins to erode. The beginning of the film is initiated, like James's novel, with the death of the last human born on earth, Diego Ricardo. However, instead of being presented with the events through the lens of Faron's journal, the film opens with the title credits superimposed on a completely black screen with the disembodied voice of a newscaster informing the audience about the occupation of Muslim mosques and a newly ratified Homeland Security bill (Cuarón6:36). Following Theo's realization of Baby

Diego's death in the café begins a filmic trope that will be used by Cuarón sporadically throughout the remainder of the film. As Theo leaves the café the camera follows him by way of a lengthy sequence-shot that allows the audience to view reality "from Theo's perspective rather than focusing on Theo" (LaRose 10). Although correct, LaRose's statement is a bit misleading because it implies that the audience is only privy to Theo's vision of the world and therefore he retains a prominence as in the novel. In fact what we are seeing in the *mise-en-scène* as Theo moves out of the café and into the street is his immersion into nature; this initiates the first sequence-shot and the beginning of his amalgamation with the natural décor.

The sequence-shot, by employing documentary-style filming techniques, achieves cinematic realism in the way that it refuses to focus solely on one particular object, human or non-human, in the camera's plane of vision. Instead what the audience receives when Theo leaves the café is a collage of objects moving in linear time with the narrative which enforces a horizontal equality amongst the visuals. This visual decoupage is achieved through "composition in depth," or depth of field, and includes the "simultaneous arrangement of dramatically significant action and objects on several spatial planes within the frame" (Cook 384). Such a technique is an attempt to "make the two-dimensional space of the cinema screen three-dimensional" so that all areas of the *mise-en-scène* foreground, middleground, and background are all in focus and carry equal significance (384). The technique is employed by disciples of cinematic realism because it replicates the way we see reality and are capable of changing our focus (384). As Dudley Andrew claims, this creates a situation where the spectator is presented with the "free interplay between man and the objects in his perceptual field," so that there is no distinction in importance between the human characters and the objects (Andrew and Joubert-Laurencin 89). The sequence-shot that follows Theo out into London 2027 creates a scene where

everything is in focus so that as Theo walks across the camera's plane of vision the spectator's eye rapidly focuses on every object simultaneously. The crowded and polluted urban landscape is in sharp focus, as is Theo, so that Cuarón achieves a kind of dramatic realism where the actor is inseparable from their surroundings (Andrew and Joubert-Laurencin 89).

This depth of field is replicated in Theo and Kee's escape from refugee camp at Bexhill, which is comprised of a continuous long-shot that refuses to focus solely on the actors. This confirms for Bazin "the total interdependence of everything real from human to the mineral," and it initiates Theo's movement from the individuality we see in the café when he is amidst the crowd of people to his lack of autonomy as a human subject outside (qtd. in Andrew and Joubert-Laurencin 91). LaRose claims that the bombing of the café only moments after Theo leaves signals his allegorical death and his disassociation from society, so that from the onset he becomes something outside of mankind, neither human nor non-human (10). However, LaRose's argument that from the opening scenes the audience must infer that Theo is the "already dead," perpetuates his position outside the narrative in a way that seemingly reinforces his centrality in a similar way that James's novel does by positioning him as a narrator (10). In contrast what Cuarón's initial long-take achieves with the spectator is not the metadiegetic conclusion that Theo is metaphorically outside of the society and nature, but that his supremacy as a human subject has been reduced (10). It is through Cuarón's ability to sustain continuity through the sequence-shot that signals the removal of any boundaries between human and non-human.

However, the aforementioned subordination of Theo to the natural décor does not mean to imply the complete extinction of him, just as posthumanism does not signal the eradication of mankind (Buckland 72). Instead what posthumanism offers is a different perspective that engenders "a greater understanding of our own (contingent) position in the world/universe"

provided by the “synthesis of the old and the new, in the same way that a cyborg is *both* human and machine” (72). The sequence-shot technique is not only a formal method employed in order to heighten the realism and subsequently increase the depth of the field, resulting in the destabilization of the image hierarchy. It also heightens the continuity of the shot in order to present, not only a more realistic view, but a presentation of a “sustained and continuous diegetic world” that exists in “homogenous space” (72).

The scene where Theo and Kee are attempting to escape from Bexhill is composed of numerous long-takes that though do not literally form an unbroken continuity, heighten the realism of what is being filmed. This creates a situation where the spectator feels that they are watching time unfold before their eyes, heightening the documentary-style feel of the film. As in the opening sequence with Theo in the café, the frame presents a depth of field where everything is in focus, but more importantly produces numerous frames where the human subjects drift in and out of the *mise-en-scène*. This is especially evident during the Bexhill scenes before and during Theo and Kee’s escape. As Kee shelters her child and Theo follows closely behind Marichka (Oana Pellea) the camera bounces with the movement of their escape. However, as they flee the sadistic guard Syd (Peter Mullan) we constantly see them drift in and out of the frame. Similarly, early in the film when Theo is going to meet Jasper (Michael Caine) the sequence-shot pans from Theo walking out of the frame to the dilapidated apartment building and finally rests on a bulldozer. This produces, in Warren Buckland’s words, a “posthumanist realism” because the non-human and human objects on the screen share the same “ontology” (73). Because the human characters continuously move in and out of the *mise-en-scène*, there is always a trace of the human and the non-human in the frame. Similarly this can also be seen in

the disembodied voice-over techniques that Cuarón uses, where many times the dialogue is non-diegetic and overlaid over non-human objects.

Unlike the conventional filmic techniques of traditional voice-over, voice-over in flashbacks, and non-diegetic monologue, Cuarón on numerous occasions employs the kind of disembodied voice-over commentary that is symptomatic of documentary-style films (Braudy and Cohen 287). It is important to differentiate here between the technique of documentary voice-over that Braudy and Cohen are discussing, which is customarily used to describe for the spectator the events that are taking place to facilitate comprehension and the non-diegetic dialogue that Cuarón uses (287). The authors are correct in arguing that this, not unlike the first-person narration present in Theo's diaries in the novel, asserts a level of authority in regards to the film and creates a situation where a purely *human* voice is not only narrating the action, but creating and guiding it themselves (287). Cuarón's film, however, commonly uses a non-diegetic form of dialogue that, not unlike his sequence-shot technique, allows the human to be coupled seamlessly with non-human elements.

As mentioned before, the opening moments of the film present the title-credits flashing across the screen as the disembodied voice of the newscaster is heard from off-screen reporting on the state of the world. This idea of the disembodied voice proliferating information coincides with N. Katherine Hayles's concept of "embodied virtuality" that is posited in *How We Became Posthuman* and challenges the notion established by the cellular automata model that argues "because we are essentially information, we can do away with the body" (11-12). Hayles recognizes that as humans we are naturally embodied beings, but challenges the conception that just because we are imbued with information/technology, that we need to purge ourselves of the duality (12). Hayles' intent is to challenge the "materiality/information separation" by posting an

“ultimate Platonic form” where the boundaries between a technological and biological medium become blurred (12-13). With this in mind what we have in Cuarón’s use of the disembodied voice is the decentering of the human subject which removes the dialogue constantly from its human origins and embeds it in the realm of technology. Cuarón’s utilization of disembodied dialogue is two-fold: on one level it is dialogue produced by a biological organism that is transposed onto the screen through technological means. This creates a biological/technological amalgamation not unlike what we as spectators experience when we reflect on the fact that our ability to see the images on the screen is facilitated by a technological apparatus, just as they were able to be reproduced in the same way. On a completely visual level Cuarón’s use of the disembodied voice works in much the same way as his long-take technique. For instance, in the scene where Jasper gives Theo a ride from Bexhill, the camera cuts from the pair talking to a panoramic view where the car is seen traveling through the countryside. However, the dialogue in the scene is constant, so when the car is moving the spectator continues to hear the dialogue between Jasper and Theo. The result is that the voices are superimposed on images of a moving car, the surrounding woods, and the burning carcasses of livestock. This technique of the disembodied voice is replicated throughout, especially when there is a television screen present, as in the scene in Theo’s apartment, or when Jasper and Theo are looking over the former-cartoonist’s collage of newspaper clippings. Again the result is the amalgamation of human and non-human elements that presents an interesting visual, but also the usurpation of any authorial voice like we might see in a conventional documentary film. The dialogue is rarely guiding or controlling the plot in any way, but instead complimenting the objects in the image. As with Cuarón’s long-takes and depth of field, the supremacy of the human subject is reduced and ultimately coupled with the non-human objects on the screen.

Having discussed at length the numerous filmic techniques that Alfonso Cuarón employs throughout *Children of Men*, it is necessary now to look at what is arguably his crowning formulaic achievement in the entire film. The sequence-shot that takes place during the car ride that includes Julian (Julianne Moore), Luke (Chiwetel Ejiofor), and Miriam (Pam Ferris), as well as Theo and Kee, is both the culmination of the posthuman elements that have been discussed previously and a pure representation of Bazin's cinematic realism. As Steve Nolan illustrates in *Film, Lacan, and the Subject of Religion: A Psychoanalytic Approach to Religious Film Analysis*, "the main challenge confronting Bazin was the paradoxical relation of cinematic realism and cinematic art," or more appropriately "how is cinematic realism to be considered ontologically connected to its object" (67). Bazin seems to answer his own question by expounding on his theory of cinematic realism through, not the complete absence of the human element, but the amalgamation of human and technology through documentary-style filming, namely the technique of long-takes or sequence-shots. For Bazin, "between the originating object and its objects there intervenes only the instrumentality of a nonliving agent" (qtd. in Nolan 67). Bazin's desire to present reality through a completely objective view is inconsequential to this discussion; what is crucial is how his theory regarding cinematic realism allows for the complete amalgamation of the human subject and technology in order to recreate reality.

According to J. Dudley Andrew, the realism that Bazin was trying to produce was "based not on a physicist's notion of reality but on a psychologist's notion" (138). What this implies is that a certain degree of realism is not only attained through cinematic realism due to its documentary-style, but also through the spectators' realization that what they are seeing was mechanically reproduced, and therefore not created solely by fallible human hands (138). In short, Bazin's theory relies on the assumption that human creativity coupled with technological

innovation legitimizes what appears on screen. The paradoxical nature of Bazin's theory is that cinematic realism, whose sole goal is to represent reality as objectively and accurately as possible, actually draws attention to constructed nature of the film. Cinematic realism, either with its hand-held camera style or sequence-shot techniques, is self-reflexive in that it calls attention to itself as a posthuman medium.

The scene involving Theo and Kee in the car, along with the rest of the Fishes, gives the impression, as with the other sequence-shots, of existing in "real" time and employing an "intensified continuity" in order to heighten the realistic nature of the sequence (Buckland 72). However, as James Udden illustrates in "Child of the Long Take: Alfonso Cuarón's Film Aesthetics in the Shadow of Globalization," this sequence, which appears to be one continuous take, is in fact impossible for a traditional camera and in fact contains "multiple shots melded together digitally in post-production" (1). What appears to be a subjective view inside the car is in fact created through the "luxury of a twin-axis doggicam rigged above a missing car roof which is then digitally filled in during post-production" (1). Though the sequence in the car seemingly unfolds in temporal and spatial reality, a physical camera, without digital assistance, cannot achieve the kind of cinematic realism that the spectator sees. According to Bazin's theory of cinematic realism, the effectiveness of this sequence lies in the fact that the spectator is aware that what they are seeing is not humanly possible, or feasible for a physical camera, and this ultimately achieves an objective vision of reality (Andrew 138). More importantly however is that these sequence-shots throughout the film "suggest to us a non-human, or posthumanist, realism" because we are aware that what we are viewing is not solely a human perspective (Buckland 74). As with contemporary movies such as *Fight Club*, we have a reality that is a combination of human and digital reproduction. This not only achieves a heightened realism, but

throws into question the traditional notions of what constitutes a human being. Whereas throughout James's source text we are continuously presented a purely human perspective, Cuarón's film is a posthuman vision that refuses any distinction between the human and non-human.

At the conclusion of the film, as we see Theo die as the Human Project ship *Tomorrow* arrives, the spectator no longer envisions the birth of the child and the possibility of human reproduction as an allegory of hope as we do with James's novel. The message in the film has been completely transformed by Cuarón's posthuman vision so that the possibility of transcending this dire view of our possible future lies not with some human or non-human object, but the ability to transgress such boundaries. Cuarón's film works toward exposing that what we see as objective reality is in fact always facilitated by something that refuses distinction and that we are already living in a posthumanist paradigm. Ironically enough, through his adherence to cinematic realism, he has drawn the spectator's attention to the fact that they are watching a posthuman representation of reality. In this way, the conclusion of the film, which depicts Theo succumbing to his wounds, does not convey the message that hope can come out of human loss as the novel does, but that the loss of the purely "human" signals the possibility of hope.

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