

Digital Media, Society, and Culture

Angus A.A. Mol

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Cyborgs

Cybernetic Organisms

- Cybernetics: “The scientific study of control and communication in the animal and the machine.” (Wiener 1948)
- “The Cyborg deliberately incorporates exogenous components extending the self-regulatory control function of the organism in order to adapt it to new environments.” (Cyborgs and Space, [Clynes and Kline](#))
- Future bodies and high tech



Illustration accompanying a LIFE magazine coverage of
Cyborgs and Space

Neuralink



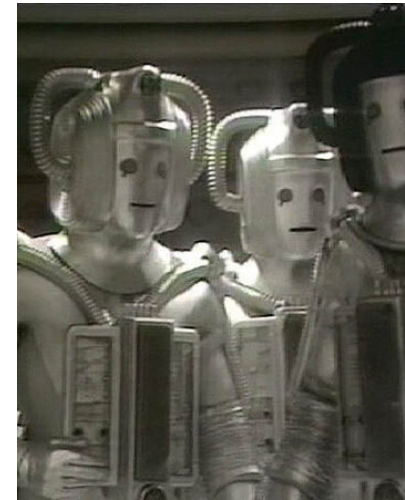
The Body, an Imperfect Construct



[*Humani Vicus Instrumenta*](#),
Unknown Artist (1570s)



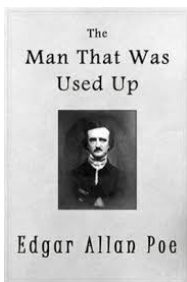
The Monster and his Bride,
from *Frankenstein's Bride* (1935)



Dr. Who's Cybermen (1966)



Inspector Gadget
(2015)

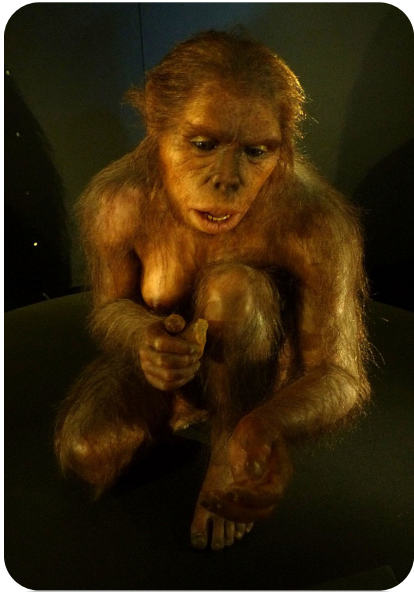


"And a bloody action it was," **continued the thing**, as if in a soliloquy; "but then one mustn't fight with the Bugaboos and Kickapoos, and think of coming off with a mere scratch. Pompey, I'll thank you now for that arm. [...] Here, **Pompey screwed on an arm**. [...]"

It was a clear case. Brevet Brigadier General John A. B. C. Smith was **the man** — the man that was used up.

Are we cyborgs all the way down?

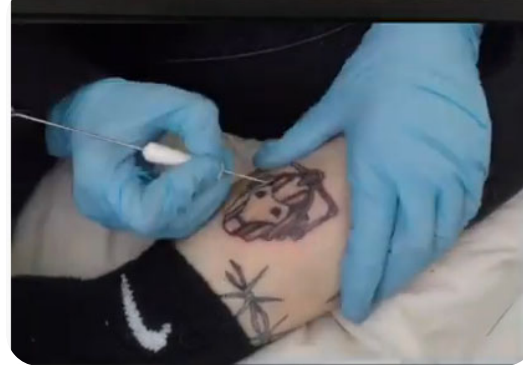
Technology in a human hand
2 million years ago



Ötzi's (5.300 years ago)
'Barcode' tattoo



Roos' (DMSC 2019)
Cyberman tattoo



Technology in a human hand
2010s



If so... so what?

A Cyborg Manifesto (Haraway 1985)

- Cyborgs as chimeric, hybrid bodies vs dualism, essentialism, patriarchy
 - Human-Animal chimeras
 - Human-Machine chimeras
 - Physical-non physical chimeras

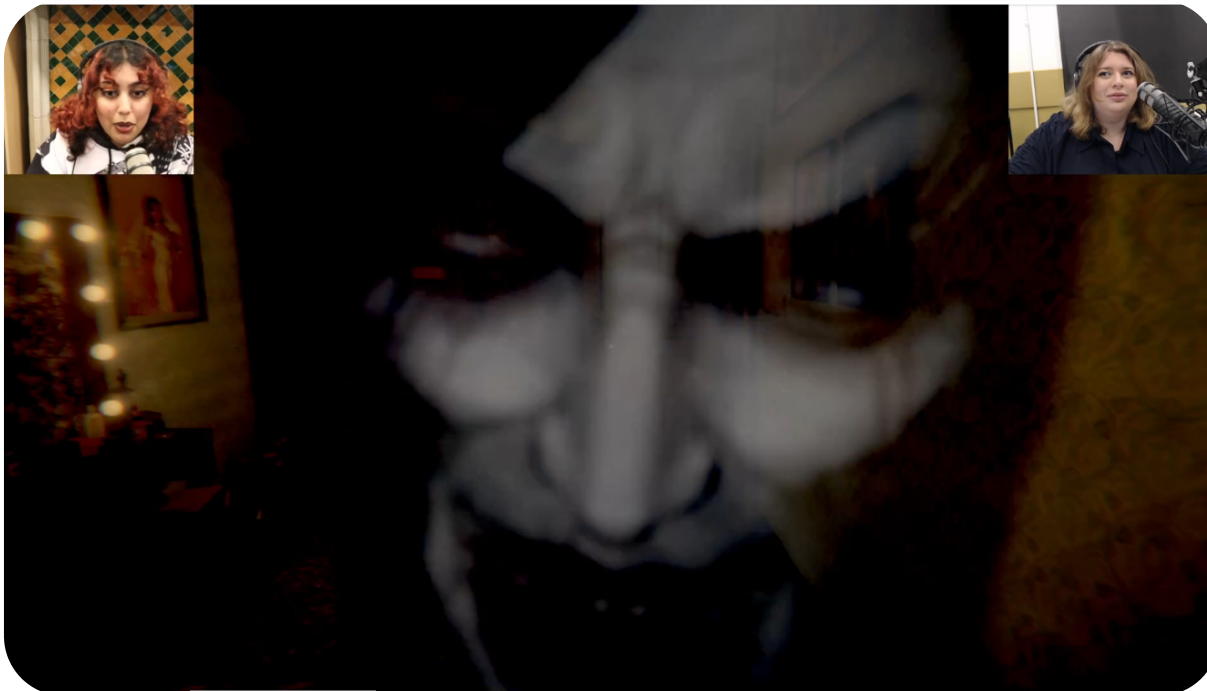
“Perhaps, ironically, we can learn from our fusions with animals and machines how not to be Man, the embodiment of Western logos.”



Donna Haraway

When things start getting serious

Play and the Body (Keogh 2018)

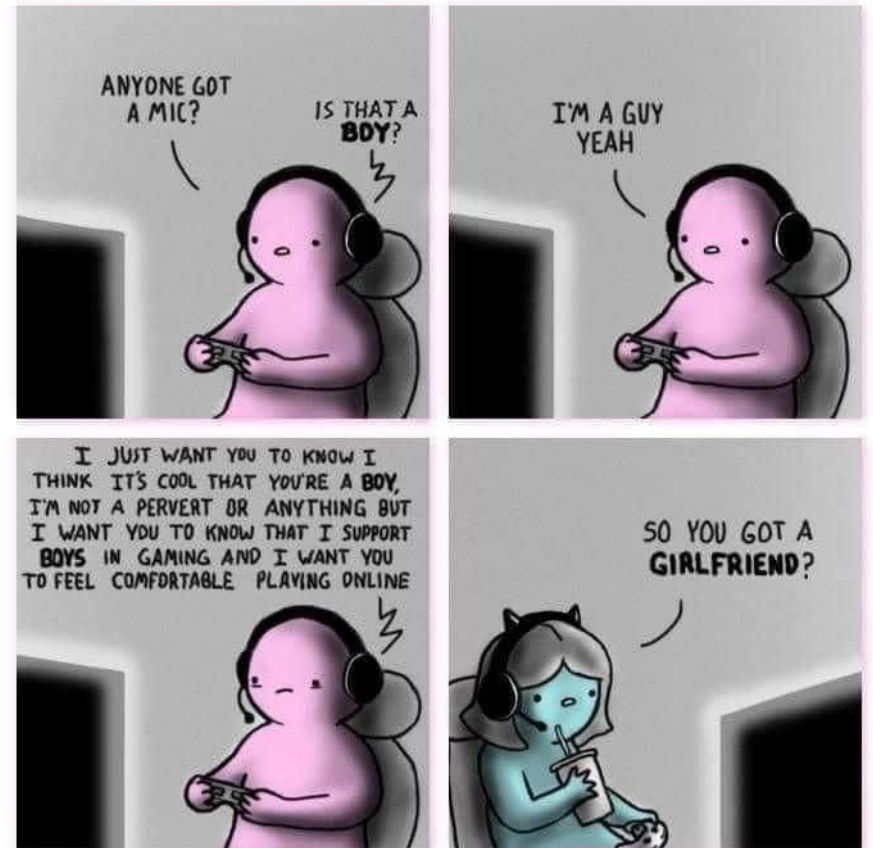


TAKE  CARE Epic Jumpscare [Ahead](#)



Bodies (biological, cultural, self-identified, and ascribed) are central to our digital experience

Fair Play for all Bodies?



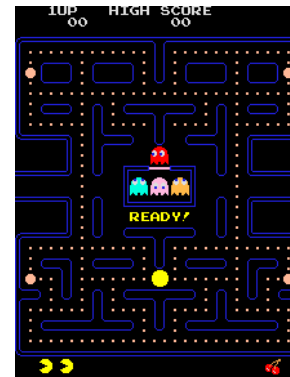
Pac-(Wo)Man

“Women are insane about this game. Men like the sports games, the action games and the space games. Women like the predator games.”

NBC News Report

“Video experts believe that Pac-Man’s lighthearted graphics, catchy tunes and the absence of exploding spaceships attract women players.”

Working Women magazine



Private Lives/Jennifer Allen **ALL THE WORLD'S A VIDEO GAME**

Mind Invaders

IT IS A CHILL THURSDAY MORNING, THE day after the surgeon general announced that video games contribute to violent and testy behavior, a wobbly grip on reality, and, for all one knows, cancer of the eyeballs, dyslexia, ennui, arthritis, palsy, and pox.

The surgeon general's remarks worried but did not faze me. At nine the next morning, I am standing in a smudgy, steamy Laundromat at Broadway and 78th Street, burrowing in my purse for quarters for the Pac-Man machine, and feeling like the chaperon at the party. On line ahead of me, having dumped his bundles at my feet, is a pecky, pink-skinned messenger; ahead of him is a six-year-old boy who has to stretch his neck to see the screen. Except for a tall boy in a crew-neck sweater slouching against a washing machine and devouring a Mars bar, the others on line are all skinny and black and look about fourteen years old. The children glance at me, mildly curious, the way you pass by someone who is having a conversation with a parking meter.

For a while it is reassuring, a comfort just to be near the Pac-Man machine, like sitting in a restaurant when you're famished, knowing a hot dinner is on its way. But the minutes start to limp, then hobble. How long will I have to wait? Is it possible that I'll have to leave here without getting to play?

"Shouldn't you be in school?" I ask one of the boys, in what I hope is a friendly, bantering tone.

"Shouldn't you be at work?" he says. I have been bewildered lately by my fascination with Pac-Man: Lacking a certain competitive gusto and weak in motor skills, I have never been a games player or sportswoman. So it comes as a surprise—like a sudden infatuation with someone I never even liked—to find that I am attached to this game. I play almost daily, before or after working, and cannot pass by a machine without stopping for a game. I've stopped buying cigarettes at the head shop down the street and switched to a candy store-video parlor two blocks away. I steal quarters

against the dark and a cacophony of sounds, from explosions to computerized ditties. The screens on the games had laser beams or shooting stars or tiny gorillas or little blobs in hot pink and green and electric blue that swoop or jiggle or dart all over them. I was mesmerized.

First, I tried Space Invaders, in which moving launchpads rained bombs on advancing rows of green creatures, and vice versa. Space Invaders was dead serious, grim, accompanied by a tune that sounded like the chase music from *Jaws* played at high speed. Space Invaders was depressing; I watched helplessly as the merciless bullies marched closer, launchpads crumbled, one by one, into smithereens.

from my boyfriend's dresser top, the ones he saves for the washing machine, and tell him I'm going out for the paper. The romance began on Labor Day weekend. On the way back to the city, I stopped at a Catskill resort, and wandering through the vast lobby, I came across a big black room aglow with wall-to-wall video games. It was dazzling in there, like Las Vegas: hot lights

This game features a skier schussing down a mountain slope to a gay Bavarian tune and a remarkably lifelike sound effect of skis slicing through crisp, packed snow. The idea was to guide the skier past the tractors, trees, and boulders that dotted the slope. I lasted longer there, but got discouraged again: The collisions reminded me of my own unhappy skiing past—spills, tumbles, tears.

Wait. Another happy, dopey song noodled from a nearby machine. It was the Pac-Man theme song—a tune that, weeks later, I would hear in my dreams. Grown-ups and children were clustered around the game, laughing and talking, better-tempered than the dour, determined players who wrestled with Asteroids and Space Invaders. The object of the game was to get the yellow Pac-Man to eat the maze of dots on the screen before being eaten by the creatures who pursued them. If the Pac-Man ate certain dots, the creatures in pursuit turned blue, and the Men could earn extra points by eating them. There were no explosions or smashups; when a Pac-Man got eaten, the only sound was a droopy, wilting noise, the kind that might accompany a clown making a sad face.

I spent \$3 at Pac-Man, oblivious to the honeymooning couple patiently waiting their turn, and left feeling feverish and happy and a little woozy, as if I had just gulped a strong drink on an empty stomach. Driving home, I found myself humming the Pac-Man song.

I begin playing regularly at the candy store-video gallery. Like a customer in a porn shop, I do not look at the proprietor, even when he gives me change. In the back of the store, where the three games are, the carpet is flecked with gum wrappers and cigarette butts; it is so warm and clammy that players wipe the sides of their faces as they play, and the control knobs of the games are slippery with sweat. When the younger players are here, mostly boys and girls from about eleven to fourteen, the place smells of grape gum and some kind of lime stick candy that stains the kids' mouths green. At dusk, when it is taken over by older teenagers and young men,

Across the room was Alpine Skier.

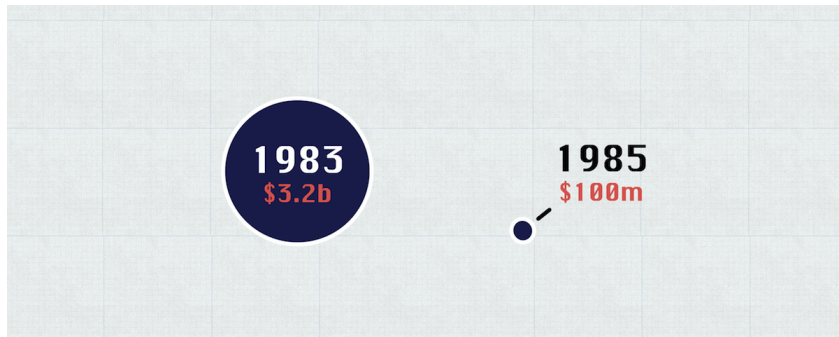
20 NEW YORK/JANUARY 17, 1983

Illustration by Ken Lindsey

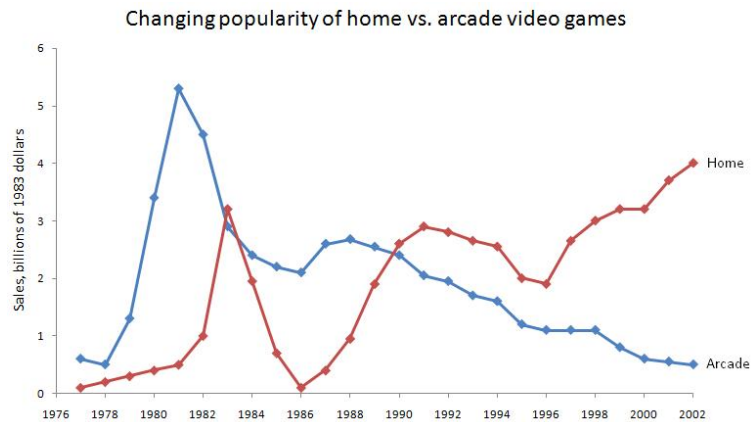


Ms. Pac-Man

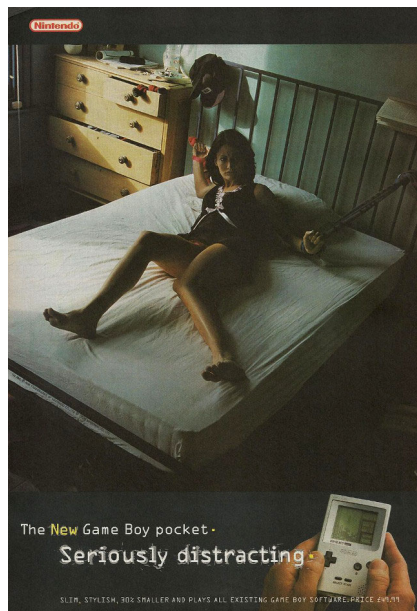
Video Games become Niche: Crash of 1983



Source: [Bugsplat](#)



‘Toys for boys’



Hey [honey](#).

Not sure if you've heard, but Xbox One is now available. That means we can start playing games like [Dead Rising 3](#). I know, I know. You'd rather [knit](#) than watch me [slay zombies](#), but hear me out on this. Xbox One is actually for both of us. Seriously.

I put together a list of reasons why the console could benefit you and me—together and apart, but mostly together:

1. **Games!** Maybe you don't LOVE games like I do, but there's really something for everyone. While I'm playing [Dead Rising 3](#), you might like [arcade](#) games. And since you were just begging me to [dance](#), I'm willing to play [Forza Motorsport 5](#) just [for](#) you. It's a win-win!
2. **Entertainment for both of us.** You love [movies](#) and I love [football](#). Well, with the Xbox One, we can love both. We can catch your favorite [team](#) AND check out my favorite [team](#). Just think of all this togetherness we're going to experience. It's gonna be awesome!
3. **It will help us get fit.** The console offers Xbox Fitness free with Xbox Live Gold through December 2014* so [I](#) can get [the abs I've](#) always dreamed of, while working out to [Tracy Anderson](#).
4. **Play with others.** You've been encouraging me to [play with others](#) and it just so happens that Xbox One has the best multiplayer service that [filters out jerks](#). So don't you worry. If we get an Xbox One, I'll be [making new friends](#) in no time.
5. **We can talk on Skype** with your [favorite sister](#) whom, of course, I love dearly. Heck, we can even talk to them while we watch your favorite [TV show](#).

So what do you say? Let's be like an awesome movie montage—just me, you, and ~~my~~ our Xbox One—together at last.

Xoxo,
Me

p.s. Did I mention how [beautiful](#) you are? And how I really appreciate that you [love me more than anything](#)?

p.p.s If (or should I say when) we get Xbox One, you have dibs on the first [multiplayer game](#) that we experience together.

p.p.p.s Long story short: I really, really, really want one for the holidays—y'know... for us.

[PSP Commercial \(2014\)](#)

“How to convince your wife to get an XBox One” (2014)

Tropes vs. Women

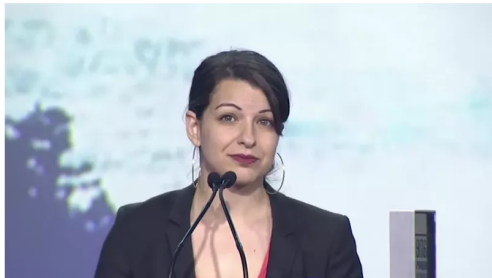
- [Feminist Frequency](#) (Anita Sarkeesian)
- Successful (\$158,000) Kickstarter for Webseries
→ Harassment



Bomb Threat Targeted Anita Sarkeesian, Gaming Awards Last March

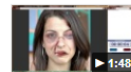
Stephen Totilo
9/17/14 5:23pm • Filed to: WOMEN AND VIDEO GAMES

120.9K 1.6K 47



Speed Run of Beat Up Anita Sarkeesian. (WR maybe) 5 seconds ...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6yLXH2KH84I>



Jan 28, 2015 - Uploaded by Astrowave
Here's the link https://mega.co.nz/#!21M3xRSIIJeYx_SgzRn05Df-7F2JCAPv6ggc335TT06WywzjXV7E ...

Controversial Games | BEAT UP ANITA SARKEESIAN - YouTube

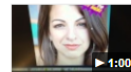
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9FJv0JEwHgE>



Sep 21, 2016 - Uploaded by Sentient Fart Cloud of Doom [dormant channel]
I am rebooting my controversial games series. I'll be covering the game Beat Up Anita Sarkeesian. Video on ...

let's play PUNCH ANITA SARKEESIAN **TRIGGER WARNING ...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b6VcROM4Dqk>



Jul 14, 2012 - Uploaded by GAMERBOYMANYGAMES99
*So no apologies for all the misogyny I just want some company to come and watch some porn with me ...

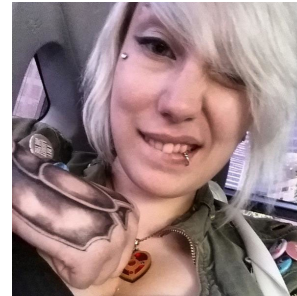


Gamergate

- Harassment campaign against Zoe Quinn
 - Developer of Depression Quest
 - Masquerading as “Ethics in Game Journalism”
 - [Doxxing](#): the public release of personal information
 - Involving other (mostly non-male) developers.
- Misogyny and Gaming
 - Violently shutting out the Other
- The Future of the Culture War (2014)

“What we have in Gamergate is a glimpse of how these skirmishes will unfold in the future—**all the rhetorical weaponry and siegecraft of an internet comment section** brought to bear on our culture, not just at the fringes but at the center. What we're seeing now is a **rehearsal**, where the mechanisms of a **toxic and inhumane politics are being tested and improved.**”

~ Emma Carmichael on [Deadspin](#)



Fortunately... Everyone and their mother plays video games!

2 | ESA Essential Facts 2022

THE VIDEO GAME PLAYER COMMUNITY

The video game community is vast and diverse. Two thirds of Americans—people of all ages, races, genders and backgrounds—play video games. Video game players are about as likely to be female as male, and the majority of players are over 18.



65% of American adults
(age 18+) play video games

71% of American kids
(under 18) play video games



87%
believe there is a
video game for everyone

There are **215.5 million** active video game players across all ages in the U.S. 🎮

VIDEO GAME
PLAYERS ACROSS
ALL AGES:



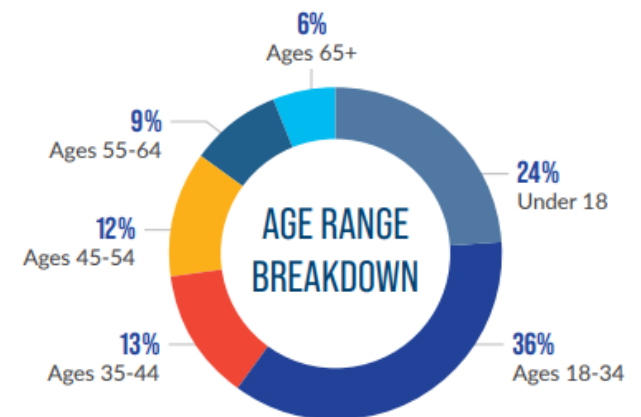
48%
identify as female
52%
identify as male†



70%
of men and boys
play video games



62%
of women and girls
play video games



The average video game
player is
33 years old

Across all ages,
76%
of players are over 18

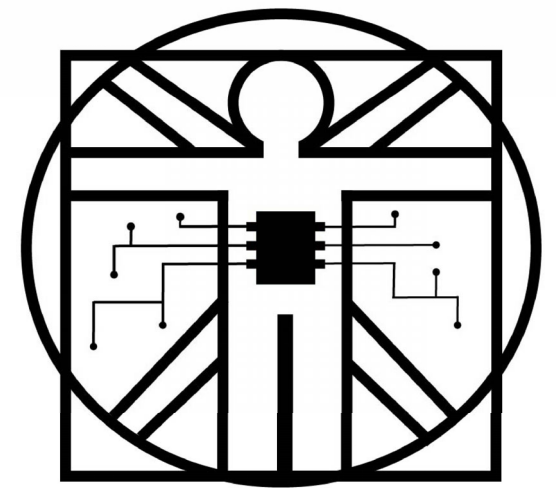
Source: [ESA 2022 Report](#)

The Cybernetic Core of Culture

Frequently, when we discuss ‘new’ or ‘future’ technologies, we are retelling ancient mythologies of who we are or should (not) be.

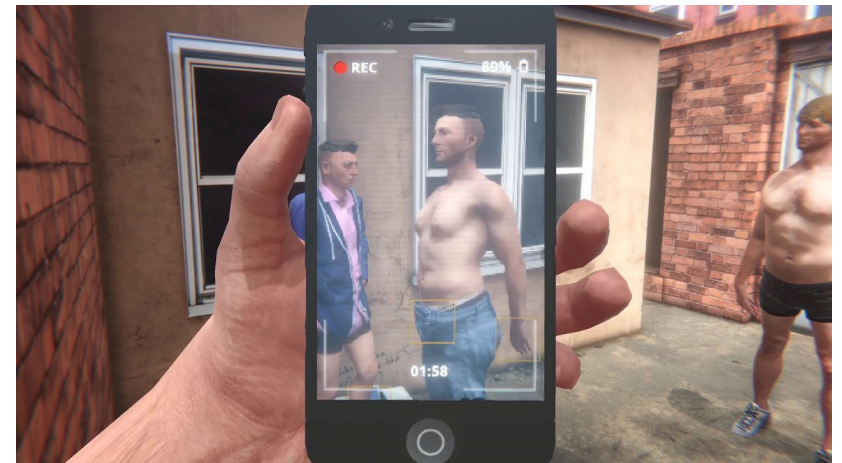
Cyborg Technologies:

- How we constitute and consume our bodies and identities
- How we conceptualize and control the bodies of others
- How we construct and are as cyborgs



“An argument for pleasure in the confusion of boundaries and for responsibility in their construction.” (Haraway 1985)

Go play like cyborgs!



Content Cue: What's your favorite cyborg (technology)?