“We Spared No Expense”:

Marxist Implications of Technology in the Jurassic Park Franchise

By

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Abstract

As long as we have considered the possibilities of emergent technology, we have written stories in anticipation of their arrival, and as long as we write those stories, we find a great propensity for turning them into film. This parallel seems to be implicitly understood by modern audiences, but the extent to which these adaptations remain true to the messages of their source material is often the subject of debate. This rhetorical analysis reviews key installments of the *Jurassic Park* franchise from a Marxist perspective. There is a distinctive evolution in narrative and message between the original 1990 novel *Jurassic Park*, the eponymous 1993 film adaptation, and the recent “reboot,” *Jurassic World*. In this analysis, I use Marxist theory to guide my interpretation of technology in the *Jurassic Park* narrative. Ultimately, there is a significant change in message from one adaptation to the next, moving from a Marxist story of resistance to a story advocating the commodification of technology.

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“’You know what’s wrong with scientific power?’ Malcom said. “It’s a form of inherited wealth. And you know what assholes congenitally rich people are.’”

—Michael Crichton, *Jurassic Park*, p. 306

Challenges in Modern Science

In 2015, entrepreneur Martin Shkreli became arguably one of the most hated men in America. After acquiring the company Turing Pharmaceuticals, a manufacturer of pharmacological products including HIV and AIDS drugs, his first move was to raise the price of the company’s Daraprim from $13.50 a pill to a staggering $750 a pill (Long & Egan, 2015). Daraprim is a drug that aids in the prevention of damage to the nervous system in patients with the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) who lack the necessary antibodies to fight parasitic infections on their own- the drug works to save the lives of those patients who would otherwise succumb to complications of the infection (Court, 2016). Shkreli reasoned that because the pill was vital to the survival and quality of life of those suffering with HIV and AIDS, those individuals would be willing to pay almost anything for access and his newly acquired company could profit from the demand. The story gained instant notoriety and outrage spread across the nation over the accused greed at the expense of human life. As the new CEO of the company, Shkreli was certainly within his rights to raise the price, and it was undoubtedly his duty to ensure the fiscal success of Turing Pharmaceuticals, but the decision was still considered one of dubious morality. There was profit to be made, but at what point, many wondered, does profit take a backseat to other factors, such as necessity?

Shkreli was not the only person in recent news to commodify valuable technology and invention for profit and fiscal gain. In another example, Dr. Anna Ahimastos was accused of fabricating the results of a study for blood pressure medication to survive in what she described

as a “publish or perish” scientific climate (Scott, 2015). Essentially, Ahimastos was presented with a choice, one that appeared easy from a distance, but was no doubt a difficult one to make at the time, and with the implication that kind of decision was not uncommon in the scientific community. Based on Ahimastos’ observations, it seems apparent that this is not an entirely uncommon moral dilemma for entrepreneurs and individuals alike: many are being encouraged to compromise their corporate, scientific, and even personal integrity in exchange for prolific scientific and technological production. Many may question whether companies such as Turing Pharmaceuticals are justified in charging what they please for the resources they produce, simply because people will pay, or whether a faulty result here or there should be a serious choice for a researcher to stay afloat in the scientific community. These cases and quandaries may sound like distinctly modern dilemmas, but in reality, we as society have puzzled with such questions for centuries- both in real life and in stories.

Finally, I will present a third case of dubious technological profit for consideration. In 1987, entrepreneur John Hammond had an idea that would revolutionize the field of genetics. There were many obstacles in the way, especially if he chose to conduct his research through a university- regulations, funding approvals committees. It was bound to be a complete bureaucratic nightmare, to the point of stagnation on the project. Instead of suffering through such a prolonged process, he founded his own company and privately funded the project himself with his own geneticists and his own equipment. It was much faster, possibly much more successful, and stood to make an even greater project- but Hammond and his team had cut corners throughout and that genetics project ended with deadly consequences.

These cases are distinctly similar in at least one prominent way: many constituents of the scientific community find distinct pressure staying abreast an increasingly competitive

technological climate. Despite the similarity, however, it is important to note that they also differ in circumstance, but especially on one crucial detail: the first two stories are real accounts in recent news, while the third story is the premise for Michael Crichton’s 1990 science fiction novel *Jurassic Park*. While life-saving drugs and test-tube dinosaurs have very little in common on the surface, the premise is familiar: the genetics company InGen wants to open a park full of resurrected dinosaurs, but along the way it is discovered that they cut corners and knew less than they had anticipated. The results are both deadly and unforgettable.

In the 1990s when *Jurassic Park* was released, Crichton was in a particularly good position to publish the novel and have it be well received by his reading audience. With five thrillers already under his belt (and many more under his early pseudonym, John Lange), at the time of its inception, Crichton was no stranger to the cautionary techno thriller. The original idea for *Jurassic Park* was conceived as early as 1983, where Crichton had a vivid image of a screenplay in which a graduate student recreates a genetically perfect pterodactyl in a lab (michaelcrichton.com). It was a good start, he had felt, but Crichton struggled with a few issues, such as a protagonist that was not relatable to his main reading audience (that is, adults) and a solid reason for anyone to care about the science he had painstakingly researched for the story. In an interview, Crichton explained, “although I, by then, believed that it was possible to genetically engineer these creatures so that eventually it would be possible I couldn’t see who would pay for it. [...] Because it’s not a cure for cancer” (Bouzereau, 2001) To Crichton, the science was fascinating and imminent, but that was not enough for him to justify the seemingly frivolous application in his story.

It was not until 1990 that the technology has measurably caught up with Crichton’s idea and the notion of exploring recombinant DNA (rDNA) in such a capacity began to make sense.

The final obstacle was one that had not changed since the early drafts: the seemingly implausible and impersonal setting that might prevent a reader from investing in the story. Crichton hypothesized that his audience would not care about the scientific advancements in and of themselves because, as mentioned earlier, it is not like Frankensteinian dinosaurs were as obviously profoundly impactful as a cure for cancer. Crichton could only fathom that the only possible reason might persuade people to care was if the dinosaurs were created for entertainment—for profit. Of the dinosaurs, Crichton said in an interview, “you know, it’s very entertaining, and the only thing I could think of was that it would be some for of entertainment” (Bouzeraeu, 2001). Crichton’s solution would go on to shape not only his initial idea, but the rest of the franchise: he set the story in a theme park where the genetically engineered dinosaurs were on display for profit, like a prehistoric zoo.

As stated previously, *Jurassic Park* was, indeed, originally formulated as a screenplay, and Crichton wasted little time before sending a draft of his finalized novel off to director friend Steven Spielberg. The result of that decision of course, became history-- Crichton adapted the novel into a new version of his screenplay directed by Spielberg and released in 1993. The film was a huge success and arguably earned its place as a Spielberg, a 90s, and a science fiction classic.

Jurassic Park became a behemoth of a franchise that could have served as a cautionary tale to Shkreli and Ahimastos. It did, after all, raise many questions about ethics in modern science, and how far is too far. The release of Jurassic Park was no small affair, either: in fact, it was a triumph. The 1993 film adaptation opened with a gross of $43 million in its first weekend, inspired popular rides at Universal Studios theme parks across the globe, and prompted Spielberg to request a sequel from Crichton (BoxOfficeMojo, 2014).

Not only was the film a financial success, but also resoundingly critically acclaimed: Duane Byrge (1993) with *The Hollywood Reporter* described the film as epitomizing, “the wondrous spirit and transcendent belief that shines through this often horrific entertainment (para. 10). The film was not just the average thriller, and audiences seemed to connect strongly with the story on a deeper level. The film was further described as “a thinking person’s thriller,” one that, “takes the time to consider the moral and scientific implications of cloning dinosaurs” (Persall, 1993, para. 10). *Jurassic Park* encouraged its audience to think deeply about the moral implications of the questions raised in the film. The influence of the film was so great that it even shaped the way the average moviegoer imagines what a “dinosaur” looks like, and the animatronics used still hold the gold standard despite a modern trend toward CGI (Dowd, 2013). *Jurassic Park* changed the faces of both paleontology and cloning in the ‘90s, and its effects continue to be evident in popular culture. The massive impact of the original film is likely one of the reasons its success did not end in 1993: ultimately, it became a pseudo-trilogy, was reformatted for a 3D re-release in 2013, and holds a position as the 16th top worldwide grossing film of all time (BoxOfficeMojo, 2014). In short, *Jurassic Park* took a captivated audience into its massive maw and never let go.

The following twelve years for Spielberg was a period of simultaneous want to add yet another installment to the *Jurassic Park* franchise, but not having a script that justified a revival of the series. With Crichton’s passing, there was no necessarily logical source to turn to for a new screenplay. Ultimately, the resolution to Spielberg’s dilemma took the form of burgeoning directorial candidate Colin Trevorrow. Spielberg liked the script Trevorrow showed him, and a new Jurassic Park film was green lit for production.

In June of 2015 the franchise once again became the center of discussion for moviegoers and critics alike. Spielberg and Universal Studios released a fourth installment in the franchise, *Jurassic World*, effectively rebooting the series for a new theatrical release. Reboots- or films that revive and older, “dormant” franchises, adapted for a modern audience- have been a popular trend in filmmaking recently with the release of titles such as *Star Trek IX, Star Wars VIII*, and *The Amazing Spider-Man* (Kelper, 2015).

Unlike the 1993 adaptation of *Jurassic Park*, however, *Jurassic World* was unique in that there was no active involvement from Spielberg or the late Crichton, and the film was not directly based on any existing installment of the already established *Jurassic Park* canon. Instead, Colin Trevorrow asked Spielberg to go in a new direction in the early stages of filming, so that the film would feel more organic. Spielberg agreed with the stipulation that Tevorrow must follow three nonnegotiable guidelines: the park needed to open, the film needed to include a raptor trainer character, and a dinosaur must break free and threaten the park.

In its opening weekend, *Jurassic World* grossed $208 million worldwide, and to-date, over $1.6 billion worldwide (BoxOfficeMojo, 2014). Despite the face that critical reviews were largely mixed, *Jurassic World* is confirmed to receive at least two additional sequels in coming years. Like other reboots, *Jurassic World* has been surrounded by debate, particularly regarding the inclusion of genetically modified dinosaurs as its focal point. Like its predecessor, this roused a real-life discussion on the ethics and practical usage of genetic modification. An extremely timely debate in a world that is currently struggling with the health and ethical consequences of things such as genetically modified crops. Interestingly, *Jurassic World* portrays a dinosaur-themed amusement-park-slash-prehistoric-zoo constructed literally on the remains of the original *Jurassic Park.*

Even with the overwhelming impact of the series, it might seem trivial to argue the minutiae of the operations of a fictional world, but the genre of science fiction has long been subject to this exact brand of discourse. Science fiction, after all, has often been cited as an inspirational source for many real world scientists; and what *Star Trek* did for astronauts and rocket scientists in the ‘60s, *Jurassic Park* has done for a new generation of paleontologists and geneticists (Jones, 2012). The real impact of the science fiction genre in any of its iterations is anything but fictional, and previous research on the topic shows this to be true. With this rationale in mind, I seek to uncover the underlying messages and meanings present in the *Jurassic Park* franchise, particularly as they relate to attitudes about technology. To do this, I will explore the body of literature on science fiction, ideology, Marx, and film, and apply the use of these theories and methodologies to the *Jurassic Park* franchise.

Literature Review

Marx, Consciousness and the Ideology of Art

From the moment *Jurassic Park*’s protagonists meet, class is a visibly pronounced and crucial force driving the conflict in the narrative. Drs. Alan Grant and Ellie Sattler welcome into their blue-collar mobile office entrepreneur John Hammond after his conspicuous helicopter arrival. Not long after this convergence, the central story of *Jurassic Park* unfolds, and the socioeconomic disparity between the characters remains a continued presence. In this section, I will explore Karl Marx’s socioeconomic theories and the way those theories have functionally changed in scholarly though through the years. Then, I will connect the us of Marxist theory to the criticism of popular culture artifacts such as *Jurassic Park.*

The primary mode of analysis for examining the relationship between class, power and commodity in rhetorical texts- such as the one illustrated by that early scene from *Jurassic Park*- is a specific subset of the ideological criticism: Marxist criticism. The German philosopher Karl Marx is most commonly associated with his political and economic writings; *Capital* and *The Communist Manifesto* remain above all some of his most well known works. These writings from Marx sparked revolutionary discussion amongst political and economic theorists, which has carried on into present discourse on the subject. However, Marx’s work also dealt heavily with the cultural implications and machinations of the political and economic ideas held by society. This critical cultural dimension of Marx’s work operated on an understanding of a society that works on two levels, what Marx called the “base” and the “superstructure” (Marx, trans. 1993).

In this model, Marx considers the base of society the socioeconomic and political conditions (Marx, trans. 1993). More specifically, the base is where complex relationships between class and production are constructed. The base is not necessarily an inherently positive

or negative force, as he gives examples of bases from totalitarian fascism to socialist communism and almost any other conceivable economic organization. Rather, the base outlines who holds the power, and what that power entails. For example, in a very simple model of Marx’s description of a capitalist society, the *bourgeoisie* holds power as the upper class and exerts this power to oppress the working *proletariat*.

The classes that constitute the base are arranged in a hierarchy of power. In his works, Marx speaks at length describing these classes and their organization. Marx’s idea of class is outlined perhaps most clearly in his work coauthored with Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (trans. 1985). In *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels outline these different strata of classes and how power is distributed amongst them. The *bourgeoisie,* or upper class, are the individuals who control the means of production and hold the power in society (trans. 1985). Because the *bourgeoisie* hold the power, it is understood that the ideas held by society serve this class by allowing the *bourgeoisie* to maintain that power. Marx and Engels (trans. 1985) also outline the *petit- bourgeoisie,* a somewhat middle class of merchants and the like. This class benefits peripherally from the power of the *bourgeoisie*. Finally, Marx and Engels (trans. 1985) also identify the *proletariat,* or the working class, who provide the labor for the other classes, but do not benefit in the form of power.

Just as in architecture, the base of Marx’s theory supports the superstructure, and this is where Marx’s role in critical rhetoric can be found. The superstructure according to Marx is the cultural dimension of the base, and this is where more complex notions such as ideology and false consciousness originate (Marx, trans. 1993). It is important to note that though Marx’s description of base and superstructure seems to imply that the superstructure is only supported by the base while the reverse is untrue, in reality, Marx described the base and superstructure as

possessing a more symbiotic relationship. In this relationship, the base informs the superstructure, but the superstructure is what allows the base to remain solid, while also being a platform for changes to the base.

The superstructure is also where Marx expanded upon the notions of ideology and false consciousness. In his writing, Marx seems to operate under the working assumption that the reader does not require the concept of ideology to be defined and outlined. He often uses ideology interchangeably with his own vision of consciousness- for Marx, these seem to be the same idea. Ideology in the simplest terms is just an idea held by society (Marx and Engels, 1932).

False consciousness in particular was of grave concern to Marx. Where consciousness can be equated to ideology, false consciousness is Marx’s term for hegemony, or the idea that one ideology in particular is normal or natural, and that any divergent ideologies are not (Marx & Engels, trans. 1974). Marx credited false consciousness as the reason the *proletariat* had not yet met the conditions for a base revolution: so long as they remained subscribed to the hegemonic false consciousness that there was no need for revolution, they would see no malfeasance in their situation (Marx and Engels, 1932; Marx, trans.1985). The false consciousness is what encourages disempowered individuals to rationalize their own place in the world.

In summary it can be said that Marx believed a socioeconomic base- be that communism, feudalism, capitalism, etc.- served as the foundation for a cultural superstructure, which either enforced or rejected this base. If the superstructure supported a totalitarian base, for example- such as fascism, by Marx’s standards- then that dissonant support would ultimately give way to a revolution in an attempt to reshape the base. If the superstructure were effective in supporting the base, then the criteria for a revolution would not be met. Perhaps most importantly for the

justification of Marxist analysis, Marx describes the relationship between base and superstructure as mutually influential, that each element exerts some influence on the other. So, cultural artifacts, for example, have the power in Marx’s model to support the base through the superstructure.

In addition to base, superstructure, and class, Marxists critics are also often concerned with the role commodity plays in these power relations. In *The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof* from the work *Capital* (trans. 1972), Marx suggests that commodities have come to take precedence over labor, and that the genuine value of labor is actually lost to the attributed value of commodity. Marx argues consistently that it is labor that is truly valuable. Marx posits that the solution is for the *proletariat* to take back the means of production from the owners. Commodity serves to distract from this more noble purpose, ultimately serving to aide in the prevention of his predicted *proletariat* revolution. In essence, the Marxist perspective can be understood as one which values labor and is the antithesis to commodity.

While Marxist theory has a very strong social and political association, these views on class and commodity serve to frame one of the arguably most useful tools offered by Marx: language. Marxist criticism is an ideal form for popular culture texts because it allows for the treatment of language as not just a periphery consequence of power imbalance, but as an active force of that imbalance (Williams & Hazen, 1990). Essentially, language in Marxist criticism encourages the lower classes to participate in their own subjugation through the ideologies propagated by language use.

Aesthetic, Ideology, and The Frankfurt School

The metaphysical implications of Marx’s work have since been a great source of study amongst cultural theorists. The Frankfurt School in particular was born amidst this movement

and built upon the cultural reach of Marxist thought. During this time, cultural theorists looked more deeply at the cultural implications of Marxist theory, making the shift from the previously dominant economic focus. These theorists elaborated more thoroughly on concepts that Marx was only superficially able to touch upon in comparison, such as the role of art as commodity in the greater schema of society.

While the works that came from The Frankfurt School were numerous and varied, I will focus on a few of the most relevant texts here, particularly those that pertain to the ideas of art and aesthetic in Marxist theory. As far as Marx’s ideas about art, Walter Benjamin (2005) argued that the capitalistic modes of production explored by Marx were nascent at Marx’s time of writing, and so they did not necessarily encapsulate the true extent of how far the reach of the superstructure would develop with the aide of art. That is to say, Marx could not have anticipated just how effective art would be in enforcing the superstructure. Benjamin (2005) further suggests that the role of art as a form of cultural control should not be underestimated. The ability to mechanically reproduce artistic works- such as photographs and film- so rapidly has fundamentally altered the role of many artistic forms. While cultural theorists had originally thought art to play a role of resistance- as Marx did- the reproducibility dampened that ability by transforming the art into commodity (Benjamin, 2005).

It may seem frivolous to some on the surface to presume that the transformation of art into an easily reproducible commodity would have any ill effect, but Theodor Adorno provides perhaps one of the most comprehensive accounts on the importance of ideology in art and in aesthetic. In his expansive *Aesthetic Theory*, Adorno (trans. 1997) explores the idea of art and aesthetic as a form of opposition to social domination. This function of art is born from the fact that works of art are critical of the era in which they are created. “In art,” Adorno explains,

“ideology and truth cannot be neatly distinguished” (trans. 1997, p.234). Art essentially comes to serve as a vehicle for the ideologies of the time it was created.

However, Adorno also explains that this resistive quality of art may be lost over time as the works are later naturalized and interpreted (Adorno, trans. 1997). Historically, works of art have ultimately been used by the *bourgeoisie* as decoration. This notion sets up the arguments that ultimately, art may become commodity, when it becomes more accessible and reproducible. Adorno staunchly opposes what he calls the culture industry in *Culture Industry Reconsidered* (2005). The mass reproducibility of art eliminates the role of the “true form” of art, and instead uses art to reinforce ideologies to the masses (Adorno, 2005). Essentially, the mass production of art transforms art from resistance into commodity, and the effect is, thus, “anti-enlightenment” (Adorno, 2005, p. 108).

The Birmingham School and Beyond

Expanding on the work of the The Frankfurt School, The Birmingham School also concerned itself with critical perspectives on culture. Up to this point, Marxist criticism had dealt more heavily with a movement of resistance and aesthetic in more classical forms of art, such as painting and sculpture. However, a rapidly expanding definition of “art” and “culture” and the media used to execute these forms meant a greater demand for a more all-encompassing application of Marx’s theory. This largely unexplored gap in the critical body of thought gave way for the formation of The Birmingham School, whose scholars looked more closely at Marxist ideas in more popular forms of culture and art, such as literature, mass media, and television.

The Birmingham School sought to define “popular culture” in order to better study the phenomena. Cultural theorist Stuart Hall (2005) explored the notion of popular culture as a

means of both resistance *and* containment. That is, popular culture can either be used to deconstruct the power systems in place or to reinforce the hegemonic domination of the *status quo.* Hall (2005) explains that popular culture cannot be divorced from its relationship to cultural power and domination. He also notes that while popular culture is most often consumed by the lower classes (hence, 'popular,' referring to the general populace) the content and production is still controlled by the upper classes (Hall, 2005).

Terry Eagleton (1976) in particular looked at great length into the use of Marxist theory in literary criticism. While there is a fine line between the study of rhetoric in literature and the study of rhetoric in popular culture texts (namely, the analysis of content versus form, but this line, too, can be blurred), Eagleton's (1976) observations provide a useful guide for critical application. Marxist criticism according to Eagleton seeks to explain works more fully, including meanings. He explicitly classifies art- and, therefore, also popular art forms- as part of the superstructure's ideology that ensures the domination of one class over another (Eagleton, 1976). Eagleton (1976) explains also that ideology is not *just* a set of ideas, but the way a person lives out his/her life in society, those forces that drive him/her to accept certain things and not others.

John Fiske (2005) addresses the question of discernment in popular culture versus that in high culture. Fiske (2005) explains that popular culture texts are discerned as valuable not based on aesthetic qualities- like in high culture- but rather in their function and relevance to the greater populace (Fiske, 2005). Popular culture texts help the consumer make sense of their own worlds, and ultimately, cope with their "subordination in society." (Fiske, 2005, p. 217) Also important to note is that popular culture disregards the production behind its texts- it is not necessarily important to the popular consumer where the text comes from, or whether it is authentic.

The work of The Birmingham School further allowed scholars to more clearly apply Marxist theory in practice to artifacts of popular culture, rather than just analyzing “high” culture, as was more the norm. Previous research on Marxist theory in film has focused greatly on class. Wierich (2000) compared three Western films (*The Sons of Great Bear; Chigachook, The Great Snake; and Apache*) and outlined how their Marxist form markedly differentiated them from similar Hollywood cinema produced at the time (in this case, the ‘60s and ‘70s). Bindman (2006) looked at art as a form of ideological struggle. Art, Bindman (2006) explains, is not, as many believe, merely limited to capitalistic consumption, but rather can play a form of resistance. Holt (2010) looked at Clive Donner’s *Oliver Twist* as a Marxist adaptation of the story, where Holt argues that the adaptation is an overt depiction between the paupers and criminals and the *bourgeoisie*. McGurck (2014) identified subversive messages in some World War II movies, specifically the role of women in the films.

However, not all of the literature on Marx in popular culture is focused solely on older films and narratives. For example, Kendrick (1999) found the filmic works of James Cameron to be contrary to the message sent by the individual films. Cameron’s work often promotes the laboring classes, but his films are consistently box office giants. While it may be unfair to criticize Cameron solely for making profit through his work, it is the disconnected message being sent which is viewed critically. This work in particular sets a strong precedent for the analysis of a popular culture franchise as a whole, and how those messages either corroborate or contradict the message as a whole.

Science Fiction and Science Fact

The origins of science fiction are most often credited to Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, when such an extraordinary tale was still classified as “fantasy.” Logically, it would follow that

older works which laud now-outdated technologies as “revolutionary” might quickly lose relevance and become passé to the point of hilarity, yet, as in the case of Frankenstein such works are still studied and discussed at length. In explanation, Pardon (2008) found that older works of science fiction, such as *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, resonate with contemporary audiences at a value level, rather than technological or literal. Even though the technology is dated, the values built into the narrative are still relevant to audiences. Arguably, the value level is one of the most important places for a narrative to resonate, as Torras (2010) suggests that science fiction films offer a channel through which viewers can navigate real dilemmas under the veil of fiction. Essentially, science fiction comes to be more allegorical in nature like classical works such as *Animal Farm* or *A Modest Proposal*: the literal surface story disguises a deeper social commentary. Brummett (2013) supports this argument further and notes that it is the form, rather than the content, that helps the audience embrace values, immaterial of the fantastically implausible narratives. At their deepest level, we understand science fiction narratives for the stories that they are, and we are able to suspend our disbelief enough to enjoy the substance therein.

Moreover, Levin and De Filipo (2013) showed that science fiction serves as a frame of reference for scientific communication. Science fiction offers a channel through which budding scientists can learn to understand and negotiate the complex and nuanced concepts with which they come into contact. This is also likely because science fiction serves a mythic role in modern science communication (Klein, 2012). Science fiction is so deeply ingrained in the way we talk about technology, even amongst professionals, that it only makes sense to study what values are being taught beneath the surface of these levels. However, despite this apparent trend, the literature simply is not there, even for as large and as influential a franchise as *Jurassic Park*.

Welcome to Jurassic Park

Jurassic Park has impacted the world of science fiction long enough that many individuals have provided a plethora of supplementary para-texts to support and discuss the original film. The series has been explored from philosophical perspectives (such as those in *The Philosophy of Jurassic Park)* to technological applications (as in *The Making of Jurassic Park*), from scientific validity to filmic forms. However, while these texts are useful for world building and entertaining for leisure reading, there has been no attempt to explore the franchise from a communication perspective, particularly in the filmic messages.

Research Questions

Despite the breadth and depth of study into the role of science fiction in society in general, and into the more technical philosophical aspects of *Jurassic Park* in particular, no attempt has been made to take a rhetorical approach to the *Jurassic Park* franchise. To remedy this missing knowledge, I seek to answer the following research question in my thesis: Using a Marxist lens, what messages are present about technology in the 1990 *Jurassic Park* novel, the 1993 *Jurassic Park* film, and the recent *Jurassic World* reboot?

Method

Jurassic Park as an Artifact

In response to the posed research question, I will analyze a selection of three artifacts from the franchise: the first *Jurassic Park* novel, the first *Jurassic Park* film adaptation, and the most recent film reboot, *Jurassic World.* It follows logically that the messages and themes found in the original *Jurassic Park* novel are closest to those intended by Crichton in his writing. In the process of publication, there are several notable contributors involved in the process, each with varying degrees of influence on the final product, but the novel still most likely remains the closest incarnation of Crichton’s original message. At the time of publication, Crichton was already a relatively well-established author and very likely could have refused publication had too many or too drastic changes been made to the text. In the writing process, often the central message-- the core idea that the audience is meant to take away from the narrative-p is the most integral part of the work, so it is possible that Crichton would have fought to have that preserved, if anything.

Following the original novel, the 1993 film adaptation of *Jurassic Park* is arguably the most “honest” of the film adaptations—while there were great sections cut for the final film-- as in any adaptation—it follows most closely the events of the original novel. When written, the novel *Jurassic Park* was never intended as a series. In fact, *Jurassic Park* is the only work from Crichton, which had a sequel. This is because Spielberg specifically requested a sequel from Crichton after *Jurassic Park*’s critical success (Gonzales, 2015). Because of the discrepancy in authorship, it is possible to rule out the second and third film adaptations (*The Lost World* and *Jurassic Park III*) as they do bear some content from the original, but are far enough removed

from the original novel that they are more “inspired by” the best-selling thriller rather than “based on.”

The original *Jurassic Park* film is also the only in the series with direct involvement from Crichton himself, since he was the one to adapt the novel into a screenplay for the film. Crichton does not have any screenplay credit for any of the other installments. In this unique situation, it is reasonable to assume that the intention of the original story was most clearly translated to the 1993 film, while any discrepancies in message probably originate from that transition. For illustration, consider the vast number of players involved in the production of film compared to that of a novel. Interpretations of the source material may differ from direction, production, design, acting choices, and any of these individuals may have some influence on the finished product, even well after the writing phase. Consider, for example, Trevorrow’s extensive changes to the *Jurassic World* script after it had already begun filming: the original screenplay included more than one genetically modified dinosaur, but the final story included only one, to strengthen the impact of the creature’s existence (Sciretta, 2015).

Finally, I will also analyze *Jurassic World* as a point of comparison, to similarly see how themes do or do not carry over from the original franchise to a reboot, twelve years later. *Jurassic World* was fully conceived after the passing of Crichton and is purely a filmic production- that is, it is not based on any sort of source material. As I have outlined previously, *Jurassic World* was directed by rookie Trevorrow, not Spielberg, so most of the original contributors from *Jurassic Park* were not involved in its writing. This comparison should yield an interesting look into how this transition affects messages and themes, if at all.

These three artifacts should provide accurate snapshots of the *Jurassic Park* franchise at different points in time and at different stages of adaptation. By looking at these different steps, I hope to

see whether or not the original message is preserved through each iteration, or whether that message is altered to suit each new medium and each new rhetorical situation.

In order to best examine message content in the novel and films, I will focus specifically on the way the characters in the story talk about the park. In the case of science fiction, it may be argued that the way we speak about and describe technology shapes our relationship to and understanding of technology. To label, then, is to limit. For example, if our aforementioned entrepreneurial friend, Martin Shkreli, sees technology as a commodity, his language will reflect that view and he will treat it as such. For instance, he might refer to a new drug as “new product” indicating the drugs role as a commodity. Through his use of language, he may also influence others to adopt this perception. If, on the other hand, an AIDS patient sees the same technology as miraculous, his/her language will likewise also indicate this perception. To contrast, this person might refer to technology as a “life-saver” or a “miracle” to indicate the important role it plays in his/her wellbeing.

For all of this real world application, it is also important to remember that science fiction is entirely a human construct. Even in works that are based on true stories, every word is chosen for the most impact at the expense of hundreds of alternatives, and every chosen word propagates one viewpoint over another (Williams & Hazen, 1990). An author may describe a character as “burly” to bring to mind the image of a character that is perhaps very strong, and to dispel other interpretations. Language is very precise in this way, and words are chosen to convey exactly what is meant. In short, the choice of language in stories is deliberate, and deliberately creates a certain lens through which the audience must interpret the narrative. This deliberation is what allows for the study of texts such as literature through a Marxist lens (as Birmingham scholar Terry Eagleton has written on extensively, providing the most clear and concise road map to

Marxist analysis in literature available), and it is therefor reasonable to expand this quality to dialogue (Eagleton, 1976). Narrative dialogue, therefore, must be treated as such.

This method of rhetorical analysis also allows for the most directly transferrable analysis of different media. Novels, especially one like *Jurassic Park,* which switches narrative voice from character to character several times, allow for extra insight into what characters are thinking, and what is motivating them. Unless they are utilizing narrative exposition (in the form of a voiceover, for example), films do not have this same capacity, at least not through verbal language. Eagleton (1976) has pointed out the important role form can play in the critical quality of a text, and so reducing the form of each of these works to be as similar as possible allows for the best comparison. Focusing specifically on the dialogue should even the rhetorical playing field between these two different modes of narrative media.

Marx as a Method

If language should prove to be an indicator of attitudes about technology and its use, then it should follow that language may further reveal messages concerning power and technology. Because of the way class is used, as a narrative tool in the *Jurassic Park* franchise, will focus specifically on a Marxist perspective to shape my critical analysis and examine themes of technology and its relation to commodity. As stated previously, I will specifically use this Marxist lens to uncover themes in the way characters talk about technology- specifically, the titular theme park- in *Jurassic Park.*

As I have already discussed, Marx as a method looks different to Marx as pure theory. Karl Marx, of course, did not theorize with academic applications in mind, but the nature of Marx’s extended theoretical work provides an excellent tool for critical analysis of artifacts, even popular culture (Eagleton, 1976). While Marxist analysis is strikingly popular in literary

criticism, as many Marxist scholars have a background in that field, it is possible to take those concepts and apply them to artifacts of popular culture. When applied to a text, a Marxist critic pays special attention to themes as they relate to Marxist ideas (Eagleton, 1976). That is, a Marxist critic will find common threads throughout a text that seem to purport the same schema. Additionally, due to the nature of Marxist theory, Marxist critics also focus on the way class is portrayed in a text, and whether that particular portrayal speaks to a subversive reading or an overt reading of the text (Eagleton, 1976).

For example, a text that enforces the *status quo* from a Marxist perspective would be one in which the lower classes begin in a disempowered position, but do not see any change from that position. A more critical text, on the other hand, would see the lower classes ultimately triumphing.

If language plays a material role in power constructions as Marx theorized, then a logical assumption that follows may be that language in particular, is worth analyzing to uncover these machinations. The entire script is naturally an undoubtedly human construct, but the dialogue in particular provides a certain frame through which views are filtered. The dialogue is essentially the words of the creators filtered through the characters they have created, commenting on the narratives and contexts that contain them.

Based on my previous review of the literature, it is possible to extrapolate a few guidelines by which a Marxist analysis should be conducted. Marxist analysis usually focuses on questions of class, commodity and labor, and what the text says about these elements. In order to answer these questions, a Marxist critic can use themes to help frame and dissect the Marxist message. With this information, the critic can then draw conclusions about whether the message

of a text is overt in supporting the *status quo*, or subversive by supporting a change to the *status quo.*

The use of themes to uncover meaning is common in rhetorical analysis, and the process in this case essentially amounts to analyzing the text and looking for similarities in the language use. Similar language is grouped together into similar themes. For instance, if one character talks about the amount of money that can be made from Jurassic Park, and another describes the park as a “goldmine,” it is reasonable to believe that this language similarly describes the park, and thus might form a certain theme. Themes are both exhaustive and exclusive, meaning that they describe every instance in that theme while making certain that other examples clearly do not fit into that theme.

The *Jurassic Park* franchise is particularly well suited for an ideological criticism of the Marxist variety for a few reasons. There is an obvious class-based stratification amongst the characters in the novels and the films, from the hard-pressed paleontologists who agree to look at the park in exchange for more precious funding, to the entrepreneurs and lawyers searching to gain the biggest return on their significant investments. As it was originally incepted as more of an economical manifesto than a rhetorical framework, Marxist criticism is especially concerned with matters of class, and *Jurassic Park* provides a clear visualization of the different struggles and motivations of disparate socioeconomic classes.

Jurassic Park also deals at great length with the relationship between new technology and big business. Indeed, the meeting of these forces is central to the plot in both *Jurassic Park* and *Jurassic World,* and so these narratives may offer some insight into the relationship between the two. Particularly, the characters should provide frames for these different factors- for

example, Hammond, founder of the park, would take a big business perspective toward the technology, while the scientists at the park may be driven in different directions by both.

Finally, as a popular science fiction film, *Jurassic Park* and its constituents serve as a social commentary on the way we live our lives. Particularly, *Jurassic Park* is a warning presenting a fictional case study of what should happen should we not tread carefully in our scientific endeavors. The language and narrative of each installment is shaped by the rhetorical situation at the time- those prominent thoughts, attitudes, and values are projected into the storytelling and offer a unique snapshot into the way we lived our lives at the time. A critical analysis of the franchise will allow insight into exactly what commentary is made about how we should live, and what our relationship to technology should look like, perhaps idealistically contrasting with what is the reality of the situation.

Analysis of Themes and Context

Analysis of the chosen artifacts yielded four separate themes that were consistent across each text. While each individual text likely had themes that were unique to that narrative, I chose to focus on the themes that were similar to best compare and contrast what role these themes played in each text. The themes I identified were shaped through the language choices of different characters talking about the park. While these themes were present throughout each artifact, I will demonstrate in the following chapter the similar and disparate ways these themes manifested in the individual artifacts. Each theme emphasized a different use for technology and represented a dominant framework propagated by the language choices of the dialogue. The five themes I identified were: technology as entertainment, technology as product, technology as control, and technology versus nature. I will outline each of these themes in depth and the role each of these themes played in the greater narrative of the artifacts’ narratives in the following sections.

Technology as Entertainment

The first theme on the surface seems the most immediately apparent of the five, as the language of this theme framed the function of technology as entertainment. Very often, the park was explained through metaphors and analogies that likened it to other, similar forms of already existing entertainment, such as zoos, amusement parks, rides, and other attractions. With this theme, the characters essentially used other existing forms of entertainment to contextualize and explain their thoughts about the otherwise unprecedented Jurassic Park.

***Jurassic Park* novel (1990).** Consistently, when asked to describe Jurassic Park and its workings and underpinnings, John Hammond and the park’s other employees (and even, in one case, their competition) rely heavily on zoo metaphors, analogies, and technologies to more

easily explain Jurassic Park. For example, to demonstrate the great impact of the park and the extensive work and costs behind its construction and maintenance, competitor Lewis Dodgson explains to Jurassic Park’s computer technician Dennis Nedry, “what they have done is built the single greatest tourist attraction in the history of the world. As you know, zoos are extremely popular. Last year, more Americans visited zoos than all professional baseball and football games combined.” (p. 67) His argument is that Jurassic Park shares some features with other tourist attractions- such as zoos and sporting events- and can be classed as such, and thus, treated as such. This exchange also marks the beginning of Nedry’s attempts to climb the socioeconomic ladder by selling Jurassic Park’s technology to the park’s competitors for a hefty sum of money. Similar to Marx’s *pettit ourgeoisie*, Nedry sees the way the means-controlling upper class enjoys their wealth and comfort, and longs for the upward mobility to reach that point.

Likewise, when Donald Gennaro (the park’s lawyer and liaison with their investors) proposes obstacles Jurassic Park may face in the future—such as disease spreading amongst the dinosaurs and to the human visitors, as in this example- his worries are dismissed by park engineer John Arnold because, “zoos don’t worry about that. Neither do we.” (p. 131) When faced with these concerns, the argument opposed is essentially that Jurassic Park is categorically the same as a zoo, despite its unique nature. Because of this classification, anything a zoo does not worry about, Jurassic Park does not worry about.

In addition to zoo comparisons, Jurassic Park is also described in terms of an amusement park. CEO of InGen and park Owner John Hammond explains that the concept behind the park is, “the most advanced amusement park in the world, combining the latest electronic and biological technologies. I’m not talking rides. […] Living attractions.” (p. 61) There is no mention of the scientific and technological implications of Jurassic Park, which reveals

Hammonds own intentions toward the park- it is strictly viewed as an amusement park, if an advanced one.

This theme is particularly interesting in the context of the book, as it calls back to the original argument Crichton made Jurassic Park a theme park instead of a purely scientific pursuit: nobody cares about science, they want to be awed and entertained. Through this theme, Crichton uses his characters to highlight the problem with this view of technology every character that uses this theme is shown to have vastly underestimated the scope and the danger of the park. The technology theme is in essence a reductive one, and does not consider the multi-faced- and sometimes double-edged- nature of technological advancements.

***Jurassic Park* film (1993).** As could be expected, the film adaptation of *Jurassic Park* expressed this theme in ways that modeled the novel, especially in one key way. The novel offered somewhat more nuanced metaphors and analogies for the park, while the film characterizes Jurassic Park almost exclusively as a zoo with rides (such as in the case of the Jeeps that roll through the exhibits on the ill-fated tour).

While Hammond begins to describe the park to Grant and Sattler in terms of a biological preserve, he quickly switches to rather competitive zoo metaphors. Specifically, Hammond says, “it makes the one I had in Kenya look like a petting zoo. No doubt that sooner or later our attractions will drive the kids right out of their minds.” Hammond’s description paints the park to be something bigger than a petting zoo, but still full of attractions for children. Even on the group’s tour of the genetic lab, Hammond exclaims, “sorry, it’s kind of a ride!” in response to the visitors attempting to leave and interact with the park’s scientists.

Later, once Grant, Sattler, and the other visitors are more privy to the park’s purpose, Hammond expands, “the most advanced amusement park in the world, combining all the latest

technologies. I’m not talking rides, you know. Everybody has rides. We made living biological attractions so astonishing they’ll capture the imagination of the entire planet.” To Hammond, Jurassic Park is more than other attractions because of the cutting-edge science that allowed the park to have what others do not- living “dinosaurs”.

***Jurassic World* (2015).** The final artifact uses this theme in a more unique way, presumably because Jurassic World is technically a fully operational incarnation of Jurassic Park, where its predecessor was unable to move past a more speculative phase. Because of this, zoo metaphors and analogies are almost entirely dropped by the characters, and the focus shifts to the entertainment value of attractions in general. Furthermore, where Jurassic Park’s comparisons were hypothetical, Jurassic World is a fully functioning park with the actual experience to suggest that these comparisons may actually be more accurate.

Despite being apparently sobered by the tragic failure of its predecessor, Jurassic Park, the employees of Jurassic World have set out with notably similar goals, though with more success. InGen inheritor and park owner Simon Masrani is reminded by Dr. Wu (indeed, the same Dr. Wu from *Jurassic Park*), for example, that, “you didn’t ask for reality. You asked for more teeth.” Like the previous park, Jurassic World was never based on the basis of reality, but rather on the idea that reality does not sell, is not entertaining on its own, and thus needs to be exaggerated to serve the park’s purposes. The park needs to meet and exceed their customers’ expectations, or their audience will not be entertained.

“Bigger… scarier… cooler, I believe is the world you used in your memo,” Wu further explains to Masrani later, “you cannot have an animal with exaggerated predator features without the corresponding behavioral traits.” Again, the viewer is reminded that while its dinosaurs are living, breathing specimen bred from the DNA of long-extinct ancestors, Jurassic World is not

real; Jurassic World is a technologically advanced sideshow. They are not concerned with reality, but that they have “something scary and easy to pronounce” so that they do not alienate visitors from their show.

It should come as little surprise to note that, like Hammond, Simon Masrani represents the *bourgeoisie* in *Jurassic World*, while Dr. Wu literally carries over his *petit-bourgeoisie* role over from the previous films. Because Dr. Wu is the only character featured in all three artifacts, his role will continue to be an interesting one as far as analysis.

Finally, seemingly in place of zoo analogies, the characters in *Jurassic World* rely on the predecessor Jurassic Park as an example to contextualize the park. Jurassic World is literally built on the remains of Jurassic Park, and this fact comes into play at least twice throughout the film.

When one of the park’s technicians, Lowery Cruthers, comes into work wearing a vintage Jurassic Park t-shirt, he is scolded by Claire, but ultimately defends himself noting that,” I know. It was terrible. I mean, I know a lot of people died, but, that first park was just legit, you know? They didn't rely on all these different hybrids. They had real dinosaurs.” The exchange makes clear that Cruthers- and perhaps even others- see Jurassic World for what it is indented to be: amusement over authenticity. How ever wrong he may be, there is something about the contrast between the parks that makes Jurassic Park feel legitimate over Jurassic World which is, by process of elimination, somehow seen as illegitimate.

Technology as Product

While the entertainment theme focused on the function of the park to the consumer, the product theme was related more to the function of the park to its creators, such as John Hammond and later, Simon Masrani. This theme shows a concern for investors, the selling

potential of the park, and the importance of profit over safety, usually through discussion of the operations of the park and the fiscal goals of the park and its employees.

***Jurassic Park* novel (1990).** It would be impossible to make it through the *Jurassic Park* novel without learning the primary aim behind the park’s creation, not only because it shares a goal with every other corporate enterprise, but because the reader is constantly reminded of it throughout the novel.

This theme is reiterated and reinforced over and over by park and InGen owner John Hammond. Through speeches seemingly of the childhood delight that will be derived from the cutting edge technology, Hammond does not fail to remind his visitors, investors, and the reader that, above all else, , “we can never forget the ultimate object of [Jurassic Park]- to make money. […] Lots and lots of money” (p. 62). Though there is certainly a part of the park that does provide delight and entertainment to adults and children alike (as I have made clear in the previous section), that joy is reserved only for those who can afford it. Essentially, the visitors’ enjoyment and the boundary-breaking technology is a happy accident- positive collateral- to the main goal.

While Crichton makes very clear the park’s primary goal through Hammond’s words, this theme is also shaped in subtler ways throughout the story- in little snippets that reveal characters’ priorities though their framing of the situation. “These are expensive animals,” we are reminded, “the zoo is the centerpiece of an enormous enterprise” (p. 129, p. 68). The concern is not for wellbeing or livelihood, but instead for cost and profit- and Hammond will always be quick to remind anyone who will listen that they “spared no expense.”

***Jurassic Park* film (1993).** In the film adaptation, the park’s lawyer, Donald Gennaro, provides a very clear frame for this theme. Worth noting is that the film’s Gennaro is the marriage of the novel’s Gennaro character and Ed Regis, the park’s Public Relations Manager. In the beginning of the film, hardly a scene goes by without Gennaro mentioning the investors he represents. One of his introductory lines in the film regards how the park is “making investors nervous.” Even though he will be the one visiting the park, he is more concerned about the investor’s thoughts through the process, as it is his job to represent their interests.

In another example, as soon as discussion of the technology that enables the cloning of the dinosaurs crops up, Gennaro cuts in with his own ideas for marking the park. “We can charge anything we want,” he explains. His focus is on the potential of how they can package the park and how much revenue they can squeeze out of the visitors. His estimates for daily rates are in the thousands.

Finally, in a discussion about safety, Gennaro adds, “we haven’t even seen the park yet, let’s just hold our concerns.” The expert dinosaur consultants that he and Hammond brought in are concerned about the safety and complications of the park in this scene, but safety ultimately takes a backseat for Gennaro.

***Jurassic World* (2015).** The idea that Jurassic World is first and foremost a money-making opportunity is established early on in the film through talk of returns on investment and consumer attitudes, and this sentiment is reinforced constantly throughout. Early on, the park is criticized for its heavy reliance on support from external corporate interests, for example, “Verizon Wireless presents Indominous Rex,” being the full name of their newest creation. The name “Verizon Wireless presents” suggests heavy indictment to the titular corporation. Park technician Lowery remarks, “why not just go the distance […] and let these corporations name

the dinosaurs?” Like any theme park, Jurassic World needs to make a profit in order to remain sustainable, and they do not shy away from corporate investors when it comes to their dinosaurs and their park.

The people behind Jurassic World seem to have what needs to be innovated in order to see the most return down to an art form. When justifying the genetic modification of a new dinosaur species, Claire breaks down the situation when she says, “the park needs a new attraction every few years in order to reinvigorate the public’s interest. Kind of like the space program. Corporate felt genetic modification would up the wow factor […] the Indominous Rex makes us relevant again.” The progression and innovation isn’t about making new strides; it’s about maintaining public interest.

There does seem to be some pressure on the park to maintain this theme, as the film paints the competition to keep the park progressing with the positive trajectory it has as something of a cutthroat process. Masrani, explains that, “all of this [the park and its creatures] exists because of me. If I don’t innovate, someone else will.” The park needs to push scientific and technological boundaries not for science’s sake, but because some unseen competitor may jump on the opportunity before Jurassic World even gets the chance.

Even in the face of life-or-death crisis, Vic Hoskins, Jurassic World’s private security, complains, “this park’s going to be Chapter 11 by the morning,” insinuating that the dire events caused the park to become a definitive risk for bankruptcy. While this may very well (and very probably) be the case, it is telling that when the personal stakes are so high, the productive quality of the park is still at the top.

Technology as Control

When dealing with enormous, extinct predators thrust into the modern world, it is reasonable to hope that those who created the dinosaurs also have some measure of control over them. Because of this need for control, the technology as control theme is formed. With this theme, characters emphasize how they have control over every aspect of the parks, from the breeding of the dinosaurs to the technical controls of the enclosures. While more often than not this control is just an illusion, characters in all three films seem to have confidence in their control of the situation.

***Jurassic Park* novel(1990).** As far as Hammond and the rest of those he employees are concerned, everything in Jurassic Park is completely under control. Every little process is automated, monitored, and reported from the birthing of the dinosaurs to the containers and feeding. “This is a safe place,” the visitors are consistently reassured throughout their stay (p 92). The reasoning is that Jurassic Park is a safe place because it is under control, but this logic proves to be a vital detriment through the story.

The reason, it seems, that Jurassic Park’s employees are so certain that everything is under control, it is revealed, is that literally ever step in the dinosaur creation process is carefully accounted for by the scientists, and the creatures are created to be exactly what they need to in order to exist within the strictly monitored constraints of the park. For example, it is revealed that the dinosaurs cannot live if they are not fed a certain protein every so often, and that even if they could survive without it, none of the dinosaurs can reproduce. “None of our animals are capable of breeding,” Dr. Wu states with certainty, because every animal is modified to be female (p. 108). Later, Wu explains that “the reason we know why all of our animals are female is we literally make them that way: we control their chromosomes, and we control their intra-egg

developmental environment.” (p. 109). In controlling these factors, the scientist can say with certainty that all of their dinosaurs begin life as female, and two female dinosaurs simply cannot conceive on their own.

***Jurassic Park* film (1993).** Hammond’s own take on the park is different enough from Gennaro’s to warrant its own screen. To contrast Gennaro who is concerned with earning potential, Hammond focuses on the wealth he has invested in the park. He does this through demonstrations of the measures they have taken to control the wild nature of the park, metaphors and stories about shows and attractions, and flagrant demonstration of the wealth and investment that has gone into the park.

When Hammond is speaking with his scientists and the consultants about the newly hatched raptors, he talks about how the dinosaurs are not “allowed” to reproduce. He often uses similar “controlling” sorts of words throughout. This use of language points towards Hammond’s possible need to feel control over the park, and that he does seem to think that this is the case. This also goes well with his “show” metaphors and stories; in a show, there are directors to control the ebb and flow of a performance, who are generally able to ensure that everything goes according to the script.

Hammond takes a sort of surreal position when describing the science that makes the park possible. He is not a scientist, so instead he results on more fantastic metaphors. For example, Hammond describes the geneticists under his employ as “the real miracle workers of Jurassic Park.” Not scientists, but wizards— he does not understand the underlying detail work that goes into the production of his park.

It would seem that Hammond’s arc words for the film are “we spared no expense.” He uses this exact phrase several times and it serves as a wave-off or justification in the face of

criticism. These sorts of phrases suggest that the investment of wealth into the technology is enough to ensure the product is good. What he does not account for is that the wealth gives him no real control.

This characterization is consistent with Marx’s definition of the *bourgeoisie*— the class that controls the means of production. Hammond, like the *bourgeoisie*, owns the means of production, but is removed from the actual labor process. He fancies himself a ringmaster in control, but does not understand the work his employees do and dismisses it as witchcraft.

***Jurassic World* (2015).** With a precedent already set by Jurassic Park and great success since their opening, the employees of Jurassic World seem impossibly more confident of their control over the park. After the disastrous failure of the first park, they have a perfect blueprint of exactly what not to do and what to look out for in their own endeavors. Even when there does seem to be a flaw in the parks operations, such as when the genetically engineered Indominous Rex escapes and kills a few park employees, Masrani explains that Jurassic World, “is predicated on our ability to handle incidents like this.”

There is also a clear divide on the topic between higher ranking individuals, such as Claire and Masrani, and those who work directly with the dinosaurs, such as Owen Grady, who handles the velociraptors. When Claire approaches Owen about his opinion on the dinosaurs, she explains, “I guess Mr. Masrani thinks you’re able to control the raptors.” Owen denies this and claims that what he has with the velociraptors is a relationship, not control. Still, the sentiment remains: Masrani and Claire are confident in the control exerted on the dinosaurs, while Own, who works directly with them, is unsure. Like Dr. Grant and Ellie Sattler in *Jurassic Park*, Owen Grady, too, is the *proletariat*, and he is not so far removed from his work with the dinosaurs to be under the illusion that he controls them.

Technology as Nature’s Enemy

The final theme focused on the reality of the park: that while the dinosaurs inhabiting it are living, breathing creatures, they are anything but natural. This theme particularly focused on authenticity versus persuasion, and on how the park fits in and stands as an affront to the natural world.

***Jurassic Park* novel (1990).** The last theme I will cover is certainly not, as they say, the least, as this theme served as the backbone of much of the debate surrounding the park. The final theme focused on all the ways the park was a deviation from the natural world. Even though Hammond wants Jurassic Park to be “as real an environment as possible- as authentic as possible,” it is shown over and over that Jurassic Park is anything but authentic (p. 111).

Malcom sums up this point well when he points out the somewhat amalgamate nature of the dinosaurs. “So these velociraptors look like reptiles, with the skin and general appearance of reptiles, but they move like birds […]” he clarifies, when discussing the appearance of the park’s velociraptors with Dr. Grant. There is no real frame of reference to compare the living dinosaurs to, as there are no other living specimen- instead, they must draw comparisons to already existing creatures. Eventually, Malcom gets to his point: “Is this a persuasive animal to you,” Malcom asks, “is it in fact a dinosaur? (p 119). It is important to note here the central idea of Malcom’s observation: physiologically the artificial dinosaurs share more features with birds, but they appear more similar to reptiles. The question for the park- and for everyone- is not in reality whether or not they have created dinosaurs. The question instead is whether or not they have created what people will believe are dinosaurs. This idea reminds us that Jurassic Park is essentially a chicken-egg question when it comes to the popular opinion on dinosaurs- does the

media make dinosaurs look the way they do because that is what the people believe they look like, or do the people believe dinosaurs look that way because of what they are shown?

Interestingly, this theme comes up the most often not from the scientists who are completely aware of how much they have manipulated nature or from the paleontologists who have the most knowledge on what a dinosaur should look like, but from Ian Malcom, that mathematician. Malcom essentially makes a consistent argument for the maintenance of the *status quo*- dinosaurs were extinct for a reason, and they should not be brought back, especially in their artificially manipulated form.

***Jurassic Park* film (1993).** This theme serves as almost the heart of the *Jurassic Park* film, as it is boldly framed through the chaotician Ian Malcom more so than any other character.

For example, when Hammond insists that all of the dinosaurs in the park are female and they have controlled the DNA so that they cannot reproduce, Malcom calls it “anti-nature.” What they are doing is literally the opposite of nature, despite the fact that they are operating a viable biological theme park.

At one point, he boldly exclaims, “the lack of humility before nature that’s been displayed here staggers me.” He is so affronted by the way Hammond has come to acquire the technology that he is using commercially that he is “staggered.” Jurassic Park is by no means humble in its approach or its execution: it is an attempt to change the natural world to the whims of mankind.

Finally, Malcom later points out one of the biggest issues of the park, in his opinion. He tells Hammond, “the problem with the scientific power you’ve used is it didn’t require any discipline to obtain it… you didn’t earn the knowledge yourselves, so you don’t take responsibility for it.” Here, Malcom is more blatantly remarking upon how removed from the

scientific process Hammond is. Essentially, that the park is always destined to fail because Hammond does not understand the production.

***Jurassic World* (2015).** There is at least one line in *Jurassic World* that encapsulates the technology vs. nature theme neatly and succinctly: “that’s not a real dinosaur.” Of course, here the word “real” takes on a double meaning. Arguably, the dinosaurs are very real, they eat, breathe, and bleed like any other living creature, and they are viciously dangerous. However, what “real” means here is not that the dinosaurs are tangible, but rather that they are not natural: the dinosaurs in Jurassic World- as in Jurassic Park before it- would not exist naturally as they do, had InGen never interfered.

In another scene, Dr. Wu clarifies the aforementioned definition of “real” for the audience of the film. He says (emphasis mine), “you act like we are engaged in some kind of mad science. But we are doing what we have done from the beginning. *Nothing in Jurassic World is natural*. We have always filled the gaps in the genome with the DNA of other animals. And if their genetic code was pure, many of them would look quite different.” Furthermore, this reiterates the argument from the *Jurassic Park* novel, that a real dinosaur is not necessarily a *persuasive* dinosaur. Like Jurassic Park, Jurassic World is not concerned with what is natural, it is concerned with what is persuasive.

Themes, Class, and *Jurassic Park*

My analysis shows significant changes not only in the surface narratives and main ideas of each individual text, but also in the use of rhetorical themes. Some of these features are consistent, for example, the park is always most heavily represented by park owners and employees, while the “outsider” characters provide the thematic antithesis via themes about technology versus nature. On the other hand, there is also a noticeable difference across texts in

how the themes are actually established and used in the narrative. As I have stated previously, I intend not only to identify the prominent themes in my analysis of the texts, but also how these themes relate to Marxist notions of class and more deeply at why and how there are discrepancies between the execution of these themes. To demonstrate this relationship between Marxist ideas and *Jurassic Park*, I will begin by comparing and contrasting the *Jurassic Park* novel and film adaptation, followed by the inclusion of *Jurassic World*. Here, I will highlight the role of class and what the thematic changes across the texts means for the overall message of the *Jurassic Park* franchise.

As far as adaptations go, the *Jurassic Park* film stays remarkably true to its source material- many of the characters and events stay the same, while some scenes and details seem to have been reasonably dropped to save on run time and to unify the more complex narrative for a film audience. For example, Grant and Sattler differ from their novel counterparts in described appearance and somewhat in personality, but their characters serve the same thematic function in the narrative. Despite being two of the most prominent protagonists in the story, Grant and Sattler comment very little on Jurassic Park as a whole- more often than not, their roles are reactionary, essentially providing an analog through which the audience may understand the story. As far as Marx’s class, Grant and Sattler fit well into the *proletariat* group- the working class. In the beginning of both the novel and the film, their connection to their labor is heavily emphasized, as the audience is first introduced to them amidst a dig, strapped for cash, and weary of new endeavors. Their roles are so similar in both the novel and the film that in order to better understand the differences, it is important to look more deeply at the other character- the ones that *do* show some variation.

John Hammond plays easily the most recognizable role in Marx’s social strata to the extent that he is almost a caricature of the wealthy *bourgeoisie* in the novel. Hammond in the novel is very vocal about his intentions with Jurassic Park and very headstrong in that regard. In the novel, he emphasizes technology as product and technology as entertainment heavily and explicitly. The film’s Hammond is somewhat more of a toned down version of the same character. Whether it is because of Sir Richard Attenborough’s jolly demeanor or Spielberg’s writing, film Hammond has more of an endearingly aloof grandfatherly quality about him. There is one last very notable difference between the novel’s Hammond and the film’s Hammond: in the film, Hammond survives, while in the novel, Hammond dies in an ironic twist of fate- at the hands of his own park.

There are several characters in both the novel and the film that comprise Marx’s *petit-bourgeoisie*- the upper middle class that strive to own the means of production- and the broad majority of the ensemble cast fall into this group. However, only three characters truly stand out significantly in this category- Nedry, Gennaro, and Wu. Dennis Nedry, the park’s computer engineer- plays a small but impactful role in the novel, while his role is granted a great deal more importance in the film. In both iterations of *Jurassic Park*, Nedry is the one who turns off the power in the park in order to make off with dinosaur embryos to sell to InGen’s competitor. In the novel, it isn’t long before the park is back up and running and Nedry meets his demise, but this event is an essential part of the conflict in *Jurassic Park.* In fact, most of the events of the film can be seen as a consequence to Nedry’s actions, while in the book, they are almost inevitable. In this way, the film is more critical of Nedry’s motives- using the technology of Jurassic Park to gain upward mobility, while in the book, Nedry makes little difference. In both

cases, the technology Nedry tries to make off with is essentially what hinders his success: he meets his end from the venom of a dilophosaurus.

As I have already mentioned in my analysis, one of the most notable character changes from the book to the film is Gennaro’s. The novel’s Gennaro is somewhat more nuanced than the film’s: his goals are the same, if somewhat less overt, and the film also combines several of the novel’s other characters with Gennaro, such as Ed Regis. Gennaro simultaneously creates stratification between him and the wealthy, but includes himself in the potential success of the park. “I’ve never been a rich man,” he tells Hammond, “I hear it’s nice.” Gennaro clearly separates himself from the wealthy Hammond. Yet he also throws out lines such as “we’re going to make a fortune,” when he catches a glimpse of the dinosaurs for the first time. In the same breath, Gennaro will appear less-than-wealthy, but with obvious hopes to become such. Finally, the last key difference is inverse to John Hammond: Gennaro survives the events in the book (Ed Regis is the one who meets a rather undignified end) but is killed in the film. Again, the thirst for upward mobility amongst the characters in their *petit-bourgeoisie* is their undoing, at least in the film adaptation.

Even the scientists, who work directly with the new technology, fit into the *petit-bourgeoisie* group. While Wu, for example, does work directly with the technology, like Grant and Sattler, his language is more reflective of Hammond’s, more often using the control and entertainment frames. This is true for Wu in both the book and the film, however, he plays a much larger role in the book. The novel gives insight into Wu’s original ambitions to conduct research for a university before Hammond picked him out of graduate school and persuaded him to work for InGen. Wu is there for many of the events in the novel in order to provide context for

the more technical aspects, while his role is mostly given to the animated “Mr. DNA” in the film, and he presumably leaves the island as soon as the main conflict begins.

While the ensemble characters fit quite neatly into Marx’s categories of class, there is one character that seems to defy these categories with his unique insight into the events of both versions of *Jurassic Park*- Ian Malcom. Unlike the previous characters and groups, Malcom does not fit so neatly into one of Marx’s class categories. Rather, Malcom is a manifestation of the *status quo*. His language is critical of Hammond's park as well as Gennaro's greed for wealth, and he is the one questioning what Sattler and Grant will do once their work is taken from them by the new dinosaurs. It would seem that Malcom would rather see everyone stay where they are- Hammond as a wealthy man, safely disconnected from the technological labors of others; Gennaro as the average lawyer, not rich but not bereft; and Sattler and Grant as the laborers, since they are some of the only ones who show respect and value for the fruits of those labors.

In addition to these changes in the characters, there are two very notable narrative differences between the novel and the film: the survival of the characters Malcom and Hammond. To be fair, it is only implied- not explicitly stated- in the novel that Malcom does not survive the events. However, in the film, he does notably survive and plays an even larger role in the events. The question that comes to mind is “why?” One reason may be because Crichton wrote *Jurassic Park* as a one-off, while Spielberg worked with a sequel in mind. However, if Malcom is the *status quo* as I have suggested in my analysis, then his survival allows for the continuance of the *status quo*: that is, Hammond in power, reigning over his park.

Which then brings me to next to Hammond, allowed in the film to continue on with the survival of the *status quo*. In the novel, Hammond meets a grisly end at the hands of his own park, devoured by a herd of tiny procompsognathus. The fate seems appropriate for the

character, as he is depicted as somewhat of a wolf in sheep’s clothing throughout the story, wilfully ignorant of the dangerous path he wishes to pursue with his park. The film Hammond survives, faced with a relieved- if sobering- ending. In the film, he survives, and seemingly aligns with the protagonists so that he may live to see another day. This seems particularly interesting and possibly serves as a comment on the values of Hollywood. It makes sense that the character might die in the novel, but he cannot die in the film. Hollywood is a lucrative pack of individuals, arguably a real life *bourgeoisie,* and it would not be in their best self-interest to kill off that representation.

The next question is what this analysis means when compared simultaneously against the *Jurassic World* film. As I have mentioned previously, *Jurassic World* varies greatly on the surface (with a successful park, and so on) but thematically follows a similar structure (similar themes about technology). Additionally, there are a few threads from the first *Jurassic Park* that carry over into *Jurassic World*: Hammond receives a cameo mention, Jurassic World is literally built on top of the remains of the old Jurassic Park, and Wu is still an employee. This arguably enforces for the viewer that Jurassic Park is a real tragedy that occurred in the *Jurassic World* universe that had real, material consequences.

After such a significant hiatus from the series, it is interesting to see how *Jurassic World* ultimately did- and did not- carry over themes from the source material. Overall, the same themes emerge in *Jurassic World*, however, they are sometimes used differently by the characters, especially the technology as entertainment theme. Class, as well, crops up similar to the way it does in *Jurassic Park*, but again, to some different effect.

Similar to *Jurassic Park*, the *proletariat* class in *Jurassic World* is represented by the dinosaur researcher, in this case, Owen Grady. Like Grant and Sattler and their deep knowledge

of and experience with digs and dinosaur specimen, Owen has a very hands-on relationship with the technology of the park- the dinosaurs. He does play a slightly more significant role in terms of describing the park, likely because he works directly for the park, and he most often uses the technology versus nature theme. He seems to have a deep respect for the dinosaurs in the park, and this attitude is later rewarded.

Like Hammond, new park inheritor Masrani represents the *bourgeoisie*. Masrani shows a targeted concern for his park, as he is mostly preoccupied with the business aspects such as profits and attendee enjoyment, but he is still very removed from the actual operational and technological processes. As we see in the film, he is not even certain of what material goes into the dinosaurs in his park- he only knows that the dinosaurs need to be scary, cool, and easy to pronounce, because that is for what his customers are looking. Interestingly, Masrani meets his end in an explosive meeting of his park and his wealth: he is killed when a group of pteranodons attack his helicopter, the one he spends a good portion of the movie boasting about.

The *petit-bourgeoisie* receive something of a status upgrade in *Jurassic World,* as Claire, one of the most central characters, fits into this class. Claire has the same *bourgeoisie* signifiers as characters such as Hammond or Masrani, but without the actual status: she runs operations, but does not own the means of production. As if this wasn’t made evident enough at the beginning of the *Jurassic World,* the film spends most of her narrative making this fact clear: she is very clearly a fish out of water in Grady’s world, at first refusing and later struggling to adapt. Ultimately, her teaming up with Grady is what allows her to survive.

While I have already addressed Wu’s role in *Jurassic Park,* it is important to address his character again, as his role becomes significantly different in *Jurassic World*. Where Wu became somewhat more one-dimensional in the *Jurassic Park* film- to the point that his role was almost

entirely written out- his character does what seems like a complete turn around *in Jurassic World*. In the reboot, Wu adopts more of the technology as product frame, and it is ultimately revealed that he has been working with the film’s antagonist, Hoskins, very similar to the way Dennis Nedry had planned to work with InGen’s competitor in *Jurassic Park*. However, unlike Nedry, Wu makes a successful escape, more likely than not setting the film up for the sequel. Where Nedry failed to become upwardly mobile with new technology, Wu was successful, effectively supplanting Masrani’s ownership of the technology. Effectively, Wu claims the means of production for himself and, in the process, becomes the *bourgeoisie*.

Finally, when we arrive at the question of the *status quo*, things become somewhat less clear. Malcom played a very unique character in *Jurassic Park*, the genre-savvy chaotician who calls every tragedy and failure before they occur. There is no immediately obvious parallel to Malcom in *Jurassic World*, and indeed no character in *Jurassic World* uses the technology versus nature theme with quite the same propensity as Malcom. However, it can be argued that since the survival of Malcom in the *Jurassic Park* film allowed for the survival of the *status quo*- that is, Hammond as the *bourgeoisie* maintaining his status of power- this stagnation also allowed for the survival of the dinosaurs in the new *status quo*. Because of this, in *Jurassic World*, the dinosaurs in the park are the new representation of the *status quo*, the argument for the natural over the unnatural.

As Malcom consistently argued in favor of nature over the apparent abuse of nature through Hammond’s new technology, the dinosaurs we as viewers have become more familiar with- such as the velociraptors and the t-rex- argue for nature against the unnatural. Most importantly, in the climactic scene of the film where our protagonists are cornered by the genetically modified Indominous Rex, it is the older dinosaurs that save the day. This is also a

testament to the argument for the respect of nature and technology: Owen Grady is one of the protagonists in danger, and he also developed a relationship with the dinosaurs. Ultimately, this respect for their power resulted in their savior. So, in the Marxist sense, the *status quo* is simultaneously maintained and disrupted: the *proletariat* remain in their disempowered positions, however, the *petit-bourgeoisie is* finally allowed upward mobility.

In the novel, we are presented with an arguably coherent story of Marxist resistance, at least in terms of narrative and themes: the *proletariat* triumph, and the upper classes that do not adapt by respecting the technology they control are put in their place- usually through death. The films, on the other hand, present more of a mixed message. Thematically, *Jurassic Park* is consistent with its written predecessor, but the resistance element is lost in the application of the themes. The lesson is negated: Hammond survives despite his complete underestimation of his technology and nature, and the *status quo* reigns supreme. Meanwhile, *Jurassic World* both uses the themes differently *and* tells a different narrative. The *proletariat* appear to triumph, but in reality the *bourgeoisie* is merely supplanted by the *petit-bourgeoisie*: the *proletariat* still understand the means of production more than any other class, but in the end, still no longer have any claim to them.

Conclusion

In the convergence of the themes about technology and the narratives about class, it is possible to arrive at a few conclusions about the role of the *Jurassic Park* franchise as a Marxist text. Each character adopts a specific frame (or, in some cases, a few related frames) through which they view the technology of the park. The role these characters play in the narrative provides clues for the consumer indicating whether or not the text ultimately validates the use of these themes, or whether the themes are being painted as problematic. When John Hammond uses the entertainment and commodity themes with overwhelming propensity in the *Jurassic Park* novel and ultimately meets a gruesome end, it can be said that Crichton is giving the audience a critical view of these specific frames. With *Jurassic Park*, it can be argued, Crichton sought to urge the greater public to think deeply about the impact the aggressive expansion and commodification of technology would have on not only the natural world, but our constructed social world as well.

The critical quality of these texts probably comes as no surprise to even the casual reader of the series. One of the most well known quotes from the book (though, the more well known phrasing of said quote is derived from the film) comes from Ian Malcom criticizing the technology of the park, “they are so focused on whether they can do something. They never stop to ask if they *should* do something”. The use of technology in *Jurassic Park* comes with a dangerous disregard for the power of that technology, but the message is still subversive. The park’s heedless use of technology is exactly what Crichton is criticizing with the original narrative. Throughout the course of the story in the original text, characters that seek to use the technology only for monetary gain are met with rhetorically-appropriate retribution. Those with

the strongest ties to the technology are triumphant, or, at the very least, able to make it out of the park alive.

However, these critical messages seem lost in translation after the bridge from novel to film. The *Jurassic Park* film is fairly diligent in its overall adaptation of the novel, but as I have shown, the message is fundamentally changed through its end. Rather than being critical of the upper class’ use of the themes found in the novel, it is only critical of those same uses by the *petit-bourgeoisie.* Further, *Jurassic World* almost takes a significant departure from the first novel and film, arguably as a result of that adaptational transformation. The message changes from one of tenuous respect for technological advances to embracing almost recklessly new advances, and even possibly weaponizing those advances without regard to the apparent dangers. In almost direct contrast to Spielberg’s *Jurassic Park,* Trevorrow paints the *petit-bourgeoisie* as being overall successful in the film, despite their sinister intentions.

Henry Wu makes an especially interesting illustration of these points- in both *Jurassic Park* iterations, Wu, though part of the *petit-bourgeoisie*, though he works more closely with the park’s technology, using the actual DNA of real dinosaurs to create the genetically modified creatures. There are steps that turn the creatures into essentially “superdinosaurs,” but the creatures are still technically grounded in the real science-- perhaps similar to the way the *Jurassic Park* film draws inspiration from the novel, but ultimately takes a few key departures. In *Jurassic World*, Wu is much more far removed from the original science, and essentially writing his own rules by creating his own genetically modified dinosaurs, a Frankenstein’s monster representing the greatest distancing from nature in the entire series.

Based on Crichton’s history of using his techno thrillers as a statement- for instance, *State of Fear*’s controversial criticism of scientific study surrounding global warming- it is not a

stretch to argue that the original *Jurassic Park* was intentionally critical of the treatment of burgeoning technologies such as genetic modification. As far as the novel, the question is not necessarily whether or not there is a message, but whether or not that message is grounded in a Marxist perspective. In my analysis, I have shown that, indeed, Crichton’s message can be understood to have an underlying Marxist meaning. Through a Marxist lens, Crichton’s *Jurassic Park* is an argument in favor of respect for labor in the form of science and technology, as opposed to a commodification of technology for profit. The later, based on this Marxist understanding of *Jurassic Park*, will ultimately lead to deadly consequences.

Harkening back to the work of cultural theorists and Marxist scholars, this mismatched message almost seems inevitable: while science fiction is still mass produced and distributed in any form, the written word is still more often than not regarded as a “higher” form of art than film. It is entirely possible that the message of *Jurassic Park* is skewed in the films because it was adapted to such a mass form of media. Thus, instead of acting as equipment for the working class to understand their subjugation in an enlightening way, the films take up the “anti-enlightenment” quality of mass-produced popular culture. In essence, Crichton’s *Jurassic Park* is poised well to allow the working classes to understand the true value of their labor and to warn the upper classes of the danger of exploiting technology for profit. Spielberg’s *Jurassic Park* skirts near this interpretation, but is fundamentally unable to be critical in this way due to the means surrounding its production. Based on this same understating of the nature of popular culture messages in massive films, Trevorrow’s *Jurassic World* is even more removed from this message.

A feature of popular culture is that the popular consumer does not necessarily discriminate based on the production surrounding the artifact, only its function and relevance.

However, it is difficult to ignore that a change in the circumstances surrounding the production of the text resulted in such a different message in the content and relevance of the text. Upon further considering, this shift appears to make sense: a blockbuster film has nothing to gain from being resistive in message, as movie giants like Universal Studios rely on the *status quo* to be as successful as they are

That does not necessarily mean that the entire franchise can never return to its Marxist roots. Ultimately, it is still possible for the franchise to make a turn around in the future: *Jurassic World* is already a film which seems to distance itself from the source material, and it is confirmed to have a green lit sequel, possibly with even more installments on the way. The question is instead what trajectory that sequel will take. While that could mean a more critical reimagining of the franchise, based on my analysis, that outcome seems unlikely. It appears that truly subversive mass media- especially one as massive as the *Jurassic Park* franchise, where every installment is almost guaranteed to see summer blockbuster success- is the antithesis to a resistive message.

As with any analysis and method, there are some limitations to the use of Marxist theory for analysis. As I have discussed previously, Marxist theory was never necessarily intended to be used as a method of analysis, and thus is more suitably considered more of a guiding framework for analysis. Thus, using Marxist theory as a method may aid in justifying and guiding analysis, but does not provide a clear cut picture of exactly what one can expect to find in the analysis. Despite these limitations, it is possible to use one’s judgment to come to the *best* answer possible rather than the only one, which I believe I have done here in my analysis.

To this day, and to and however far in the future, *Jurassic Park* is an undeniably popular franchise. The stories that make up the franchise explore themes of the fantastical technologies

that serve as a staple in the science fiction genre. However, instead of providing a truly foreboding message about the dangers of the commodification of technology, it instead serves as an almost perfect example of the warnings Marxist scholars have supplied regarding the anti-enlightening quality of mass media.

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