**Questions from the VCAA SAMPLE EXAM   2018**

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Narrative and ideology

Question 1 (3 marks) Describe the relationship between audience engagement and the construction of media narratives.

Heinemann 6.1

For media creator’s audience engagement is the primary goal. They do this by constructing narratives that appeal to the audience in the hope of financial gain, subscriptions or ratings Media producers create narratives with meanings encoded into them that audiences read and decode. Therefore, audiences play a role in the construction of narrative meaning through the ways they consume and read them. Narrative meaning is shared between producer and audiences through a common understanding of media codes and conventions.

**ATOM**

How may an audience construct meaning in a media narrative ? 3 marks

Heinemann 6.1

Audiences come to a media narrative with a number of expectations .They have a prior knowledge of narrative conventions such as structure and the role played by technical codes for example camera, sound or lighting. They may have expectations based on genre or previous experiences with the director or a favourite actor. Audiences use these expectations amongst other things to construct meaning Audiences infer meaning as they decode the codes and conventions presented in a narrative. Each audience member brings their own experience and understanding to their reading of the narrative .

**INSIGHT**

**Question 1** (3 marks)

Explain how a characteristic or an element of construction can shape media narratives.

Heinemann 6.2

In film the classical narrative form is based on the action and motivation of individual characters and works on the equilibrium – disequilibrium – equilibrium model through the three act structure. In Blade Runner the narrative is constructed through ACT 1 Equilibrium for the first quarter of the film ,with the introduction of character s including protagonist Deckard and antagonist Roy Batty , goals and motivations, obstacles and conflict are established. In Act II Disruption and plot complications occur when Deckard in his mission to eradicate the Replicants becomes attracted to Replicant Rachael who he is responsible to terminate . In Act III through the resolution where Replicant Roy Batty dies and Deckard survives and Rachael remains safe the central conflict resolved and equilibrium is re established .

**QATS**

Q1 Describe the way an audience engage with one of the media narratives you studied this year

( Heinemann 6.1 audience reception –expectations –shared experiences –social cultural context )

In Nosedive, dir Joe Wright, 2016 an audience such as digital natives have a reception context that identifies with the examination of social media and user rating systems inherent from their own experience .As the Black Mirror series presents a dystopian view of technology the audiences expectations and shared experience engage and identify with Lacies’ character and her obsession to increase her social rating status. In this way audience reception ,expectations and shared experience provide engagement with the text.

**VCAA**

Question 2 (4 marks) Explain how ideology can shape media narratives.

The influence of society’s ideologies on media texts is multifaceted and depends on a range of factors, including the style and genre of a text the circumstances of its creation and the time and place of its construction

In terms of narratives, ideology is the frame of values and beliefs that informs a narrative. Within a text, the creator employs narrative strategies in the form of technical and symbolic codes and conventions to structure the narratives and position the consumer to support or question the ideology expressed in the text.

Provide an example from either text:

For example in Blade Runner 1992, the rise in Corporate governance as a key policy and ideology of the Reagan government is reflected in the text through the Tyrell corporation who manufacture the replicants used in off world colonies

**Question 2**

**ATOM**

How may the reception and/or audience engagement have changed over time in one of the media narratives you studied this year ?

An audiences interaction with a media narrative is dynamic and changing. Audience reception of media texts can be shaped by ideologies, settings and attitudes. An audience viewing Blade Runner 1982 whilst considered a stylistically dazzling film noir with special effects and sheer virtuosity of production contained an unrelenting grimness in its representation of Los Angelos 2019. In the cultural climate of Reaganomics which endeavoured to expand economic prosperity for Americans the film’s dystopian view of the future did not make a profit in a film market dominated by “ET” and “Rocky” The Directors Cut 1992. The film re edited from the 1982 original studio release positions itself as (counter) narrative of Reagan’s discourse on wealth and prosperity. In the Directors cut, some significant changes were made where Deckard’s voice over narrative is removed, as is the happy conclusion depicting Deckard and Rachael in the films closure. The inclusion of the unicorn scene prompts the audience to debate whether Deckard is a replicant and what it means to be human. By reshaping the narrative codes and conventions, the re make presents a critique of the ideology of Reaganism during the 80’s where capitalism had created further division in American society .

Audience reception of the Directors Cut was much more positive as they recognised and identified the failures of Reaganomics that the film largely critiqued. The films insertion of the unicorn scene prompted audiences to question if Deckard was a replicant which enhanced the films cult status during the cultural climate of President Clintons presidency who endorsed space exploration and evidence of life on Mars. The audiences reception of Blade Runner in a vastly changing politically ideology is accredited to the renewed interest in a film that grew to become a science fiction/noir classic.

**INSIGHT**

Explain how media codes and/or conventions can influence an audience’s reading of a media product. ( 4 marks )

Media codes and conventions form a significant part of audience reading, as they are encoded with symbolism that is decoded independently by audiences. For instance, in *Nosedive* 2016), colour is used throughout the film to convey ideas to the audience. The film’s mise en scène heavily features the colours pinks mauves and whites which are incorporated into props and costumes throughout the film to establish a connection between Lacie and characters with whom she feels an affinity.

 In stark contrast, when Lacie’s efforts to raise her social rating suffer humiliation after humiliation her characters demise is evident in the use of harsh tones. When her rating drops below 4.2, and her flight to the wedding is cancelled, an airline representative can no longer book her on another flight because her number is too low. It’s at this point that “Nosedive” descends into nightmarish territory, for Lacie, characterised by the change of colours that represent Lacie’s feeling of exclusion feeling disliked, feeling downgraded and categorized as a second-class citizen. When Lacie reaches peak meltdown by being rejected as bridesmaid and breaks into the wedding her torn pink dress and mud smeared face suggest the distant divide between Lacie’s and Naomi’s world through the symbolic application of colour in the scene.

**QATS**

With reference to another media narrative you studied compare how an audience from a different time period may have consumed, engaged with and interpreted that narrative differently to the original audience.

Audiences reception of Ridley Scotts Blade Runner the directors cut in 1994, was primarily intended for the cinema where the films opening mesmerising visuals panoramic and Vangelis's evocative score merge to represent the cityscape of Los Angeles in November, 2019

Question 3 (6 marks)

**VCAA**

Explain why audiences from different periods of time engage with, consume and read media narratives differently. In your response, refer to one of the narratives that you have studied this year.

When we discuss ideologies evident in media narratives we must differentiate between those held in the time and place of production of a text and those held in society at the time and place of the consumption of that text. The reading of a text may vary according to time, place, culture, gender age or the consumption context Media texts are products of society and when examined in sequence, can illustrate changes in that society. Different societies may be built on different ideologies and therefore read tests differently.

This is evident when analysing the contemporary media text Blade Runner, The Directors Cut 1992. The film re edited from the 1982 original studio release positions itself as (counter)narrative of Reagan’s discourse on wealth and prosperity. In the Directors cut, some significant changes were made where Deckard’s voice over narrative is removed, as is the happy conclusion depicting Deckard and Rachael in the films closure. The inclusion of the unicorn scene prompts the audience to debate whether Deckard is a replicant and what it means to be human. By reshaping the narrative codes and conventions, the re make presents a critique of the ideology of Reaganism during the 80’s where capitalism had created further division in American society

Nosedive’, dir Joe Wright, 2016 the first episode of the third season of the tech dystopian series Black Mirror also reflects how audiences from different periods of time engage with, consume and read media narratives differently.

According to Statistica one the defining phenomena of 2016 reshaping the world is the world-wide accessibility to the internet and most pertinently the use of social media. The region with the highest penetration rates of social networks is North America where 70% of the population had at least one social media account. As of 2017 81% of the United States population had a social networking profile. This demographic, exposed to President Trumps strategic use of social media, business and social platforms such as Uber and the Peoples App and China’s move to rate its citizens through a social credit reflect how ideological and social contexts impact on the audiences reading of the text.

Nosedive takes social media to an Orwellian conclusion with its app called 'Rate Me' that has absolute market penetration. The 'Rate Me' app allows people to rate every interaction both online and offline out of 5. This leads to a world separated into people who are absolutely controlled by the app and those who joyously remove themselves from what has become civilised society. The text in presenting an examination of the potential cycle and outcome of social media engage the audience through either a preferred or negotiated reading of the text. A contemporary audience familiar with the unprecedented and rapid rise of social media is positioned to identify with the narrative presented in Nosedive, as opposed to an audience preceding the rise of social media.

A satire on acceptance and the image of us we like to portray and project to others’’ – creator Brooker describes the successful yet concerning episode. Nosedive is perhaps a heightened version of modern society, were through social media we are undeniably careful of the choice of words used around certain company or consider the correct way to project a comment in the most positive way. These are undeniable ingredients purposely included to make a contemporary audience immersed in social media not only think about our behaviour as an individual but collectively as a nation. This is distinct from an audience devoid of experience with social media who would be positioned to perhaps have an oppositional reading of the text given its dystopian view of the future.

**ATOM**

Explain how a particular ideological point of view can be seen in one of the media narratives you have studied this year. (6 marks)

**INSIGHT**

**Question 3** (6 marks) Explain how ideologies can implicitly and/or explicitly shape media narratives. In your response, refer to **one** of the narratives that you have studied this year.

**QATS**

Describe how the ideological context from the time of its construction helped shaped one of the media narratives you studied this year ( 7 marks )

Question 4 (7 marks)

Analyse how the relationship between two media codes and/or conventions convey meaning in another narrative that you have studied this year.

In Blade Runner dir Ridley Scott, 1992 the highly effective use of camera shots and lighting in the opening scene communicate narrative possibilities and audience expectations

The opening of Blade Runner commences with a harp-like glissando which accompanies the fade-in to a panoramic establishing shot revealing an industrial wasteland that is Los Angeles in the year 2019, on an Earth that is in physical and psychological decay - without a trace of nature.

The establishing long shot of the cityscape, is accompanied by diegetic sound of fire bursts emitted from chimneys in the distant skyline, the camera slowly tracks forward, showing a vast city at night where the sky is black, the city is a dirty brown colour, heavily polluted with smoke; and giant flames of exhaust gasses belch out of oil refinery towers in the industrial overgrowth. A flying car (a spinner) zips by giving homage to technological advancement in a futuristic world. As the camera tracks across the nightscape panorama, the wallowing synthesised tones from composer Vangelis creates an atmosphere of mystery and menace.

An extreme close reveals a huge, disembodied blue eye reflecting the flames above the city. The camera steadily tracks forward in rhythm to the orchestral synthesised music. A low camera angle reveals two massive skyscraper structures shaped like an Egyptian pyramid (or a mammoth Aztec temple) of the gigantic Tyrell Corporation headquarters where search lights punctuate the night sky suggesting the dominance of this corporate structure

Their exteriors framed in a medium shot reveal those like the interior of a vast computer with an intricate micro-chip design.

In the film's opening sequence this whole fantastic panoramic landscape is mirrored and devoured in a contrasting close on the gelid blue surface of a gigantic eye

The camera cuts to a medium shot of a room bathed in expressive blue hues of smoke, a character stands with his back to the audience beneath a steel chrome rotary fan creating tension characteristic of the style of film noir. A re-establishing exterior tracking shot of the Tyrell skyscraper reveals that the room is high above street level, matched by a high angle medium shot of the room where an interrogation is taking place. A woman’s voice reverberates through the rooms intercom announcing the next subject; Leo an Engineer with the company for 6 days. A close of the futuristic Voigt-Kampff machine is intercut with Leon appearing uncomfortable and nervous.

The use of an extreme close of a futuristic Voigt-Kampff machine administers an empathy test, that measures emotional responses. The use of the extreme close reveals the device focuses in on the subject's human iris and measures involuntary fluctuations. This works to convey the nervousness, of a lower-level employee known as Leon Kowalski (Brion James), a new employee of six days."

Through a sequence of shot reverse medium shots, Leon reacts antagonistically to hypothetical questions by a suspicious, hostile and abrasive test administrator, a Blade Runner named Holden When the subject changes to a key question that replicants would find impossible to answer, Leon’s eye fluctuations are revealed in an extreme close “Describe in single words, only the good things that come into your mind about: your mother." Leon, framed in a medium shot sarcastically answers the question: "My mother? Let me tell you about my mother" blasts a smug, seated Holden with his concealed handgun under the table, sending the questioner through an adjoining office's wall. Then, he blasts him a second time.

The use of the camera and lighting in the opening sequence has effectively revealed the futuristic, polluted industrial wasteland setting of Los Angeles in 2119, introduced a dominant corporate authority, recurring attention to a symbolic eye motif and the plots conflict revealed through a replicants murder of the blade runner

Or camera / character

In Blade Runner, the highly effective use of camera shots and mise en scene complement and enhance the introduction and establishment of the main protagonist Rick Deckard juxtaposed within the urban decay of Los Angeles 2019.

The scene commences with an overhead view of the night-time cityscape, composed of smaller skyscrapers left over from the 20th century and a huge media or video-screen (with the giant, smiling image of a pill-popping geisha girl). [Electrical advertising throughout the film features sponsors, including TDK, Atari, Coca-Cola, Pan-Am, Budweiser, RCA, Kinney Shoes, Bulova, Cuisinart and Schlitz. A blinking, mammoth overhead blimp cruises above - its loudspeakers advertise and promote the good life elsewhere with neon signs and huge graphics. ‘A new life awaits you in the Off-World colonies. The chance to begin again in a golden land of opportunity and adventure”.

Climactic changes bring an incessant acid rainfall, mist, and fog to the dreary, grimy, congested landscape. The city, a melange of Hong Kong, Tokyo, New York, and other metropolitan areas, is in ruins. The neon-lit, dark, downtown streets are populated by the lower-class dregs of society, an odd beleaguered assortment of police, Asians, Spanish, street gangs and punks carrying glowing umbrella handles.

In contrast to the film's opening panoramic level, the camera now descends to the street level. It tracks through the crowd to the title character - a retired, burnt-out Rick Deckard (Harrison Ford) framed in a medium shot leaning against a store display window, filled with television sets with poor reception. Deckard sits alone in the frame; his brown coat appears grim against the bright neon hues of café signs behind him. The incessant street traffic impedes the audiences view further signifying that Deckard is alienated within this environment. He looks up toward the blimp, flashing graphic catchphrases to highlight upscale life on the galactic Off-World colonies. Deckard is reading a newspaper, headlined: "Farming the Oceans, the Moon and Antarctica."

An eye line match of Deckard reveals him surveying the advertising blimp, followed by a close of Deckard indicating his indifference to the Off-World colonies advertisement. Wearing a floppy brown trench coat [typical of detectives in classic film noirs], he walks over to order raw fish over noodles at the neon-illuminated, White Dragon Noodle Bar.

The mise en scene established in the café as he argues in Japanese with the manager of the cafe over the amount of food he can eat positions Deckard to the left of frame with the restaurant owner more central and dominant. Depth of field is used to emphasise the bustling diner crowd as steam rises from the cafe bar. When Deckard sits an eye level medium shot is used to frame him against the approaching policemen sent on an errand to arrest him.

When Deckard beckons “You’ve got the wrong guy pal” a low angle camera shot is used to frame Officer Chew, exerting authority over Deckard. When Chew announces that Captain Bryant wants to see him, Deckard is tightly framed reinforcing his entrapment amongst the arresting officers and he appears to surrender to their instructions to come with them. The introduction of Deckard conforms to the central male film noir character.

The camera framing, dialogue and mise en scene contribute to establishing his character as a disillusioned loner, a tough guy who appears defiant to authority and uncomfortable in his environment

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or

In the scene where Sebastian is forced to take Replicant leader Roy to meet Tyrell the effective use of camera shots combined with editing is employed to create tension and rhythm.

The scene commences with an establishing shot of the grand Tyrell corporation. **Continuity editing** is used to then reveal an exterior medium shot of an elevator lift ascending the building. **A cut in** of a medium shot shows Sebastian who appears nervous, which is followed by **an eye line match** revealing Roy next to him who stands in anticipation of his quest to meet Tyrell. As Roy raises his eyes above, **a match on action** exterior shot is used to show its further ascend

The camera then **cross cuts** to a close interior shot of a replicant owl as the elevator stops half way to the buildings summit. This is followed by a medium shot of Tyrell who sits alone on his bed engaging in share trading via his laptop.

The electronic audio security system announces the arrival of Sebastian. The camera then cuts to a close of Roy and Sebastian in the lift punctuated by a radio communication from Tyrell who enquires” At this hour What can I do for you Sebastian”? A close is used to enhance the tension of an anxious Sebastian who replies, “Queen to Bishop 6 check” about their Chess game. The camera **cross cuts** to Tyrell who murmurs to himself “Nonsense, just a moment” as he leaves his position on the bed and emulates the chess move on his chess board. The camera cuts back to Sebastian in the elevator as Tyrells transmission reveals” Knight takes Queen” The camera **cross cuts** back to Tyrell leaning over the chess board as he enquires “What’s on your mind Sebastian, what are you thinking about”? A **cross cut** reveals Roy’s wry grin followed by **an eye line match** of Sebastian as Roy softly announces, “Bishop to King 7, checkmate”. Which Sebastian repeats to Tyrell. The use of cross cut editing successfully places the audience in the position to share the full range of knowledge of Roy’s surprise entry unbeknown to Tyrell.

This is affirmed through the **cross-cut medium shot of Tyrell** who mutters, “Got a brain storm hey Sebastian, milk and cookies keep you awake huh?” The camera them **cross cuts** to the first two shot of Sebastian and Roy inside the lift as Tyrell announces “Lets discuss this, you better come up Sebastian. A re-establishing shot of the exterior of the lift on the building enables the audience to follow its final ascend to the top floor. A close shot of the replicant owl reveals it has one translucent red blinded eye representing Tyrell whilst the other remains clear of vision representing Roy’s mission to meet Tyrell. Sensing sound the owl turns, followed by an eye line match medium shot of Sebastian and Roy’s entry to Tyrells quarters.

Sebastian announces “Mr Tyrell as he enters the doorway with Roy standing somewhat obscured behind him. A medium shot of Tyrell. adjusting his night gown reveals his sudden unease. Sebastian then exclaims “Mr Tyrell. I brought a friend, as he turns to Roy. A medium shot of Tyrell appearing surprised is followed by a **match on action over the shoulder shot** of Tyrell as he walks forward and says “I’m surprised you didn’t come sooner. This long-sustained camera shot is used to show Roy walking forward from the shadows as he replies. “It’s not an easy thing to meet your maker”

**ATOM**

**Question 4** (8 marks)  Analyse how media codes and conventions have combined to create an effect on or to engage an audience in one or more of the media narratives you have studied this year. Your answer should include at least two codes and two conventions.

**Insight**

**Question 4** (7 marks)

Discuss the relationship between media narratives and their ideological and/or institutional contexts of production. In your response, refer to **another** media narrative that you have studied this year.

**QATS**

Analyse how two media codes functioned together to create and communicate meaning in a media narrative that you have studied this year

**VCAA**

Question 5 (10marks)

Media narratives can convey ideology through the selection and application of media codes and conventions. Analyse how media codes and conventions convey ideology in the media narratives that you have studied this year.

Film and television narratives are often shaped and influenced by social, cultural and political ideology evident during the production period. Both Blade Runner the Directors Cut (1992) dir Ridley Scott and Nosedive dir Joe Wright, 2016 use media codes and conventions to convey ideology to position the audience to read and engage with the text.

Blade Runner the Director S Cut 1992 was re-edited from the original 1982 release to reflect the Directors dissatisfaction with the original and the films resurgent cult popularity. Its re-enactment as a cultural narrative, occurred just a few years after Ronald Reagan left office and several elements in the narrative represent a very critical examination of Reagan’s presidency. The film’s dystopian view of the future characterizes an economic and social system whose functioning and structuring encapsulate a speculative reading of the economic, political, and cultural practices of Reaganism.

Under Reagan the new Right established ideology and new values of hard work, self-reliance, health and religion. Reagan advocated industrial deregulation, reduction in government spending, free market and tax cuts for both individuals and corporations. The 80s became known as a decade of excess, materialism and capitalism

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The socio-economic system presented in Blade Runner adheres to this line of thought as it intends to deconstruct and pinpoint the contradictions interred within the dynamics of Reaganomics.

Blade Runner opens with a long shot of a slightly gloomy yet exuberant Los Angeles: characteristically wide, luminous, and unmistakably set in the future as a spinner (flying car) crosses the skyline. The perfected technology, along with Vangelis’ appealing score, provides an ode to Reagan’s opulence. This is further reinforced by the establishing shot and low camera angled shots of the massive Tyrell corporation, the setting for the interrogation of Leon a suspect replicant. The use of mise en scene in revealing the dominant and sterile blue hues and clinical depiction of the Tyrell Corporation interior gives homage to the rise of Corporate America.

Echoing this sense of dominance underpins the first interior sequence of the film, where “waste disposal” replicant Leon has his humanity tested. The sequence has strong connections with the emergence of stringent methods of control on the part of employers where in the 1980s the union proclivities of workers are increasingly monitored in elaborate pre-and postemployment screening and data collection. The subtext of the sequence will resonate in the entirety of the film where the lowest sectors of society are to be constantly scrutinized and chased by larger structures of power.

Screenwriter David Fancher says that he always intended BLADE RUNNER to be a rebuke of the “cruel politics” of Ronald Reagan, whose presidency marginalized the poor and promoted class conflict.

After Leon disposes of Blade Runner Holden the audience observe a gigantic virtual billboard of a geisha-looking woman covers the entire façade of a skyscraper. Consumerism has gained such dominance that is literally superimposed upon the cityscape, suggesting the strengths of the market (and, so we assume, of the national economy). The hyper city that is presented to the audience within the first minutes of the film conforms to the Reaganite narrative and its pervasive culture of greed.

Blade Runner also added some very 1980s fears into the mix. Corporate power which had taken over from democratic government entirely. The threat of foreign economic powers overtaking the US also fed into Blade Runner’s melting-pot, multilingual Los Angeles, particularly Japan, which was then buying up chunks of the US, including Hollywood studios

In Blade Runner, the visual style of film noir presents high rise, high-tech buildings next to decayed and rotten tenements. The chaos on the streets seems unbearable and the mix of races and advertisements signals the arrival of the global market. The American economic hegemony seems to be over and mainly Asians control the smaller enterprises. English is no longer the dominating language as Japanese, Spanish and even German sentences are audible. The visual design obviously speaks to contemporary dilemmas. The anonymous masses on the streets allude to another phenomenon of the 1980s, that is the explosive growth of homelessness and the resulting underclass in American society. The so-called ‘re form’ of low-cost housing together with a cutting of social services and a growing inflation endangered the economic survival of many American citizens, forcing many of them out of their homes. Looking for food, clothing and jobs these “ghosts of former lives and selves” gathered in the major cities.

The underclass as well as homeless people and drug addicts were defined as morally unworthy and unemployment, in the eyes of the New Right, was the result of a lack willpower and initiative. These ideological polemics helped the conservative government to maintain its control over society.

The selection of long shots, emphasizing a sense of overall richness, runs in parallel with the way “Reaganites dismissed concerns about the skewed distribution of wealth by pointing the wealthier society overall” The camera cranes further down until it reaches a rain-washed, crowded street where tacky neon lights and junk food stalls dominate the space. In opposition to the previous long shots depicting a technological climax, subsequent scenes enhance a sense of structural poverty that underpins the entirety of the zero level. The audience encounter, throughout the plot, homeless people warming themselves up near re buckets, extreme pollution and overpopulation, crumbling infrastructures, abandoned buildings, and unhealthy living conditions,

The film positions itself as (counter)narrative of Reagan’s discourse on wealth and prosperity. Whenever the camera zeroes in on the impoverished city ground or when it shows Deckard’s car being almost dismantled in the street, the film refutes the “American miracle” proclaimed by Reagan as well as his idea of how supply-side theory made “economy bloomed like a plant that had been cut back and could now grow quicker and stronger”. It is not surprising that the macro-perspective is controlled by huge advertisements of Coca Cola or Pan-An. But as pointed out previously, the power and solidity of big business is not matched, in turn, with a well-established average consumer as the abundant images of poverty on the ground level certify. By means of presenting an economic landscape totally subjected to big business, powerful enough to become an enormous material part of the city, the discourse of the film validates the argument asserting that “Reaganomics is based, in large part, on the belief that only the large corporations can revitalize the American economy” Moreover, along with the very materiality of the city, the film makes explicit the Reaganite narrative by leaving any form of government totally absent and unnamed

Scott’s nightmare vision leaves not much room for Los Angeles as known to the audience. Sunshine has been replaced by rain, light has been exchanged for constant darkness. Science fiction meets film-noir in this city of noise and danger. With his picture of the population, Scott obviously alludes to the fear of many Americans of Asians taking over not only Los Angeles but also the rest of the west. Bicycle-riding, food-selling and fast-talking immigrants crowd the streets, always eager to display what western society assumes to be their characteristic attributes. They seem to be the only ones who have adjusted perfectly, working for the sake of future generations who hopefully will be able to live in one of the dream-worlds advertised by flying billboards: “A new life awaits you in the off-world colony, the chance to begin again in a golden land of opportunity and adventure”. The icons of advanced capitalism are omnipresent. By giving us glimpses at familiar products (Coca-Cola, Jim Beam, Atari, Michelob), the director provides us with something we can relate to and at the same time signals the survival of huge corporations. While the city appears to be on the brink of total chaos and destruction, advertisements shine bright, symbolizing the invincibility of market forces.

On the grounds that only large corporations and big business would reignite national economy, and provided with wide scale relief, wealthy tax-payers employed the advantages granted by Reaganomics “for conspicuous consumption (such as expensive foreign cars) or for stock exchange speculation rather than productive investment” as wealth distribution kept growing disparate. During the decade, for “those in the top 1 percent of the income bracket, capital gains grew by 112 percent and salary income grew by 81 percent, whereas for those in the bottom 90 percent of the income distribution, a whole decade of work yielded only a 3.9 percent wage increase” Reagan’s Morning in America was, after all, hidebound by a class-oriented nature. Attuned to this, the Off World of Blade Runner is beyond the majority’s means. The first hint of this is the extreme overpopulation of the city (and the subsequent lack of decent living conditions) and the poverty that strikes most of the citizens is demographic and social reality seems strange given the fact that a “golden land of opportunity” such as the Off World is supposedly available for the entire population. The structural forces that shape this situation are brought to the fore when the film introduces us to J.F. Sebastian, a genetic designer living in an almost abandoned building who suffers a degenerative disease:

Pris: What’s your problem?

Sebastian: Methuselah syndrome.

Pris: What’s that?

Sebastian: My glands, they grow old too fast.

Pris: Is that why you’re still on Earth?

Sebastian: Yeah. I couldn’t pass the medical.

Echoing the sadly famous “pre-existing conditions” that insurance companies use for refusing to provide medical coverage, the scene manifests the real nature of the Off World and its implicit class-bound discourse. In elucidating the agency of spaces as ensuring the hegemonic status, David Harvey sketches an idea paramount for both the Off World and, implicitly, for Reagan’s Morning in America:

As a consequence of its market-centred policies, Reaganomics reduced investment in welfare. Aid for the poor and the unemployed was terribly damaged as billions of dollars were taken from such programs and re-directed to military spending.

The depiction of the underclass in Blade Runner is multifaceted even though the replicants must face the most inescapable ill-fated destiny. They are, nonetheless, a perfected version of the worker from a corporative perspective (and, therefore, from the stance of Reaganomics). Their extremely short lifespan provides a four-year disposable worker with, allegedly, no emotional responses that may problematize the tasks imposed. They are the most suitable units for the ultimate capitalist state and, implicitly, for Reaganomics: “most work schedules are extremely tightly ordered, and the intensity and speed of production have largely been organized in ways that favour capital rather than labour [...] all part and parcel of a daily work rhythm fixed by profit-making rather than by the construction of humane work schedules” Due to the strict temporal trajectory they are subject to, the replicants become metaphors of the type of worker demanded by supply-side theory: de-unionized, rapidly and easily interchange- able for other, and left adrift in the market to be used by large companies.

Black Mirrors’ Nosedive was released at the height of the Unites States election campaign in 2016 resulting in Donald Trump’s presidency. Trump copied and recast Ronald Reagan’s promise to [make America great again](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Make_America_Great_Again%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank). In four words, it captured both pessimism and optimism, both fear and hope. The political positions of [United States President](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/President_of_the_United_States) [Donald Trump](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donald_Trump) (referred to as **Trumpism)**have elements from across the political spectrum merging populism with [plutocracy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plutocracy) and [authoritarianism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Authoritarianism).

Trump also proposed sizable income tax cuts and deregulation consistent with conservative ([Republican Party](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Republican_Party_%28United_States%29)) policies, along with significant infrastructure investment and protection for entitlements for the elderly, typically considered liberal ([Democratic Party](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratic_Party_%28United_States%29)) policies. His [anti-globalization](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anti-globalization) policies of trade [protectionism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protectionism) and immigration reduction cross party lines

During this period, the cultural and social landscape of America had embraced social media as a major platform of communication engagement and identity. Nosedive” explores the consequences of integrating seemingly arbitrary social rankings into everyday life—in this world, where your number dictates which jobs you can get, which neighbourhood you live in, and even which cars you can rent.

The prevalence of social media is championed by Trump himself who uses Twitter as a platform for political commentary, opinion and announcements. Unlike Blade Runner, Nosedive is set in contemporary society as we follow the protagonist Lacie, on the journey to her idea of success. There are extreme gender regressive notions which are portrayed through the overall aesthetics of the episode, which resonate with the infamous Trump tapes which marked him as misogynist. Both the male and female characters, dressed in their perfectly mismatched shades of salmon and baby blue, prance around a clear 1950’s inspired architectural community which paints the picture of the nuclear family, and all that entails. The colours used - blue for boys, pink for girls - combined with female and male interactions causes for one to feel confused by the idea of regression contrasting with when the episode is supposed to be set, the future.

Preceding Trump the election of the nation’s first black president back in 2007 [raised hopes](http://www.people-press.org/2008/11/13/section-2-the-president-elects-image-and-expectations/#optimism-about-race-relations) that race relations in the U.S. would improve, especially among black voters. But by 2016, following a spate of high-profile deaths of black Americans during encounters with police and protests by the Black Lives Matter movement and other groups, many Americans – especially blacks – described race relations as [generally bad](http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2016/06/27/2-views-of-race-relations/).

Nosedive also explores how the American social system [affects people of colour](http://fusion.net/story/336672/pew-race-social-media/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank). The mise en scene employed in the text largely consists of pastels, soft pinks and peaches, milky mint green, but it is also very *white*.

In the episode, the majority of service roles like baristas, airline booking agents, car rental attendants, airport security—apparently associated with lower rankings—are played by people of colour. The one person we see being down voted out of a job and into oblivion was a black character, who desperately attempts to make himself more likable by buying smoothies for his co-workers, as if he had no choice but to engage in a self-fulfilling prophecy of poor ranking and servitude. Nosedive suggests our society marginalizes and devalues people of colour as an unconscious by product of that very system.

Nosedive” is both dystopian fiction and acute social satire. Lacie (Bryce Dallas Howard) lives in a version of America where every tiny interaction is ranked by the people involved on an app that syncs with augmented-reality contact lenses (or retinal implants, it’s unclear). The minute you see someone you can also see their ranking, meaning that reality has morphed into a pastel-coloured nightmare of aggressive cheeriness, as citizens attempt to out-nice each other and bump up their ratings.

Of course, a lot of this already happens. Many governments including the U.S. already spy on their citizens, social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram collect an overwhelming amount of information on you, as does Google. The Peeples App gave users the capacity to rank any person around them on a star system. Globally in China Zhima Credit, a "personal credit" rating associated with Alipay, the main form of mobile payment in China is set to become mandatory for all citizens by 2020. The Chinese government has described the system as a method to improve trust nationwide and cultivate a culture of “sincerity.”

The episode aims squarely at the anxiety stoked by a social media and obsession with quantification. For anyone who’s ever made conversation with an Uber driver specifically to upgrade a passenger rating, or wondered why a tweet isn’t getting more likes, or even checked a credit score, “Nosedive” surely radiates shivers of anxiety and a dystopian view of social media. Its setting in a *Truman Show*-style universe that seems designed explicitly for Instagram. Nosedive is perhaps a heightened version of modern society, however there are undeniable ingredients purposely included to make one not only think about our behaviour as an individual but collectively as a nation.

Writer, Brooker heightens aspects of real life within the episode for dramatic purpose and entertainment, not to completely leave the audience with an uncomfortable feeling of regret towards our world. The defining moment at the end of the episode where the audience observe Lacie through subjective camera shots and rhythmic editing utterly let go of the repression and built up emotion which allows for a closure where the audience can reflect that although technology, social media and overall modern society can at times be overwhelming, it’s how we as humans utilise them in moderation that counts.

Both texts use codes and conventions to examine and make critical comment upon the political, social and cultural ideologies of their production period and their far-reaching consequences. Both Blade Runner and Nosedive offera very critical conclusion of where the misappropriation of technology consumerism and capitalism, should not be “lost in time, like tears in rain”.