

Article

Capitalizing on Animality: Monstrosity and Multispecies Relations in Jordan Peele's *Nope* (2022)

Heather King 

Department of English, Rice University, Houston, TX 77005, USA; heather.king@rice.edu

Abstract: One amongst many of the defining characteristics of so-called 'late stage' capitalism are human-animal relationships that have become acrimonious, hostile, or even *monstrous* in nature. A foundational premise of monster theory, and one that Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's seminal 1996 edited collection of the same name suggests, is that the construction of the monster in popular culture is fraught with the boundaries that constitute the society that has spawned them; the monstrous body "exists only to be read" (p. 4). Bringing together the theoretical insights of the Marxist theory of reification, critical animal studies, and monster theory, this article examines the ways in which cinematic depictions of gigantic monstrosity can inform our theorizing of multispecies relationships under capitalism. Specifically, I explore how the tensions between capital and human-animal relationships serve to construct and constitute the multiform monster, Jean Jacket, in Jordan Peele's 2022 film *Nope*. Through an examination of the multispecies relationalities that the film portrays, I argue that the figure of Jean Jacket is a monstrous culmination of the reified and therefore, necessarily deferred nature of human-animal relationships under capital. However, *Nope's* conclusion alerts us to the radical dereifying potential of multispecies bonds of care and embodied knowledge; systems of resistance that can be forged even within our current capitalist ruins.

Keywords: human-animal relations; monstrosity; capitalism; reification; Karl Marx; Jordan Peele; multispecies; contemporary cinema; dereification; kaiju

I will cast abominable filth at you, make you vile, and make you a spectacle

(Nahum 3:6)



Citation: King, Heather. 2024. Capitalizing on Animality: Monstrosity and Multispecies Relations in Jordan Peele's *Nope* (2022). *Humanities* 13: 136. <https://doi.org/10.3390/h13050136>

Received: 12 September 2024
Revised: 7 October 2024
Accepted: 8 October 2024
Published: 18 October 2024



Copyright: © 2024 by the author. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. The Culmination of Jean Jacket

During one of the first scenes of Ishirō Honda's 1954 *Gojira*, following the loss of both human and animal life at sea and poor fishing yields, an elderly man urges his community to believe his claims regarding the threatening existence of the gigantic and monstrous Godzilla. His daughter, scoffing at his suggestion, sarcastically responds, "Godzilla again Pops? There is no such thing nowadays" (Honda 1954, 00:10:48). Nearly seventy years on, Jordan Peele names his monstrous *kaiju* feature film *Nope*, echoing this same sentiment of denial and disavowal in the face of monstrous horror. Unfortunately, such monster denial is not contained within the art itself. As David McNally rightly argues, a denial of the monstrous not only "marks modern consciousness," but even within our "ostensibly critical theory today, the beasts have fled the field" (McNally 2011, p. 114).

Godzilla's legacy is, like the monster himself, great and enduring. The godfather of the *kaiju* genre, Godzilla is the world's longest continuously running film franchise, with thirty-seven *Gojira* movies released since Ishirō Honda's 1954 original.¹ The cinematic *kaiju* genre (literally translated as strange beasts) centers on gigantic monsters, which are extraordinary animalistic creatures possessing great powers. Godzilla (Figure 1), whose name is a combination of the Japanese words for 'gorilla' and 'whale,' emerges from the ocean to terrorize the city of Tokyo, destroying infrastructure, killing citizens, and emitting dangerous levels of nuclear radiation. Almost seventy years later, Jordan Peele's

third film *Nope* centers on another gigantic monster, Jean Jacket. As fans of *Nope* discuss online in forums from Redditt to Letterboxd, Jean Jacket fulfills many *kaiju* criteria; he is a gigantic animate and *animal* monster who terrorizes a human population and exhibits anomalous physical and biological abilities. Reading Jean Jacket as a decidedly animalistic *kaiju* monster, this article asks what attending to the film's human-animal relations can tell us about the structural conditions that give rise to his existence. How can, through attention to the dynamics of multispecies relationships, we better understand the monstrous forces that produced Jean Jacket?



Figure 1. Ishirō Honda's Godzilla. Source: Screenshot from *Godzilla* (1954). Toho Studios.

The first animal we, only audibly, meet in *Nope* is chimpanzee Gordy, the titular character in a fictional TV sitcom, *Gordy's Home*. Peele's film opens with an audio of Gordy's family delivering their lines to a live studio audience who laugh on cue. We hear Gordy being presented with a gift for his supposed birthday, his gruff pants as he approaches the present, and the applause of the audience. Gordy's vocalizations rapidly become more tense, more agitated. Then POP! A total black screen descends and in fades the above quotation from the Bible's book of Nahum. As Peele writes in his screenplay, the "crowd GASPS as the unthinkable ensues" (Peele 2022b, p. 2): spooked by an exploding balloon, Gordy has violently beaten and mauled members of his fictional family to death. The audience has fled. Lil' Jupe, Gordy's fictional human brother who appears to be only nine or ten years old, hides alone underneath the dining room table, behind a draped opaque tablecloth, unharmed yet trembling with fear. As Gordy leaves his human sister bloody and disfigured on the carpet only inches away, he spots the barely concealed Jupe (Figure 2), slowly approaches, and extends his fist to the boy as if to initiate a fist bump. As Jupe reluctantly yet purposefully reciprocates, reaching his little fist out to touch Gordy's, the chimpanzee is shot dead by off-screen police, his blood splattering over the sheer tablecloth draped just inches from Jupe's young face.



Figure 2. Gordy looking directly at Lil' Jupe, at 'us'. Source: Screenshot from *Nope* (2022). Monkeypaw Productions and Universal Pictures.

Peele's third filmic offering is, as Amy Bride notes, somewhat of a "cinematic oddity" (Bride 2023, p. 138). Classified vaguely as a 'neo-Western' horror, *Nope* is an enjoyable big-screen blockbuster fit for IMAX screens and surround sound. The irony of this is that the most overt and explicit theme that the film addresses is spectacle and the dangers therein.² Noting arguably the most common reading of the film—a warning in regards to our propensity to value spectacle at the expense of all else—this article turns its attention to how *Nope*'s gigantic *kaiju* spectacle, Jean Jacket, comes into being in the first place. What is the relationship between *Nope*'s display of acrimonious yet intimate relationalities between humans and laboring animals, and the central monstrous extraterrestrial antagonist, Jean Jacket (Figure 3)? Following György Lukács' Marxist notion of reification—"taking social relations for things" (Feenberg 2015, p. 490)—this article will argue that the extraterrestrial overarching antagonist of *Nope* is a monstrous culmination of the reified, and therefore, necessarily deferred, human-animal relationships that almost, but *never quite*, come to fruition due to the need human characters have to capitalize on animal bodies. Jean Jacket is not, therefore, to be understood as an object but rather as a dangerous, animate being that is made manifest by the reified latency of the interspecies social relationalities that the film portrays. Similar to laboring animals such as Gordy, Jean Jacket is an animal upon which the human characters in the film pin their hopes for financial gain. He is also distinct from animals such as Gordy, due to his monstrous form and the correspondingly monstrous scale of his destruction; he is a material and animate manifestation of capitalist crisis. His entry into the world is because of the reified and often exploitative human-animal relationships that *Nope* portrays, relationships that are marred by the profiteering and extractivist logics of capital. Because of this, Jean Jacket is both a monstrous animal and a materialization of capitalist crisis.



Figure 3. The monstrous Jean Jacket, in saucer-form, chasing OJ atop Lucky. Source: Screenshot from *Nope* (2022). Monkeypaw Productions and Universal Pictures.

Of course, no relationship comes to an absolute state of positive finality or fruition, and therefore the specifically *deferred* status of the human-animal relationships this article addresses is to be understood relatively. Due to the structuring, reifying presence of the demands of capital, the multispecies relationships that *Nope* portrays are severely stunted, relative to human-animal relationships occurring within a parallel social world defined by the shared ownership of resources necessary to sustain life and wellbeing. The logic of deferral, then, is not used to signify that there could ever be a total state of harmony between two multispecies beings, but that the material ramifications of capitalism *caps the extent of* the harmony, care, attention, love, and community between human and animal. The intimacy that we can see multispecies relationships approaching in *Nope* is deferred into a future that, under capitalism, will never manifest. However, as Section 6 of this article will elucidate, this does not mean that intimate multispecies relationships cannot exist or that they are incidental to forms of anti-capitalist, dereifying struggle. In fact, as I discuss in Section 6, the main characters ultimately avoid an untimely demise because of their care, attention, and proximate relationships to the animals around them.

This article will conceive of *Nope* as a film that explores complex human-animal relationships in a less-than-ideal structural context. After mapping the film and some of its scholarship in Section 2, as well as speaking to how specifically *gigantic* monstrosity factors into my discussions, Section 3 highlights Peele's multispecies oeuvre and how the treatment of the animal in his films parallels that of his exploited human characters under capital. Introducing Lukács and his theory of reification in Section 4, *Nope's* central animal characters, Lucky and Gordy, are articulated as reified and exploited beings due to the need and/or desire human characters have to profit from their laboring bodies. Section 5 then traces how the reified status of these laboring animal characters results in the advent of the gigantic monster Jean Jacket, before situating him as a monstrous visualization of capitalist crisis. Finally, Section 6 claims that even given the reified and exploited status of the laboring animals in *Nope*, Peele nevertheless gestures towards the dereifying and radical potential of multispecies bonds of care and intimacy, even in the face of capitalist exploitation and crisis.

As Jeffrey Jerome Cohen notes in his seminal *Monster Theory*, the construction of the monster in popular culture is fraught with the boundaries that constitute the society that has spawned them; the monstrous body "exists only to be read" (Cohen 1996, p. 4). I follow Cohen's methodological call in what follows, applying his suggestion that we ought to read "cultures from the monsters they engender" (Cohen 1996, p. 3) to the figure of Jean Jacket in order to ask what *Nope's* human-animal relations can tell us about our contemporary moment. What is one of the best-rated and highest-grossing science fiction films of the twenty-first century diagnosing? On the 70th anniversary of the release of Honda Ishirō's *Gojira*, why is it still pertinent that we analyze our popular cultural expressions of gigantic monstrosity?

2. What's a Bad Miracle? They Got a Word for That?

Nope centers around siblings OJ and Emerald (Em) Haywood, who live on a ranch in Agua Dulce, Los Angeles County. After their father, Otis Senior, is mysteriously and fatally injured by metal shrapnel falling from the sky, OJ, played by regular Peele front man Daniel Kaluuya, accompanies his overbearing sister (Keke Palmer) in struggling to continue their family business—'Haywood's Hollywood Horses'—from their remote ranch. The Haywoods, non-coincidentally, are horse wranglers who train and accompany their horses, hired to appear in high-grossing Hollywood movies, to set. To make ends meet after his father's demise, OJ has been selling members of his herd to a now adult Jupe (Steven Yeun), who, years after his appearance in *Gordy's Home*, runs Jupiter's Claim, a theme park that harks back to America's mythic 'golden age', featuring a saloon, a sweet shop called 'Candy Bowl' (one may suspect this is a spin on the 1930's Dust Bowl), an assay office, and a 'Gold Panning' interactive activity. After a Haywood horse named Ghost leaps over the rails of his arena late at night and disappears into the valley, the power at the

ranch goes out, and OJ witnesses a strange UFO-like phenomenon in the distance above Jupiter's Claim. Ghost makes a noise that OJ "ain't never heard a horse make" (Peele 2022a, 00:30:21), and we hear chilling screams echoing up into the sky. Regrouping after this shocking moment back at the house, the siblings, too afraid to fully verbalize the monstrous nature of what they experienced, speak in code, culminating in Em asking, "OJ, are you sayin' what I think you're sayin'?" (Peele 2022a, 00:30:46), the unspoken subtext being their shared experience of a gigantic and dangerous flying entity. OJ nods, and the two embark on a journey to lure this monster back to their ranch to be captured on film. They purchase surveillance equipment and begrudgingly get stuck with a Fry's employee named Angel (Brandon Perea), who installs the cameras. In a pursuit to get the 'money shot', which they believe will make them rich, OJ, Em, and Angel point the surveillance cameras to the sky and hope they can tempt the UFO-come-spaceship-come-monster octopus (Bride 2023) into their view to then sell to the press, or, as OJ suggests, to Oprah. Eventually, following many failed attempts, OJ realizes that the object is in fact a biological organism, in many ways akin to a large untrained animal, and names him Jean Jacket after a horse that Em was promised and then denied by Otis Senior for her ninth birthday. Following this, OJ crucially notices that if one does not look up at Jean Jacket, then he does not attack or consume you, and, along with Angel, Em, and a disgruntled cinematographer, he attempts to lure Jean Jacket back to his ranch to be captured on film.

Several commentators have interpreted the transition of Jean Jacket from 'The Object' (a clinical and sleek spaceship, shown in Figure 3) to his animalistic, biological, and animate *kaiju* form (Figure 4) as a movement that signifies "the saucer is, in fact, a living creature which eats humans and horses alike, and *must be wrangled and broken in, much like. . .ranch horses, if. . .[OJ] and Em are ever to be safe from its hunt*" (Bride 2023, p. 147, italics my own). However, it is my intention in this article to query such an idea. Rather than join the likes of Gordy or the Haywood's horses as animals that can be placed along a scale from wild to domesticated—and in Gordy's case, subdued and repressed under the absolute power of the humans that surround him—I understand Jean Jacket as the monstrous culmination of the reification and exploitation that *Nope's* animal characters are subjected to, and the subsequent deferred status of multispecies relationships. Because animals such as Gordy are exploited as a result of the profiteering and extractivist logics of capital, and the need human characters have to exploit their animal counterparts, Jean Jacket is both a monstrous animal and a materialization of capitalist crisis.



Figure 4. OJ, atop Lucky, moving back from Jean Jacket in his animalistic form. Source: Screenshot from *Nope* (2022). Monkeypaw Productions and Universal Pictures.

Jean Jacket's specifically gigantic monstrosity is particularly pertinent to this claim. As Georges Canguilhem wrote in 1962, discussing enormity and the monstrous, "after a certain degree of growth quality becomes questionable. . . [e]normity tends towards monstrosity" (Canguilhem 1962, p. 28). The animal nature of Jean Jacket, combined with his enormous scale, allows the viewer to understand the less monstrous animals present in *Nope*, such as Gordy or the Haywood's horses, as materially constituting, or as being from the same order as, Jean Jacket. As this paper will explore, there are many reasons, other than his sheer size, that Jean Jacket is monstrous in nature. However, a core tenet of his corporeal monstrosity is his enormity *as* an animal being. Whether we read Jean Jacket as a "monster octopus" (Bride 2023), a "squid" (MezaGuerra 2024, p. 127), or "an aquatic-like species" (Turcios 2024, p. 42), his bodily animality grounds him within and of this world, born from its structural and fantastically real conditions. At first the viewer is invited to believe Jean Jacket is a UFO or flying saucer—an otherworldly and fantastical visitor to our world. However, the characters ultimately realize this is not the case; they are dealing with a gigantically monstrous yet animal and earthly being. It is the reified status of *Nope*'s animals, and the interspecies relationships that never quite come to fruition, that culminates in Jean Jacket's specifically *kaiju* monstrosity, and his status as an animalistic visualization of capitalist crisis. As Peele writes, describing the moment seconds before Gordy is shot dead by police, as young Jupe and the chimpanzee reach towards each other to engage in a fist bump, they "approach connection. . . *near* contact" (Peele 2022b, p. 56, italics my own) (Figure 5). Of course, we can read this as a practical stage direction for the actors, guiding them as to the speed, placement, and proximity of their hands. However, I propose that this direction consolidates a central theme of the film: the necessarily deferred status of human-animal relationships under capital.



Figure 5. Lil' Jupe and Gordy extend their hands towards each other to engage in a fist bump, permanently deferred due to police fatally shooting Gordy seconds later. Source: Screenshot from *Nope* (2022). Monkeypaw Productions and Universal Pictures.

3. Jordan Peele's Multispecies Parallels

Whilst most explicitly the case in *Nope*, Peele's previous two movies also feature non-human animals, often as figures whose fates are indelibly linked to the central human protagonists. His debut film, the psychological horror *Get Out*, was released in 2017, and focuses on Daniel Kaluuya's character Chris, an African American man who visits his white girlfriend's family in the country and is subjected to a modern-day lynching. In the opening scenes of the film, Chris and his girlfriend Rose hit a deer who runs in front of their car, and, as Rose's white supremacist family closes in on Chris, he has recurrent dreams and intrusive thoughts in which he likens himself to the not quite dead, but dying deer, bloody and tormented with pain by the side of the road. Peele's second film, *Us* (2019), centers on Adelaide Wilson (Lupita Nyong'o) and her family, who are holidaying

in their summer home in Santa Cruz when they are subjected to a violent home invasion and prolonged attack by exact doppelgängers, who are part of an underground, underclass group of humans called the Tethered. In *Us*, innumerable white rabbits are shown behind the opening credits, all housed underground in individual metal cages which severely restrict their movement. We learn later in the movie that these rabbits are positioned similarly to the Tethered humans, who also live underground, leading lives lacking all the privileges of their above-ground counterparts, such as space to move or the capacity to see the sky or feel the breeze. After the Tethered have undertaken an uprising and violently escaped the confines of their existence in the underground tunnels, we see the rabbits freed from these cruel cages, running free where there once lived the Tethered humans. In both of these multispecies moments in *Get Out* and *Us*, Peele connects the exploitation and suffering of the non-human animal with that of the human characters, who are subjected to racial and class-based structural violence and radical inequality.

This is a pattern that can also be observed in *Nope*. The Haywood siblings, the central human characters, have been spat out by the capitalistic Hollywood entertainment industry. The Haywoods are a Black African American family who claim their great, great, great grandfather was captured by Eadweard Muybridge on 'Plate Number 626' as the first individual to appear in a motion picture sequence (Figure 6). This claim, delivered by Em early in the film, is creative license by Peele, as the real Black jockey, unlike Muybridge himself, remains unknown to this day. Here, Peele's screenplay echoes the critical methodology of the likes of Saidiya Hartman, who "troubles the line between history and imagination" (Hartman, cited in Okeowo 2020) in her 2019 book *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments*. Hartman mixes historical archival research and literary creativity to (re)produce the stories of Black women in the early twentieth century that otherwise would not be told, at least not outside of prison case files, sociological surveys, slum photographs, or the documentation of social workers, all of which "represent them as a problem" (Hartman 2019, p. xiv). Em's not-so-distant ancestor being "the very first stuntman, animal wrangler, and movie star all rolled into one" (Peele 2022a, 00:11:05), would very likely situate her and her brother firmly within the Hollywood space, fame, and celebrity, that is, if she were white. The film crew that Em is delivering her speech to are all white; the director is in fact played by real-life actor and director Oz Perkins, whose real father, Anthony Perkins, was the star of Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960), and whose grandfather was Osgood Perkins, a movie star and stage actor prominent during the early twentieth century. These intricate details that Peele has incorporated within *Nope*'s opening scenes serve to contrast the naturalized and genetic reproduction of white cinematic wealth (the Perkins family) with Em and OJ's anxious attempts to 'break through' into the programmatic Hollywood space. Given the fact that we do not know the identity of the Black man riding a horse on 'Plate 626,' Peele allows his characters to, as Hartman does, trouble "the line between history and imagination," reinterpreting the historical lack that structural racism perpetuates into the contemporary moment. As a work of fiction, we are encouraged, however, to take Em at her word, believing that her character really is the great, great, great granddaughter of the first human to be captured on film. Even so, she and her African American family remain expendable to the profiteering sphere of moviemaking, a space the Haywoods financially depend upon.

The expendability of the animal in *Nope* runs parallel to this theme of racial exploitation and exclusion—Peele again connecting the fate of the animal with that of his human characters. In the same early movie-set scene from which the Haywoods are ultimately fired, due to Lucky bucking and nearly injuring his would-be human co-stars, VFX green-screen horses are brought in to replace Lucky before the Haywoods have even left the set. This runs parallel to one of the crew members telling the director of the film (Oz Perkins) that, since Otis Senior has died, "we're stuck with Junior over here" (Peele 2022a, 00:09:07), insensitively referencing the impossibility of continuing to work with OJ's recently deceased father, whilst also alluding to the idea that Otis Senior and Junior are ultimately interchangeable and serve the same function. Similarly, later in the film, we hear that

a big project that Otis Senior worked on with several horses “ended up using camels anyway” (Peele 2022a, 00:24:44), and ultimately none of the Haywood horses appeared in the final cut. Here, the specific horses and their unique characters are shown to be readily replaceable in the eyes of the Hollywood film industry; it does not matter whether a horse, a camel, or a wooden cutout painted green feature in the film, as long as the movie is ultimately profitable. Throughout *Nope*, the expendability of the animal characters echoes the exclusion and exploitation of the human characters, and Peele, as he does in both *Get Out* and *Us*, ties the fate of the animal together with the fate of the human.



Figure 6. Eadweard Muybridge’s Plate 626, as shown in *Nope*. Source: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/community.36630442> (accessed on 6 October 2024), The Wellcome Collection.

4. The Reification of *Nope*’s Working Animals

4.1. Reification

Reification, discussed by Hungarian Marxist philosopher György Lukács, takes its foundation in Karl Marx’s analysis of the commodity form, the central unit of capital. Lukács, however, argues that the commodity has become not only the “elementary form” (Marx 1990, p. 125) of the capitalistic economic system but “the universal category of *society as a whole*” (Lukács 1923, italics my own). Under our radical and contemporary capitalism, we have forged an entrenched pattern of practices that “establish a world within which reified objects appear. These objects are understood ‘immediately’, that is to say, without critical awareness, in a reified standpoint” (Feenberg 2015, p. 490). Feenberg goes on,

Reification provides structure through determining a specific type of practice that reproduces. . .institutions, while dereification involves another type of practice with the power not only to penetrate the illusion of reification but to transform the practices and structures it establishes. (Feenberg 2015, p. 490)

In the case of commodities, rather than conceiving of them as the result of social relations of production and exploitation, we have assigned to them a kind of magical and objective power, as if they were not the outcome of a “common social substance. . .labour” (Marx 1976). For Lukács, this extends to an almost totalizing abstraction under contemporary capitalism, resulting in the development of an “unengaged, spectatorial stance of human beings toward the world” (Chari 2010, p. 587).

The figure of the animal is a particularly interesting one in this context and current historical moment. Non-human animals, at least in Western societies, vary from being wild

and supposedly ‘untouched’ signifiers of a vast and non-human ‘nature,’ to bodies that we rear, farm, and ultimately consume, usually raised in intensive and unbelievably torturous circumstances, to those we call pets or companions that live in our homes and sleep in our beds. Many of these animals also occupy a commodity status, whilst at once being sentient, living creatures with the capacity to form and maintain relationships, both of the intra- and inter- species variety. To take the example of OJ’s horse, Lucky. He arguably holds a commodity status in a Marxian sense—“something made through human labor, satisf[ying] a demand, and . . . produced for the purposes of exchange” (Thier 2020, p. 28)—and is also a living being who can form and maintain relationships. He is at once a commodity, a product of social relations (the Haywoods likely bred him selectively, undertook the labor to care for him, feed, and rear him, and ultimately exchange him with Hollywood film studios, or Jupe, for money), and an active participant in the social relationships in which he is engaged (with humans such as OJ or Em, or other equine members of the Haywood herd, such as Clover and Ghost). *Nope* shows that its animal characters are reified in this double sense. Firstly, as commodities: the past labor that humans have undertaken to ensure these animals remain alive and in relatively good health in an anthropocentric and domesticized environment (being fed, exercised, stimulated, etc.) is invisibilized. And secondly, animals such as Lucky, as individual living beings, are denied their own character, sociality, and relationships due to their status as a commodity and the associated need human characters have to capitalize on their bodies. Rosemary-Claire Collard discusses a similar bipartite distinction in her discussion surrounding the term *lively commodities*, a being that “remains alive for the duration of its commodity life and whose life is central to its value. . . [a] lively commodity has two lives that are intertwined but not reducible to the other: a wild life and a commodity life” (Collard 2014, p. 153). Whilst Collard is specifically discussing animals in rehabilitation centers, her distinction between the wild and commodity life of each animal informs this discussion; *Nope*’s non-human animals, such as Lucky and Gordy, are doubly reified: as a commodity in a traditional Marxist sense, and as lively, living, and sentient beings. The remainder of this section will examine the characters of Lucky and Gordy, indicating that both of *Nope*’s central working animals stand in a reified position to the humans around them.

4.2. Lucky

Haywood’s Hollywood Horses, the family business that OJ was forced into taking responsibility for after the sudden death of his father, revolves around the training, laboring on, and ultimate commodification of its horses. *Nope* opens with a scene in which OJ and Lucky are on a film set, hired to appear in a Hollywood movie (Figure 7). OJ repeatedly tells the cast and crew to step back from his horse, to not look Lucky in the eyes, and to move away from his rear, all to no avail. Eventually, OJ comments that Lucky requires a break, and this request is denied by the director and his crew, before a VFX reference ball (Figure 8) is brought in front of the horse, who catches his reflection in the mirrored side, panics, and rapidly bucks, narrowly avoiding injuring the star of the film. This tense and frustrating scene captures the reified and thing-like nature that the film crew assigns to Lucky, demanding that he mold completely to their desires and requirements, from the placement of his body and the reduction of his personal space to his overlong working hours; the crew treats Lucky as if he is an automaton who is totally malleable to their interests. When the horse reacts according to his nature, as a living being with needs that have not been fulfilled, and bucks, Haywood’s Hollywood Horses are fired from the set. In other words, the Haywoods lose out on being paid due to the expectation that OJ wrangles his horse to a stage of total deference and submission to their employers’ wishes. OJ, who knows Lucky more intimately than the crew and advocates for at least some of his needs in the unfamiliar environment of a movie set, ultimately must defer to the whims of his employer, and to their object-like view of his horse, to procure clients. After the producer delivers the news that they are fired, and a crew member wheels in the VFX greenscreen wooden horses to replace Lucky (Figure 9), OJ discreetly and even shamefully replies, “we

need it” (Peele 2022a, 0:13:13), indicating that regardless of his heightened care for Lucky, he would still prefer for him to be subjected to the particularly hostile environment of the film set than lose out on getting paid.



Figure 7. OJ and Lucky on the set of a movie that hired Haywood’s Hollywood Horses. Source: Screenshot from *Nope* (2022). Monkeypaw Productions and Universal Pictures.



Figure 8. VFX reference ball being held directly in front of Lucky, against OJ’s advice. Source: Screenshot from *Nope* (2022). Monkeypaw Productions and Universal Pictures.



Figure 9. The movie’s line producer tells OJ that he is fired as crew members wheel in a green VFX horse to replace Lucky. Source: Screenshot from *Nope* (2022). Monkeypaw Productions and Universal Pictures.

The replacement of the living breathing horse with VFX further emphasizes the commodified, and therefore reified, status of Lucky. As Marx notes,

Since a commodity cannot be related to itself as an equivalent, and therefore cannot make its own physical shape into the expression of its own value, it must be related to another commodity as equivalent, and therefore must make the physical shape of another commodity into its own value form. (Marx 1990, p. 148)

In this scene, Lucky, a living commodity, is brought into a relationship of equivalence with his green VFX wooden replacement, a process that is “inherently violent in so far as valuation requires erasure of the inherent qualities of one entity in order to create a generalized equivalence and identification with another” (Wadiwel 2015, pp. 164–65). Lucky’s life is, in this process, absurdly and violently rendered interchangeable with inert matter. Regardless of OJ’s more compassionate attitude towards Lucky than that of the film cast and crew, he is nevertheless bound by the social fact that his horse has exchange value that can be liquidized to gain cash. Given this, OJ sells Lucky to Jupe, again reinforcing the reified status of Lucky and his position as a bearer of exchange value. Jupe’s interest in purchasing Lucky is to use him as bait to lure the monstrous Jean Jacket to his park and garner an audience for his ‘new family live show’: The Jupiter’s Claim Star Lasso Experience. This runs parallel to OJ and Em’s attempt to coerce Jean Jacket to their ranch to be captured on video, also to reach an audience—the broader American public—for the purposes of profiteering. We see later on that the Haywoods also rely on Lucky and his bodily abilities in their own attempts to capture Jean Jacket on film. The human-animal relationship between OJ and Lucky, even though of a qualitatively different nature than that which exists between Lucky and Jupe, or Lucky and the film crew, is nevertheless indefinitely deferred, due to the reified status of Lucky and the need human characters have to profit from his body.

4.3. Gordy

Gordy the chimpanzee is another working animal character in *Nope* that stands in a reified position to human beings; his relationships with the humans around him necessarily deferred. Gordy, much like his real-life counterparts, was likely bred to work in the entertainment industry, separated from his mother too soon, and subjected to torturous and violent ‘training’ practices in an attempt to produce a being who is totally submissive to the whims of the humans who hire him.³ In *Nope*, Gordy appears dressed in human clothes on a contrived TV set in front of a live audience, an unnatural and stressful environment for a chimpanzee. His human co-stars deliver their lines and expectantly look to Gordy to play his part. Again, in a more extreme version of Lucky’s treatment on the movie set, Gordy has been acutely objectified by those that seek to profit from his presence on the TV show. His own personality, sociality, and relationships are quirks that obstruct a total deference to those that desire to profit from him and his body. Reminiscent of OJ and Lucky’s intimate but ultimately reified and deferred relationality, Lil’ Jupe and Gordy’s relationship stands out in the *Gordy’s Home* scene, and it appears as though Gordy has bonded more significantly with Jupe than with the other humans that he is surrounded by. Regardless of this qualitatively different relationship, the adult Jupe ultimately grows up and further monetizes Gordy’s abuse and subsequent violence. As Bride notes, Jupe “repackages his childhood trauma as an exclusive, highly profitable media experience that exists as a significant side line to Jupe’s main business of the theme park. Held in a secret room...the memorabilia of *Gordy’s Home*...act as a vault-come-mausoleum in which the physical signifiers of Jupe’s pain...become one-of-a-kind commodities that customers pay to see, discuss, and photograph” (Bride 2023, p. 151) (Figure 10). Whilst the chimpanzee actor himself was shot dead on set by tragically unpunctual police officers, his character of Gordy is perpetuated into the contemporary moment by Jupe, not to bring to light the abusive practices inflicted on animal (and child) actors but as a spectacular and objectified entertainment experience. Even in death, Gordy is reified and profited upon, his and (Lil’) Jupe’s relationship necessarily deferred. They reach towards each other,

“approach connection. . .near contact” (Peele 2022b, p. 56) (Figure 5), but ultimately, due to the reified, expendable, and killable status of an animal such as Gordy, their relationship is permanently deferred.



Figure 10. Adult Jupe in his self-built memorabilia room, a testament to *Gordy's Home*, which he charges people to enter. Note the chimpanzee statue wearing a shirt to the right of the shot. Source: Screenshot from *Nope* (2022), Monkeypaw Productions and Universal Pictures.

5. Gigantic Monstrosity in *Nope*

For a large portion of *Nope*, Jean Jacket, despite his gigantic proportions, remains unseen. He is heard only through his consequences and interactions: gusts of air and wind that his movement has produced, human or animal screams that extend and fade upwards towards his mouth, metal shrapnel that falls from the sky and claims the life of Otis Senior, or a cloud on the skyline that the characters realize mysteriously never moves or changes shape. This same state of invisibility, despite gigantic size, can be assigned to so many of the sprawling and monstrous problems that construct our contemporary moment: climate change, corruption, natural disaster, and, crucially, the forces of capital that unite them all. As David McNally, in his *Monsters of the Market*, notes, straightforward narrative strategies can

fail to register the reality of the *unseen* forces of capital; they assume that what is invisible is necessarily ‘not there’. But this is to miss the essential: the hidden circuits of capital through which human capacities become things, while things assume human powers; in which markets ‘rise’ and ‘fall’, and in so doing dictate who shall prosper and who starve; in which human organs are offered up to the gods of the market in exchange for food or fuel. . . And this means that invisible powers—market forces—are at the same time *fantastically real*. (McNally 2011, p. 7, italics my own)

Our theoretical and literary strategies must be able to sit with and acknowledge the presence of the monstrous, which is all too often rendered invisible. As Ishirō Honda’s character, Professor Yamane, commented seventy years ago in his defense of *Godzilla*, “Right now, our priority should be to study its incredible powers of survival” (Honda 1954, 00:34:23). Eschewing the existence of gigantic monsters, from *Gojira* in 1954 to *Jean Jacket* in 2022, necessarily results in passivity, amelioration, and avoidance in the face of the overarching and structuralizing problems of our historical moment. This is the case both within the texts themselves and in our theorizations. In *Gojira*, lobbyists attempt to continue business as usual after *Godzilla*’s appearance, concerned about shipping routes, international relations, and corporate interests, and seventy years later, in *Nope*, we see Jupe and his family treat Jean Jacket as an opportunity for profiteering rather than a dangerous animalistic monster who must be studied and understood if they are to have any chance of surviving and countering the forces that produced him. And in our theorizations, we must not forget

that it is only “in staring horrors in the face and insisting on their systemic, not accidental, character that theory sustains radical commitments” (McNally 2011, p. 114).

The transition of Jean Jacket from an amorphous, transitory, and secluded being at the beginning of *Nope*, to an acutely visible monster of gigantic size and impact as the film progresses, renders the forces of capital that McNally discusses acutely and unavoidably visible (Figure 11). We can witness a similar move from relative invisibility to hyper-visibility during the formation and appearance of capitalist crises. The devastating impacts of the monster at the beginning of the film are felt, and yet Jean Jacket himself is not seen. However, as the viewer sees the human-animal relationships become more and more acrimonious due to the structuralizing and exploitative forces of capital, we begin to see Jean Jacket himself, rendering his position as a materialization of capitalist crisis hyper-visible. In this sense, Jean Jacket, as symbolic of a specifically animalistic strain of capitalist crisis, is not just a rhetorical or metaphorical structure, but an animal actor born of structural and material conditions who, in our theorizations, can be mobilized to “give voice to [both human and animal] suffering” (McNally 2011, p. 115). How, by attending to the reified status of animals such as Gordy and Lucky, can we understand the conditions that have led to Jean Jacket’s monstrous culmination as a capitalist crisis, under the “fantastically real” forces of capital?



Figure 11. Jean Jacket in animal form. Source: Screenshot from *Nope* (2022). Monkeypaw Productions and Universal Pictures.

The Reified Animal to Jean Jacket

During Gordy’s rampage, Lil’ Jupe is transfixed by his fictional sister Mary-Jo’s unnaturally upright shoe that became separated from her during Gordy’s violent attack (Figure 12). As Peele writes in his screenplay, “[o]ne drop of blood on the shoe almost makes it seem as if it’s *winking*” (Peele 2022b, p. 2, italics my own), a comment which, when read in light of the shoe’s unnaturally upward pointing stance, suggests its ironic, pre-ordained, and ill-disposed message: the coming of the monstrous Jean Jacket. This unnerving scene invites us to question how and why the shoe has landed so precisely amongst all the chaos, to query how gravity is impacting the object, to accept its position as directional, to look up, away from the living, and currently dangerous, being in front of us. Young Jupe’s transfexion on this supernatural object, amongst the bloody violence and very present threat that Gordy poses, is also symbolic of a broader critique of the spectacular that Peele’s film wages; rather than focus his attention solely on the imminent threat of violence, Lil’ Jupe cannot help but look. In this object, Peele directly links the Gordy attack, including the permeant deferral of Lil’ Jupe and Gordy’s relationship due to his reified status and resulting killability, to the arrival of the animalistic Jean Jacket, inviting us to infer their causal relationality.



Figure 12. Mary-Jo Elliot, Gordy’s fictional sister, lies still and bloody on the ground. Her shoe has been separated from her during Gordy’s attack and stands perfectly upright on its heel, pointing directly upwards. Source: Screenshot from *Nope* (2022). Monkeypaw Productions and Universal Pictures.

Mary-Jo’s supernatural shoe is not the only object in the Gordy scene that suggests Jean Jacket is the culmination of the reified, commodified, and exploited animal. As Gordy approaches young Jupe (Figures 13 and 14), there stands, discarded in his path, a lamp shade that has been strewn across the set during Gordy’s rampage. To begin, its opening is facing away from Jupe, to the right of the shot, as shown in Figure 13. However, the force of Gordy’s movements causes the lamp shade to roll on its side, and the terrifying moment where Gordy notices Jupe hiding under the table and looks directly at him—and at us, the viewer—is also the moment in which the lamp shade’s hollow center is looking directly at us too (Figure 14). Its new position obscures all but Gordy’s face and shoulders; its presence is so completely innocuous that Peele invites his audience to ignore it entirely. However, when comparing Figure 14 with Figure 15, we can see the uncanny similarity in shape and architecture between this lamp shade and its positioning, and Jean Jacket in saucer form. This seamlessly links the exploitation of the animal—Gordy—with the coming of Jean Jacket, who OJ has, moments before this flashback scene, realized may not be a spaceship after all, but a gigantic monstrous animal. The force of Jean Jacket, here represented by the lampshade, has seen us; Gordy’s gaze is Jean Jacket’s, and therefore the monstrous violence that Jean Jacket reaps on Agua Dulce is united with Gordy’s exploitation, at the hands of humans who, due to the forces of capital, exploit him and his body. Gordy, in his bodily placement in this scene, comes prior to and as a precursor of Jean Jacket’s signifier; in other words, to look up at the monstrous Jean Jacket is to reckon with the exploitation of the likes of Gordy, due to his reified and commodified status under the logic of capital. The violent and exploitative treatment of Gordy and others like him, is just one of many crises of capital, symbolic of our current “failure of multispecies cohabitation” (Turcios 2024, p. 45). This scene, which situates the monstrous Jean Jacket as specifically reaping destruction due to the exploitative treatment of animals such as Gordy, also, more broadly, aids in an understanding of Jean Jacket as a manifestation of capitalist crisis, his own animality representing the specific failure of harmonious multispecies relationality under capitalism.



Figure 13. Gordy and the lamp shade, moments before their gaze becomes one. Source: Screengrab *Nope* (2022). Monkeypaw Productions and Universal Pictures.



Figure 14. Gordy and Jean Jacket in lampshade form, spotting Lil' Jupe hiding under a table. Gordy's and the lampshade's gaze are unified as they stare back at us, the viewer. Source: Screengrab from *Nope* (2022). Monkeypaw Productions and Universal Pictures.



Figure 15. Jean Jacket in saucer form, echoing the shape of the lamp shade in Figures 13 and 14, chasing OJ and Lucky. Source: Screengrab from *Nope* (2022). Monkeypaw Productions and Universal Pictures.

The film's temporal organization also echoes this culminating movement from the reified and exploited animal to Jean Jacket. *Nope* moves through five title cards, all named

after commodified non-human animals present in the film, three equine and one simian: firstly, 'GHOST,' followed by 'CLOVER,' 'GORDY,' and 'LUCKY,' eventually culminating in the final monstrous act: 'JEAN JACKET.' These animals accompany Gordy in coming prior to and as a precursor of Jean Jacket, who is himself named after a Haywood horse. As Booker and Daraiseh point out, "[i]t also appears that the mirrored helmet being worn by a TMZ reporter who shows up on the scene provokes Jean Jacket to attack him, very much like the mirror that provoked Lucky" (Booker and Daraiseh 2023, p. 176) (Figure 8). Here, the scholars are referencing a reporter who shows up at the Haywood ranch just as the final attempt to lure and capture Jean Jacket on film is underway (Figure 16). Ultimately Jean Jacket makes particularly light work of attacking this man, and, as Booker and Daraiseh point out, this is reminiscent of Lucky's protest of his treatment on the film set, his physical outburst the natural consequence of his basic needs not being met. In being provoked by this mirrored surface and then attacking, Peele invites us to infer the causal relationship between the treatment of reified characters such as Lucky, due to the need and desire that humans have to profit from his body, and the coming of the monstrous Jean Jacket. Again, here Jean Jacket is situated as a terrifying materialization of the specifically multispecies strain of capitalist crisis: he parallels the previous protestations of working animals such as Lucky, as if he was seeking vengeance for the treatment of such animals under capitalism. However, similarly to capitalist crises we have seen in the last several decades, Jean Jacket harms both human and animal, albeit it to varying degrees. He is the culmination of the monstrous nature of multispecies relationships under capitalism, a visualization of capitalist crisis.



Figure 16. The TMZ reporter wearing a totally mirrored helmet, reminiscent of the mirrored VFX ball that spooked Lucky. Source: screengrab from *Nope* (2022). Monkeypaw Productions and Universal Pictures.

As discussed at the beginning of this article, *Nope* opens with a snapshot of the Gordy scene. However, it is not until later in the film that Peele shows us the full extent of Gordy's attack, during a flashback belonging to a now-adult Jupe. This scene, in which we see the extended version of the fateful day on the *Gordy's Home* set, comes directly after OJ's realization that the monstrous Jean Jacket is not a ship but rather an animate, *animal* being. During the Gordy flashback scene, we see OJ's realization compounded by the unification of the animal (Gordy) and the monster (Jean Jacket, as a lampshade, or in the directional gesture of Mary Jo's supernatural shoe). Transitioning back to the present moment, we see adult Jupe disassociating due to this traumatic flashback, during the preparation for his new live show, in which he attempts to lure Jean Jacket to his park for a paying audience. Jean Jacket, as the culmination of the reified and exploited animal under capital, intensifies and compounds Gordy's violence. The legacy of Gordy's attack is made contemporary in the film's present day, as Jean Jacket appears, sucking up, consuming, and killing Jupe, his family, and their entire audience (Figure 17). Lucky, the latest in a long

line of equine bait purchased from the Haywoods, refuses to come out of his enclosure and is therefore, the only survivor of the monster's advances. Jean Jacket, read in this sequencing, is the monstrous culmination of acrimonious human-animal relationships, such as that which exists between Gordy and Jupe, shown to be indefinitely deferred due to the reified status of the animal under capital. As Michael Anthony Turcios notes, Jean Jacket is a "visualization" of capitalist extraction and "anthropogenic catastrophe" (Turcios 2024). He is a monstrous materialization of the crisis that is the reified and exploited animal, and of the corresponding deferral of multispecies relationships. Because this crisis of human-animal relationality is propelled by the logics of capital, Jean Jacket is a specifically animalistic manifestation of capitalist crisis.



Figure 17. Adult Jupe, in front of his audience, looking up at Jean Jacket during his live show. This is moments before all are swept up into the air and engulfed by Jean Jacket. Source: screengrab from *Nope* (2022). Monkeypaw Productions and Universal Pictures.

6. Dereification: Don't Look Up

Contemporary capitalism produces a logic that, as Cinzia Arruzza writes, is pervasive, possessing the "capacity of coloring all other social relationships" (Arruzza 2015)—a social totality that, whilst totalizing, is also contradictory and mobile. This means that one may speak of both a totality and the contradictions inherent in it without themselves being contradictory. It too means that we may seek capitalism's downfall within its own logic, which will not come via a transcendence but rather, following imminent critique, capitalism contains within itself the seeds of its own destruction. Whilst *Nope's* animals are reified commodities, with their socialities denied to them, the Haywoods ultimately survive Jean Jacket's advances due to OJ's laborious care and attention towards his horses, such as Lucky. His realization that Jean Jacket does not attack or consume you "if you don't look it in the eye" (Peele 2022b, p. 71) is accompanied with a flashback to the early movie set scene, in which Lucky bucks, narrowly avoiding injuring cast and crew members, after he sees his own reflection in a VFX mirrored ball. OJ, when telling Angel and Em about his discovery, comments, "Every animal got rules. . . We know what it wants. . . We know how it comes. . ." (Peele 2022a, 01:28:07), acknowledging the importance of a careful attention to, and understanding of, animals—a sentiment which is then applied to better understand the monstrous Jean Jacket. In other words, OJ's close proximity to Lucky, his laboring, rearing, and training of him, are, as Radhika Govindrajan notes, "'lived practices' that *make relationships*" (Govindrajan 2018, p. 149, italics in original), and through their relationship, OJ comes to better understand Lucky, his needs, nature, and personality. It is OJ's "intimate knowledge" (Parreñas 2016) of his horses that has attuned him to the embodied reality that animals have specific characters, needs, likes, and dislikes. Such an idea counters the reified and thing-like status of the animal, and ultimately, when this knowledge is applied to Jean Jacket, it serves to save the Haywood's lives.

6.1. Lucky and OJ's Dereification

OJ's realization is a dereifying move, one that counters the reified, thing-like status that animals such as Lucky and Gordy have occupied throughout the film. As previously discussed, Peele shows us that due to the forces of capital, animals such as Gordy are reified, and therefore, their relationships with humans are necessarily deferred, characterized by exploitation and profit. This culminates in the monstrous and threatening Jean Jacket, an animalistic and monstrous materialization of capitalist crisis. Whilst Lucky and the other Haywood horses remain commodified, OJ's realization that Jean Jacket does not attack if you do not look up highlights the dialectical, dereifying, and radical potential of multispecies bonds of care and "intimate knowledge" (Parreñas 2016). Through reflecting on Lucky's nature and his specific needs, OJ comes to better understand Jean Jacket and conceive of him as a specific kind of beast—an individual living being, born of the fantastically real forces of *this* world, whose nature must be understood if the Haywoods are to have any chance of survival. OJ's understanding of the monstrous Jean Jacket, a being who is a material visualization of capitalist crisis, ultimately saves both OJ and Em's lives, alerting us to the life-preserving potential of knowledge gained within intimate human-animal relationships.

Of course, "[m]utuality and connection do not imply an erasure of difference or hierarchy" (Govindrajana 2018, p. 4), and, as discussed above, the equine and simian animals in *Nope* remain reified and commodified under contemporary capitalism. However, OJ's attention to Lucky's needs, and the work that he undertakes to connect the behavior of his horse to that of a gigantic animalistic monster is a movement that not only saves his life but also serves to promote the individuality of animals such as Lucky, countering the dominant understanding of a depersonalized and reified animal object. This is an albeit retroactive verbalization of one of Lucky's needs (to not be directly looked at) that was not met earlier in the film, now being applied to the terrifying, yet animalistic, Jean Jacket. As Parreñas comments, discussing the materiality of intimacy in wildlife rehabilitation, "[f]orms of copresence with...individuated animals are forms of intimacy that cross a distance between species. Copresence resulting from the act of individual...[humans] caring for individual animals produces forms of knowledge and feeling that are impossible to mediate through sight and sound alone" (Parreñas 2016, p. 99). Parreñas here notes the irreplaceable nature and radical potential of localized, material multispecies relationalities, such as that which exist between OJ and Lucky. OJ's intimate knowledge of Lucky's needs and personality, when applied to Jean Jacket, saves his life. This ultimately suggests that such dereifying movements, which work against a capitalistic logic of animals as depersonalized and commodified beings, contain within them at least a modicum of hope. As Feenberg concludes, "[d]ereification is not reducible to a mechanism of integration; it holds the future open" (Feenberg 2015, p. 499).

6.2. A Multiplicity of Jean Jackets

The eventual downfall of Jean Jacket, as he attempts to consume a gigantic balloon depicting a comic rendering of Lil' Jupe, although visually epic and monumental, does not strike the viewer as being a great victory for the Haywoods (Figure 18). They have survived, after innumerable traumatic encounters with Jean Jacket. However, news and media camera crews have already assembled around the wreckage, and the siblings have failed to get the extensive footage that they believed would make them rich. Their only evidence of Jean Jacket's existence is a physical photograph that Em took seconds prior to his demise, using a hand-crank operated camera in the Jupiter's Claim park. Arguably this single photograph, as OJ comments earlier in the film, is "good...but ain't Oprah" (Peele 2022b, p. 53). However, at this point, just surviving feels like a victory. The reward, as Turcios writes, "for obtaining photographic evidence of the sentient thing is anticlimactic. Upon procuring the impossible shot, the result is inconsequential. The damage to sentient life [(Gordy, the Haywood horses, the humans Jean Jacket has killed both directly and indirectly)] is too great, and the souvenir photograph does not provide gratification. Rather,

the survival of the protagonists brings fulfilment” (Turcios 2024, p. 44). As we know, capitalism has proved to be much more resilient than Marx had expected, able to “survive despite the unimaginable catastrophes it has continued to visit upon humanity and the planet” (Panayotakis 2021, p. 68). Unsurprisingly, we hear this sentiment echoed by Honda’s Professor Yamane seventy years ago, when he argued that “right now, our priority should be studying [Godzilla’s] . . . incredible power of survival” (Honda 1954, 00:34:23). That is, to prioritize asking how our monstrous, fantastically *real*, structures of capital and their devastating crises continue to persist. As this article has explored, attending to the dynamics of human-animal relationships is one especially underutilized avenue for such questioning; capitalism affects, and is affected by, multispecies relationalities. Ultimately, the tension that capitalism exerts on the human-animal dynamics in *Nope* serves to reify the animal characters, and therefore indefinitely defer the multispecies relationships themselves. The acrimonious and exploitative nature of these relationships ultimately culminates in the coming of the monstrous *kaiju* Jean Jacket, a living materialization of capitalist crisis. Viewers of *Nope* are left with the sense that the end of the film depicts only a temporary, short-lived victory by unlikely winners, echoing Godzilla’s incredibly momentary demise in 1954, Honda’s professor concluding that “I can’t believe Godzilla was the last of its species. . . someday, somewhere in the world, another Godzilla may appear” (Honda 1954, 01:35:22). There will be other Jean Jackets, as long as capitalism persists and our current “failure of multispecies cohabitation” (Turcios 2024, p. 45) continues. After all, as GQ magazine notes, there are “few things. . . more innately American, than a denim jacket” (Berlinger 2016).



Figure 18. Jean Jacket exploding after attempting to consume a 25-foot balloon, which depicted a cartoon of Lil’ Jupe, that Em had let loose into the sky. Source: screengrab from *Nope* (2022). Monkeypaw Productions and Universal Pictures.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Data Availability Statement: No such datasheets have been used in this article.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflicts of interest.

Notes

- ¹ Booker and Daraiseh (2023) note that *Nope*’s “play with genre is part of a larger game that involves contemporary popular culture in general, focusing on an increasing emphasis on spectacle in film and other audiovisual media . . . conducting a subtle critique of the society of the spectacle as a whole” (p. 165).
- ² See footnote 1.
- ³ For sources that discuss chimpanzees in the entertainment industry, see *Save the Chimps* (2024) and Baeckler (2003), which both comment on the use of chimpanzees in film and TV.

References

- Arruzza, Cinzia. 2015. Logic or History? The Political Stakes of Marxist-Feminist Theory. *Viewpoint Magazine*. Available online: <https://viewpointmag.com/2015/06/23/logic-or-history-the-political-stakes-of-marxist-feminist-theory/> (accessed on 26 July 2024).
- Baekler, Sarah. 2003. Campaign to End the Use of Chimpanzees in Entertainment. *Friends of Washoe*. Available online: https://www.friendsofwashoe.org/learn/captive_chimps/entertainment.html (accessed on 30 July 2024).
- Berlinger, Max. 2016. The Best Denim Jacket: Citizens of Humanity Denim Jacket. *GQ*. Available online: <https://www.gq.com/story/best-mens-jean-jacket> (accessed on 27 July 2024).
- Booker, Keith, and Isra Daraiseh. 2023. Jordan Peele's *Nope*: Saying no to the society of the spectacle. *Science Fiction Film and Television* 16: 165–82. [CrossRef]
- Bride, Amy. 2023. 'What if it's Not a Ship?': Reading the Monster Octopus in Jordan Peele's *Nope*. *Gothic Studies* 25: 137–59. [CrossRef]
- Canguilhem, Georges. 1962. Monstrosity and the Monstrous. *Diogenes* 10: 27–42. [CrossRef]
- Chari, Anita. 2010. Toward a Political Critique of Reification: Lukács, Honneth and the Aims of Critical Theory. *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 36: 587–606. [CrossRef]
- Cohen, Jeffery Jerome. 1996. Monster Culture (Seven Theses). In *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*. Edited by Jeffery Jerome Cohen. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 3–25.
- Collard, Rosemary-Claire. 2014. Putting Animals Back Together, Taking Commodities Apart. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 104: 151–65. [CrossRef]
- Feenberg, Andrew. 2015. Lukács's Theory of Reification and Contemporary Social Movements. *Rethinking Marxism* 27: 490–507. [CrossRef]
- Govindrajan, Radhika. 2018. *Animal Intimacies: Interspecies Relatedness in India's Central Himalayas*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Hartman, Saidiya. 2019. *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Riotous Black Girls, Troublesome Women, and Queer Radicals*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Honda, Ishirō, dir. 1954. *Gojira*. New York City: The Criterion Collection.
- Lukács, György. 1923. Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat. *Marxists Internet Archive*. Available online: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lukacs/works/history/hcc05.htm> (accessed on 26 July 2024).
- Marx, Karl. 1976. The Commodity. *Marxists Internet Archive*. Available online: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/commodity.htm> (accessed on 26 July 2024).
- Marx, Karl. 1990. *Capital Volume I*. London: Penguin.
- MezaGuerra, Hilary R. 2024. Afrofuturist Horror on the Western Frontier: Capitalism's Reckoning and Queer Possibilities in Jordan Peele's *Nope*. *Studies in the Fantastic* 16: 124–55. [CrossRef]
- McNally, David. 2011. *Monsters of the Market: Zombies, Vampires and Global Capitalism*. Leiden: Brill.
- Okeowo, Alexis. 2020. How Saidiya Hartman Retells the History of Black Life. *The New Yorker*. Available online: <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/10/26/how-saidiya-hartman-retells-the-history-of-black-life> (accessed on 27 July 2024).
- Panayotakis, Costas. 2021. *The Capitalist Mode of Destruction: Austerity, Ecological Crisis and the Hollowing Out of Democracy*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Parreñas, Juno Salazar. 2016. The Materiality of Intimacy in Wildlife Rehabilitation: Rethinking Ethical Capitalism through Embodied Encounters with Animals in Southeast Asia. *Positions* 24: 97–127. [CrossRef]
- Peele, Jordan, dir. 2022a. *Nope*. New York: Universal Pictures.
- Peele, Jordan. 2022b. *Nope*: Screenplay. *Script Slug*. Available online: <https://www.scriptslug.com/script/nope-2022> (accessed on 27 July 2024).
- Save the Chimps. 2024. Chimpanzee's in Entertainment. *Save the Chimps*. Available online: <https://savethechimps.org/chimpanzees-in-entertainment/> (accessed on 30 July 2024).
- Thier, Hadas. 2020. *A People's Guide to Capitalism: An Introduction to Marxist Economics*. Chicago: Haymarket Books.
- Turcios, Michael Anthony. 2024. Metaphors of Extractive Capitalism and Fabulation in *Nope*. *Afterimage* 51: 27–46. [CrossRef]
- Wadiwel, Dinesh Joseph. 2015. *The War against Animals*. Leiden: Brill.

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.