

Selfies and Z**o**mbies

The Cultural Response to
Nihilism and N**o**thingness

Barry Vacker
Associate Professor
Temple University



Selfies and Zombies

Or the new **universals** of:

- the global village
- post-millennial culture
- a species lost in space



Selfies



Selfies and Zombies

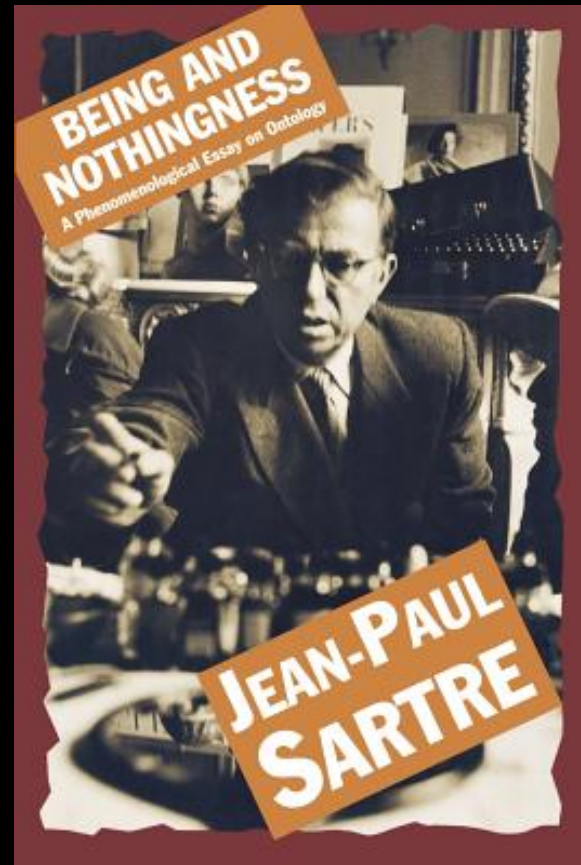


Confronting Nothingness

Via our freedom, we must confront and fill:

- Lacks
- Voids
- Emptinesses
- Nothingnesses

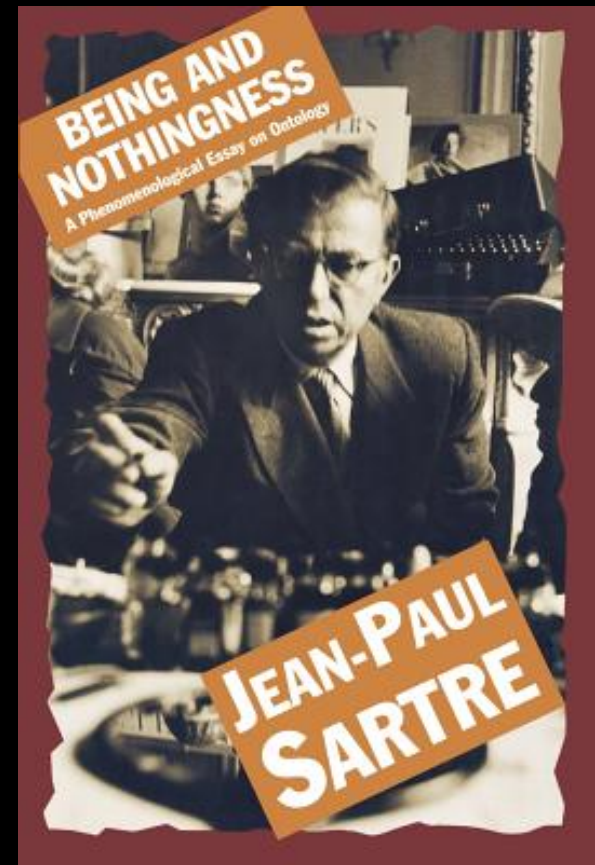
in **three** worlds we inhabit



SARTRE	<u>NOTHINGNESS</u> MATERIAL WORLD	<u>NOTHINGNESS</u> INTELLECTUAL WORLD	<u>NOTHINGNESS</u> FUTURE WORLD
FILLED WITH:	Agricultural and industrial civilization		

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FILLED WITH:	Agricultural and industrial civilization	Art, media, science, books, computers, internet, etc.	

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Apollo 8



“Earthrise” 1968

Apollo 8



“Earthrise” 1968



Original Earthrise

Apollo 8



“Earthrise” 1968



Earthfall?

Earth Selfie?



Apollo TV broadcast to 1 billion people



What did the astronauts do?

Apollo TV broadcast to 1 billion people

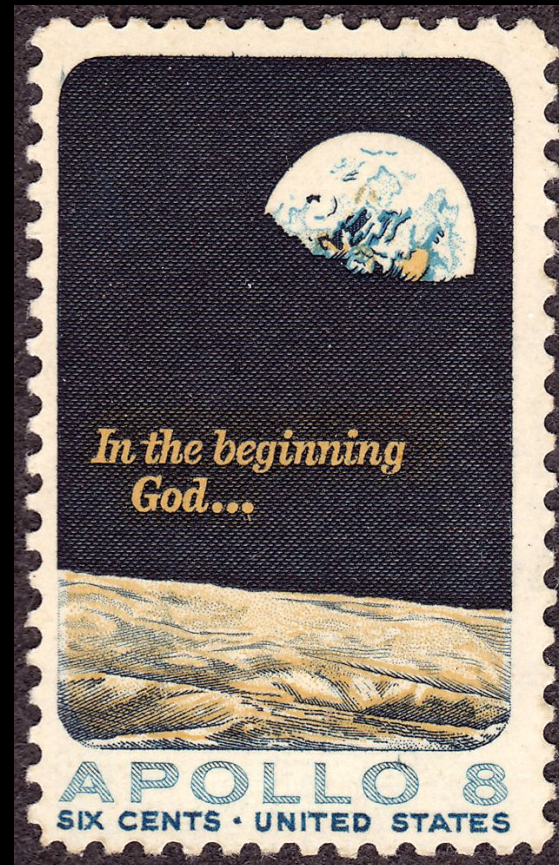


**Apollo 8
Christmas Message
December 1968**



Read opening verses of "Genesis"...

Apollo TV broadcast to 1 billion people



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Breakdown of secular **meta**narratives

1979

Society losing belief and
confidence in:

- Progress
- Science
- Enlightenment
- Shared purpose

Jean-François Lyotard

The Postmodern
Condition:
A Report on Knowledge

Translation from the French by
Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi
Foreword by Fredric Jameson

Theory and History of Literature, Volume 10

Breakdown of secular **meta**narratives

Knowledge and Science:

- Fragmentation, hyper-specialization, uncertainty, etc.

People embracing **micro**
narratives

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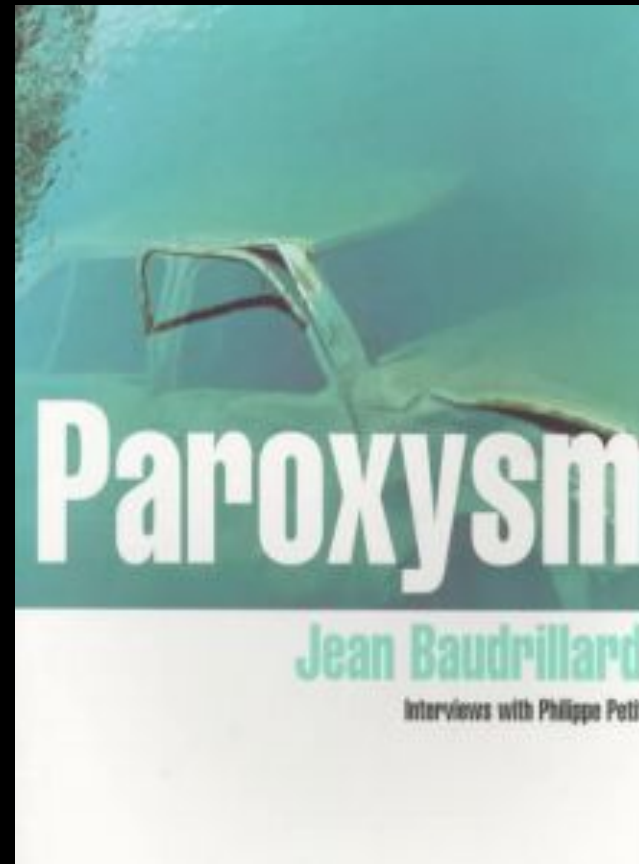
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LYOTARD		Hyper-specialization, fragment, uncertainty	Breakdown of meta-narratives, rise of micro

The Wild State

Globalization reigns ...
Universals are in retreat.

The quest for meaning and
identity has returned to
“the wild state.”



The Wild State

Globalization reigns ...
Universals are in retreat.

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Sheriff Grimes “goin’ cowboy”
The Walking Dead

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BAUDRILLARD	Return to “wild state,” tribalization		Globalization reigns, universals in retreat
SELFIES			
ZOMBIES			

Apollo 8



“Earthrise” 1968



Earthfall?

Hypertext debuts

The future of computers, media



December 1968



December 1968

Cyberspace counters outer space



December 1968



December 1968

Human selfie counters cosmic selfie



December 1968



December 1968

Human selfie counters cosmic selfie



December 1968

Western Electric
is crossing a telephone
with a TV set.

Someday you'll be a star!

What you'll use is called, simply enough, a Picturephone® set. Someday it will let you see who you are talking to, and let them see you.

The Picturephone set is just one of the communications of the future Western Electric is working on with Bell Telephone Laboratories.

Western Electric builds regular phones and equipment for your Bell telephone company. But we also build for the future.

 **Western Electric**
MANUFACTURING DIVISION OF BELL TELEPHONE

1968-1969

Human selfie counters cosmic selfie



December 1968

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MANUFACTURING COMPANY

1968-1969

“Someday you’ll be a star”



December 1968

Western Electric
is crossing a telephone
with a TV set.

A Western Electric Picturephone set is shown on a wooden surface. It includes a television set on a stand, a telephone base with a coiled cord, and a control panel with several buttons. The television screen shows a woman's face. The text "Someday you'll be a star!" is written on the right side of the television set. Two red arrows point to the right from the text.

Someday you'll be
a star!

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Western Electric
MANUFACTURING DIVISION OF BELL SYSTEM

1968-1969

“Someday you’ll be a star”



© ABC

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 **Western Electric**
A BELL COMPANY

1968-1969

“Someday you’ll be a star”



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Western Electric
MANUFACTURING SUPPLY DIV. OF BELL SYSTEM

1968-1969

“Someday you’ll be a star”



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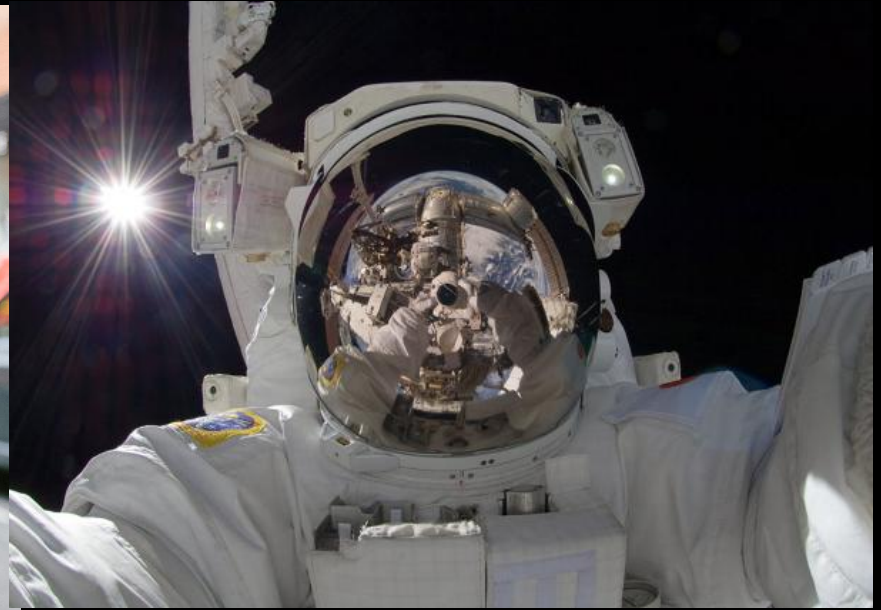
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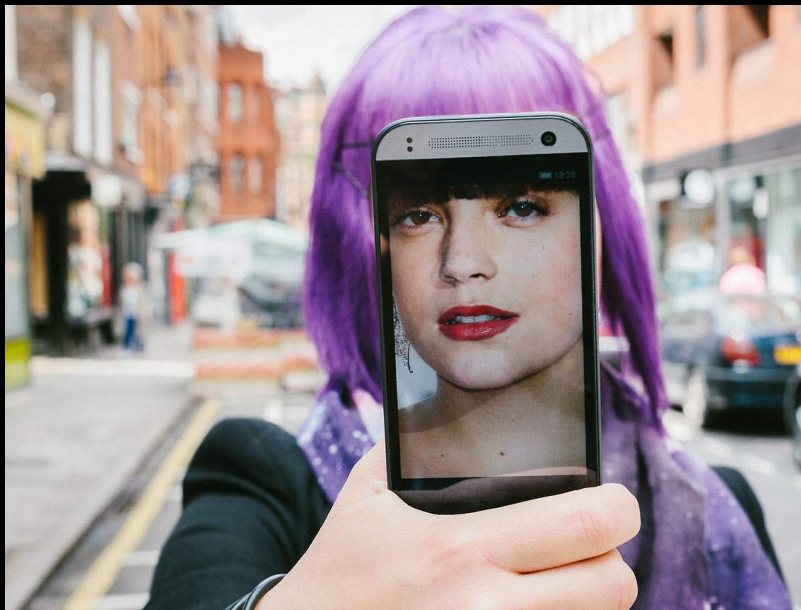


1968-1969

“Someday you’ll be a star”



... in a galaxy of 200 billion stars

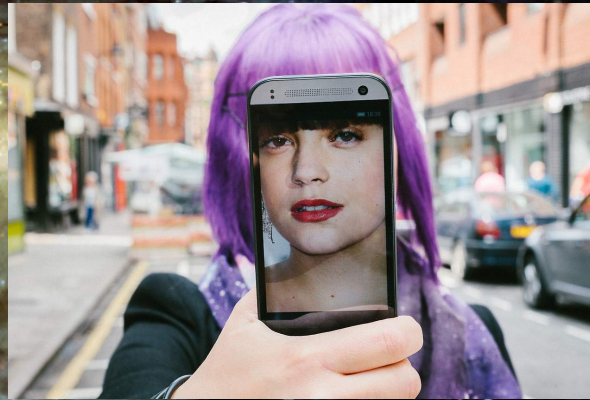


... in a cosmos of 200 billion galaxies



Filling the void in cosmic meaning

The Sun



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BAUDRILLARD	Return to wild state; tribalization		Globalization reigns, universals in retreat
SELFIES		Wild state: identity in info-wilderness	Center of everything, electronic-viral destiny
ZOMBIES			

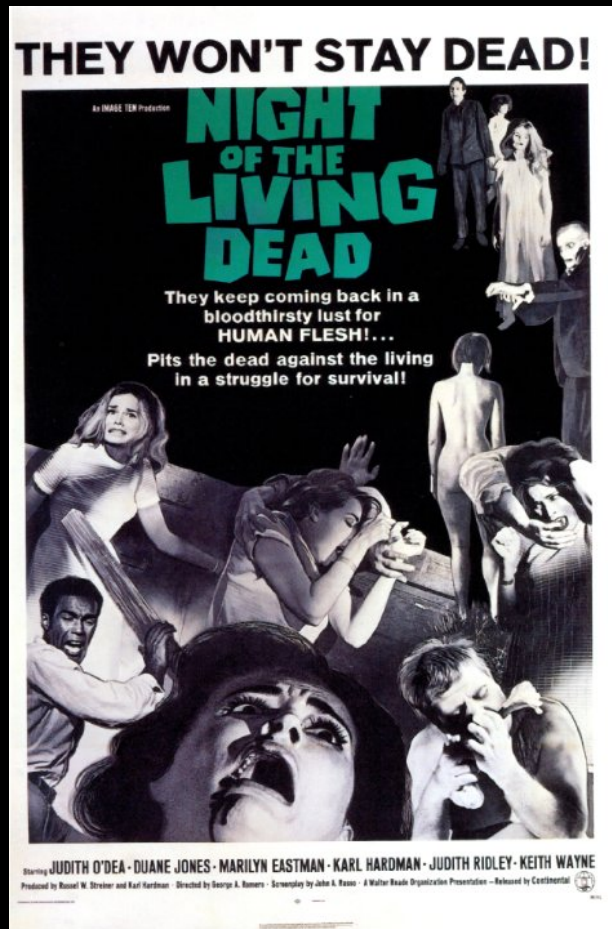
Zombies rise just before Earthrise



1968

December 1968

Zombies rise just before Earthrise

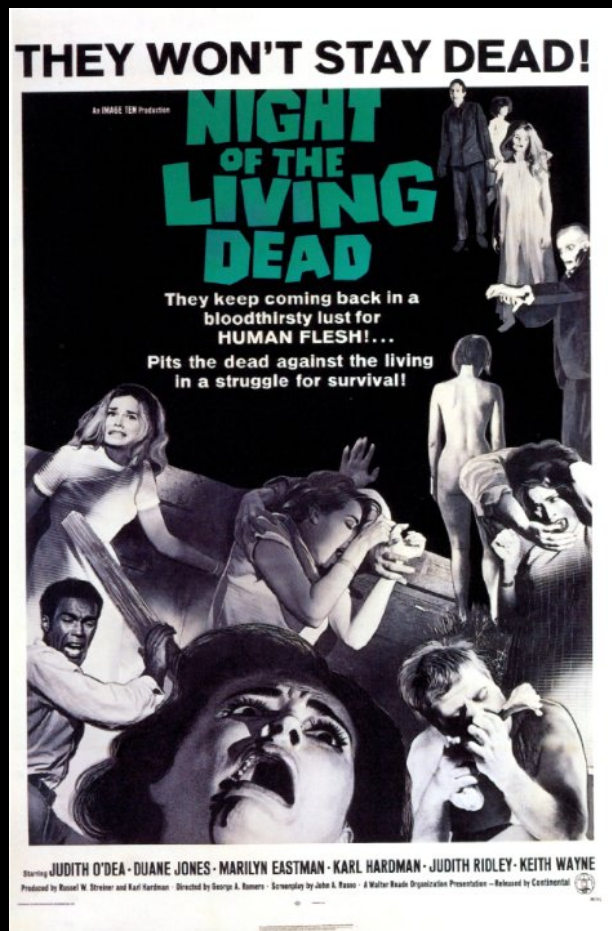


October 1968



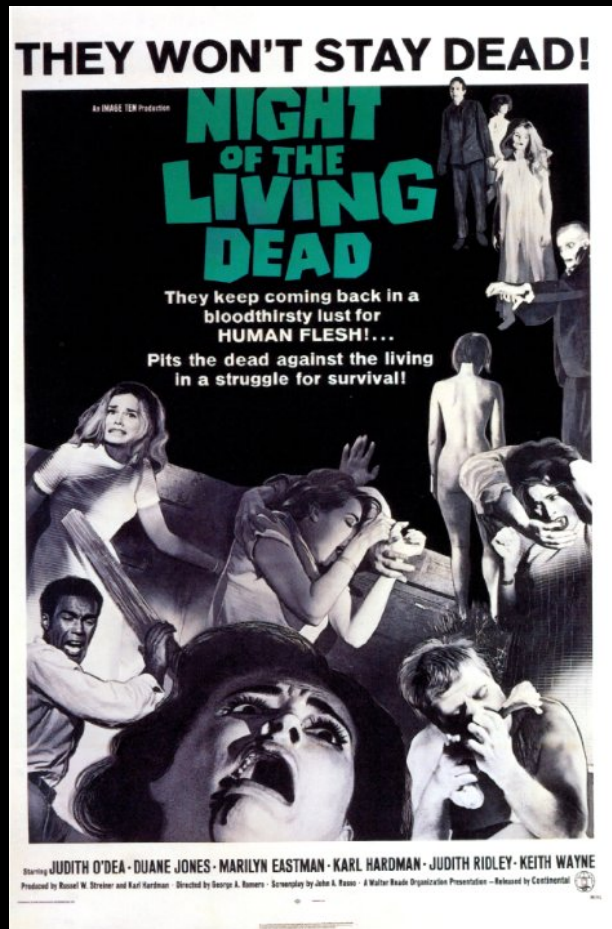
December 1968

What triggered the z**o**mbie apocalypse?



October 1968

What triggered the zombie apocalypse?



October 1968

- A malfunctioning satellite from Venus
- Space exploration sets off the zombie apocalypse...

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ZOMBIES	Wild state, savage, devour, devolution	None	Center of everything, bio-viral destiny

Confronting the Nothingness



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Western Electric
A Division of Bell Telephone Laboratories

THEY WON'T STAY DEAD!

in 1968, 12th Anniversary

NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD

They keep coming back in a bloodthirsty lust for HUMAN FLESH!...

Pit the dead against the living in a struggle for survival!

Starring JUDITH O'DEA • DUANE JONES • MARILYN EASTMAN • KARL HADRIAN • JUDITH RIGLEY • KEITH WAYNE

Produced by George A. Brown and Paul Kerwin. Screenplay by John A. Russo. Directed by George A. Romero. Released by Castleford.

What are most humans doing since 1968?

Acting like **Z**ombies?



What are most humans doing since 1968?

Acting like Z**o**mbies?

- Devouring Earth's resources and destroying ecosystems.
- Waging tribal warfare all over the planet.



What are most humans doing since 1968?

Acting like Z**o**mbies?

- Devouring Earth's resources and destroying ecosystems.
- Waging tribal warfare all over the planet.
- Embracing creationism, anti-intellectualism ...
- Seeking identities in "special" tribes.



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