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## The Effects of Technology on Man's Identity in *Knight Rider* TV Show

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**Abstract:** This study is concerned with the effects of technology on man's identity in the *Knight Rider* TV show. It investigates how the major characters of this TV show lose their human identities as a consequence of embracing technological practices which are hailed by technocratic societies as enhancing to the human race. Such an issue is knocked upon by Henri Lefebvre who sees technology as an expression of capitalist domination over humanity. In Lefebvre's view, man's social and cultural practices are formed by the space encompassing him reflecting a mutual relationship between man and space. With the advent of the technological age, Capitalism tends to socialize technological practices as alternatives to man's original cultural and social practices. This issue encourages the initiation of technocratic societies which require man to cast away his human identity through annexing him to a machine. In the light of these perspectives by Lefebvre, the current study examines the effects of technology on man's identity in *Knight Rider* TV show. Through tracking the phases that they pass in becoming technocratic individuals, the study reveals how the main characters give up their innate cultural and social molds to technological practices. The study argues that the characters' own aspirations for an unlimited power, intensified by the mystification practiced by capitalist leaders about the role of technology in enhancing man's attributes, have blinded them from noticing the gradual loss of their human identities.

**Keywords:** Henri Lefebvre; Capitalism; Urbanism; Technocratic Society; Culture.

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## **1. Introduction: Man's Reckless Initiation in the World of Technologies**

The most defining feature of the urbanity characterizing modern and postmodern eras is man's heavy reliance on the smart machines aided by the rapid advance in technological production. Such a case has a latent drive stemming at the political ambition of controlling man's situations. In other words, man's pursuit for achieving welfare in life is linked to the capitalist endeavor of attaining an advanced system of administration through the application of technology to humans' lives on a large scale. This condition urges Henri Lefebvre to explore the hegemonic end of such a system as well as the impact of technology on the sense of humanity. In his view, technology does not offer a sustained identity for neither man nor capitalists, rather it "ends up both enslaving [man] and dominating the lives of capitalists" (Shields 44). It is true that technology offers man an ease in experiencing his everyday life, but it also implies a set of behavioral adjustments and aptitudes for man affecting the very nature of man. In other words, man's shift to the technological practices consequently results in stripping him from the real sense of himself as a result of casting him into an abyss of abstractions. Such a case contradicts the very goal of using technology suggested by the post-humanists, who propose that technology has an improving role to man's natural capacities. In fact, while enhancing his appearance, technology tears man's essence by imposing its abstract reality on him. It follows that man is "tearing himself apart, dividing himself, fragmenting himself" (Shields 44) by resorting to technologies.

Submitted to the technological practices of postmodern society, man's identity begins to oscillate between the humane and non-humane extremes until man is scarcely recognized as a human being. Over the course of man's continuous pursuit for attaining technologies required for coping with his new existence, his identity is hybridized as a result of his interaction with technological products overshadowing his reality. The culmination of such hybridization is a division in man's identity crystalized in such binaries as "actions and products, powers and fetishes, growing consciousness and spontaneous lack of consciousness" (Shields 44). Such a case points at the manipulated everyday life that man experiences in postmodern era which occurs because of reproducing his space. In other words, the reproduction of man's space comes with its own social and cultural practices that alternate man's original everyday practices with which he is recognized as an individual.

The critical studies tackling *Knight Rider* TV show often celebrate the type of hero, Michael Knight, presented by its writer and producer Glen A. Larson. They see that the

show has introduced a novel mold for the postmodern hero who with the aid of technology can achieve marvelous acts. Moody (2001) argues that Michael's heroic being begins with saving him by such a giant technological firm as the Knight Industries owned by Wilton Knight. This company is able to rescue him from death, changing him into a new individual with a new face and new name. In addition, the Knight Industries also supplies Michael with a smart car, K.I.T.T, that directs, warns and protects him during raiding the criminals. With the help of this "futurist, computerized super-car" (Moody 69), Michael can defeat perilous criminals who are armed with the deadly weapons and submit them to justice. Compared to the common cars of the 1980s, the K.I.T.T is miraculous because it can run at 300 mph and it can also fly in the air up to fifty feet. This car is also equipped with weapons and distracting devices as well as sensors. To make it more unique to other cars, the K.I.T.T appears with human characteristics. It can speak, think and react to the various situations to which it is exposed. Moody (2001) argues that this TV show reflects the debate over the role of science and technology coloring the cultural life of the 1980s.

The role of technology in enhancing man's life in *Knight Rider* is also emphasized by Terrace (2005) who investigates the nature of plot in this TV show. He sees that the essential success of this show is achieved by focusing on the newly discovered technologies that reshape the human reality. The writer shows how the people's lives are spared by means of advanced technologies that are annexed to a common man, Michael, making of him a superhero of the society. Terrace (2005) passes on the central issue of blurring the line between the concrete reality and the abstract one when he hits upon the simulation idea. He makes a reference to the technologies with which the smart car is equipped that can create a virtual reality through which Michael is able to "see an enhanced simulation of the road's topology and vehicle in pursuit" (Terrace 101). In addition to such advanced capacities, the car is also capable of analyzing voices and duplicating them as well as an ability to explode suspected cars by heating the air of their tires. In Terrace's view, these capacities of the K.I.T.T give *Knight Rider* show its uniqueness and they help raise a special appeal for the TV show among the spectators. Joe Huth and Richie F. Levine (2004) also see that such technologies make this show unique among the TV shows of the 1980s. The writers argue that the smart car in this TV show has been inspired by the marvelous computer presented in the science-fiction film *2001: A Space Odyssey* anticipating the new bond between man and technology in which man is supplemented to the latter to come up with a mixed entity. Whereas the computer in the film appears as a supplement smart machine with defective presence, the K.I.T.T

car has been introduced in the TV show as an attempt by the writer to present “an artificial intelligence that really became a full character” (Huth and Richie 2) with fantastic functions amending to the defects of human beings’ natural attributes.

Though these studies have focused on the role of technology in manipulating man’s cultural life, they focused more on how technology enhances man’s capacities in achieving heroic deeds. They have never revealed the other side of the coin, i.e., the effect of technology on man’s own identity as a human being, emphasized by Lefebvre. In order to explore such agitating issues, the present study tracks the actions in *Knight Rider* TV show and examines them in relation to Henri Lefebvre’s theories about space. The change in the characters’ natural, birth culture into the technological one is traced in relation to the arbitrary manipulation of space intended to attain urbanity. It follows that the current study hits upon man’s dilemma of dropping his human identity for the sake of being an individual of the urban society.

## **2. Methodology: The Urbanization of Man**

Henri Lefebvre (1901-1991) was a French sociologist who revolutionized the social sciences with his theories about the nature of space. His approach to space is colored with his “eclecticism and anti-dogmatism” (Gardiner 97) warning of the manipulation of space in terms of the political ideologies. He postulates that space and everyday life are firmly interconnected that one produces and reflects the other. In addition, the manipulation in each of these two elements of human life in order to achieve urbanity is a politics-oriented practice ultimately affecting man’s identity. In other words, the postmodern urban system is rationalized by political doctrines targeting man’s space making him subject to a mold of practices that offers him an institutionalized everyday life with a defective identity. Man’s sustained identity can only be realized in his own produced space where everyday life becomes natural. It follows that the everyday life has to be redefined in order to isolate what is natural to human experience from what is modified. The characterizing feature of man’s everyday life is that it is embraced by his appropriated space, rather than by a space manipulated by political ideologies. It lies, as Lefebvre argues, in “the region outside official politics and large economic organizations” (Poster 743). Affected by the interactions with the cultural practices of the political class in his everyday life, man will not be able to retain his identity as an individual because of the change occurring to his original culture. This aspect alludes to what Lefebvre conceives of the human innate culture, which he insists to be natural and free of the impact of the political restraints and the cultural hues of the age. In Lefebvre’s view, culture is always associated with

man's "lived experience that is not limited to [the] interaction" (Brosio 209) with the practices socialized by the political powers.

Lefebvre explains that urbanity imposes a particular set of social practices drawing from industrial behaviors which, in turns, changes the society into an industrial society. In such societies, urbanity and industrial processes are firmly interrelated that the latter is often concerned with achieving and enhancing the former. This aspect can show the shift in the purpose of production from a production for humanity into a production for a power destructive to humanity. That is, as Lefebvre sees, the industrial society "is...producing for power and domination, that is for war" (Lefebvre, *Everyday Life* 47). The heavy attention given to industry over humanity also renders man a robotic being through shaking his trust in his very nature. In other words, the human culture becomes subject to fatal changes in man's birth social and cultural practices caused by shifting to the technological culture. The aspect of embracing technology eventually leads man to reproduce his everyday life. In this pursuit, man also reshapes his "social relations...and...the mental conceptions that flow from those relations" (Merrifield 12). In other words, man's birth culture will be held invalid compared to the perfection that he would experience when resorting to technology.

The effect of adopting technology on perceiving man's ideal and unideal being can best be exemplified by the analogy of art. Whereas art used to be the medium for delivering aesthetic molds for the human experience, technology becomes the main mediation between man's real world and the imaginary or the aesthetic one. Man's conception of the artistic works as a mediation between the ideal and the unideal is replaced with that of the technological machines. Consequently, the human culture appears as "a decaying myth, an ideology superimposed on technology" (Lefebvre, *Everyday Life* 49) and therefore should be eliminated or at least adjusted to fit the urban culture. Amid such an exchange between industrial and technological practices, the generative process continues to create essential changes to the human society. As technology begins to fill the gap left by expelling the original social and cultural practices, the human society changes into what Lefebvre calls the 'technological society'. It is referred to as technological because, as argues Lefebvre, it is "lacking any specific artistic mediation or culture" (Lefebvre, *Everyday Life* 49). The technological society is a city-specific society and it reproduces space into an urban environment by means of technology. In addition, under the effects of the technological practices, technology overshadows the social situation experienced by the society members. This aspect gives rise to technicality which appears as a decisive element for crystalizing the economic and

social conditions of the human society involved. In so doing, the technological society undergoes a transformation ending with reshaping it into a technocratic society. What makes this transformation possible is the existence of “a social 'layer' tending to become a caste or class: the technocracy” (Lefebvre, *Everyday Life* 50). Such a group can only practice their influence in organizations and institutions forming what Lefebvre refers to as the ‘technocratico-bureaucratic society’ economically and politically dominating the human society. The ultimate outcome of the process of production then becomes to fasten the capitalist authority. Nonetheless, within such a milieu, man will experience the postmodern sense of alienation, which does not mean the separation of man from the social community. Rather, alienation, for Lefebvre, is realized in the “loss of control over essential human capacities and powers” (Gardiner 97) especially over human’s own everyday life. Consequently, man cannot practice his social life without relying on the technological practices which serve the socioeconomic system offered by technocracy.

Technocracy, as Lefebvre sees, is defective on various levels, the most obvious of which is that it is something fanciful and not existent. In Lefebvre’s view, it only signifies an ideology by which the capitalist system imposes its rationale. Such an aspect shows the technological practices as contributors to the overall capitalist scheme of superseding, because they fulfil the political will. For human society, technological practices come with “no current utility that might influence everyday life and improve it” (Lefebvre, *Everyday Life* 50). Not only does technocracy not bestow any goodness on human beings, but it deepens their miseries by offering the technological practices. On one hand, the technological practices enhance the ruling capacities. On the other hand, they cast the technocratic deficiency over man’s social and cultural experiences. Lefebvre argues that the political powers sneak into man’s social life within a system of substitutions. The technicality and technicity are the substitutes of the social and cultural aspects of man’s original, birth everyday experiences. Simultaneously, such insertion of technology into the everyday experience in fact represents “a substitute for technocracy which is itself a substitute for the true leaders of economy and politics” (Lefebvre, *Everyday Life* 51). In brief, the technological practices help regenerate the authority of the technocratic group that has naturized them and they are also reflections and extensions of the technocratic power. By such mutual regenerative processes among the triangle of science, technicity and technology, the bureaucratic doctrines demolish the birth social and cultural traditions of the human society. In other words, the members of society are socialized by means of these three elements to become individuals of ‘scientific society’. Such a scientific socialization operates “to justify bureaucratic rationality and to prove...the

competence of the technocracy” (Lefebvre, *Everyday Life* 51) in comparison to original social codes. Drawing from these issues raised by Henri Lefebvre, this study poses the questions ‘How does technology affect man’s identity in *Knight Rider* TV show? And to what extent?’.

### 3. Analysis: Familiarizing Technology and Estranging Man’s Identity

*Knight Rider* TV show by Glen A. Larson was first presented to TV audiences in 1982 and continued over four seasons through 1986. The plot of this show revolves around the adventures of the police officer Michael Long, played by David Hasselhoff, who is seriously shot in a police operation. Michael is rescued by Wilton Knight and is given both a new face and a new name, Michael Knight. Wilton Knight, the owner of the Knight Industries played by Richard Basehart, has already planned to recruit Michael in his experimental project, the Pilot, which involves a smart car, K.I.T.T, directing, warning and protecting its driver acting more as a partner than a machine. It can speak and reflect on critical situations providing efficient solutions. Such an aspect gives the car “its own – rather peevish – personality” (Moody 69) and simultaneously casting a new identity on its rider, Michael Knight.

The first season of *Knight Rider* was produced 1982 and it contains twenty-one episodes. The first episode, subtitled *Pilot*, sets the frame plot for the following seasons of the TV show in presenting the technological miracle occurring to its protagonist, Michael Long, that resurrects him from death. It begins with the common police officer, Michael, and his partner, Lonnie, played by Shawn Southwick, conducting an investigation in a hotel. On a gaming table, Charles Acton and Tanya Walker, played by Edmund Gilbert and Phyllis Davis respectively, play cards. When Charles indulges in the game, Tanya pretends to be bored and goes out for some fresh air, where she meets Michael Knight sitting in a police car. Michael has been waiting outside while Lonnie is searching for documents important to a police investigation. She is disguised as a maid who is pushing a cleaning cart along the hotel corridors in order to enter the suspect’s suite. After copying the documents required, she tries to flee the place, but she is noticed by Fred Wilson and Symes, played by Vince Edwards and Robert Phillips respectively. Lonnie succeeds to reach the elevator and manages to flee from them reporting her situation to Michael. Because Michael cannot get her into his own car, Lonnie takes another car to avoid being caught by these criminals. Michael engages in this race together with Tanya, who has already been in Michael’s car. While trying to save his partner, Michael is shot in the face with a bullet from Tanya’s pistol. The shooting of Michael is dramatically depicted that

he appears flying in the air and begins to roll “backwards into the darkness of the desert fringing the highway” (Larson, *Pilot* 5) to signify its aftermath. This event is the turning point in Michael's life and it is his last time with his original identity, which he casts away to become Michael Knight. In addition, the change in Michael's social and cultural traditions is highlighted in depicting Michael becoming astray from the highway to fade away into a dark and bizarre area. This is further suggested in the gradual fading of the siren sound of the car and the utter silence following Michael's disappearance. The narrator in the TV show reveals that everything becomes stagnant “except for the sound of Michael's idling car. Fade to black” (Larson, *Pilot* 5). However, these incidents prepare the ground for the technological practices to be introduced as replacements for Michael's common everyday practices that fade away as he downfalls.

The leap into the world of technologies seeking redemption from the defective human attributes is further suggested by the presence of the retarded Wilton Knight whose life is totally supplemented by technology. Wilton is a billionaire and a technology manufacturer owning the Knight Industries company. This company represents the technological agent in this TV show that socializes the traditional human society to become scientific and digitalized. It is an organization that helps rationalize the political doctrines of urbanization. For Henri Lefebvre, the neo-capitalist proponents have changed the concept of rationality into a “state-concerned and political” (*Everyday Life* 43) by shifting the concept of organization into that of an institution politically operative to the social domain. In this TV show, the Knight Industries operates to naturalize the attaining of technological practices, and this issue is highlighted by Wilton's decision of recruiting Michael. Wilton finds in Michael's misery a chance for introducing the “pilot program that Knight Industries was creating” (Huth and Levine 20) accelerating as such the political-intended shift into a technological mold for everyday life. The Pilot program relies on the hybrid nature of its human operator, which is attained by a bond between him and the smart car, Kitt.

The ideological element of hailing of technology as redeemer for man's falling nature is strengthened in the way Wilton Knight is introduced. Wilton appears as a white spot getting bigger and bigger in a dark desert evoking an enlightening figure for a darkness encompassing man's milieu. It follows that Wilton's entrance alludes to the role of technology in improving humans' situations expected as his “strange whine far in the distance [as] a pinpoint of light far off on the horizon” (Larson, *Pilot* 5) is realized. Wilton's technological miracles are brought into focus as they are applied to the central character of the show, Michael, whom he has resurrected from death, after his face is



totally smashed. Only when put to technological processes, Michael witnesses his miraculous resurrection and transformation from a dead body into a powerful entity. This marvelous transformation is accompanied with “powerful light burst on, bathing the scene of carnage in dazzling brightness” (Larson, *Pilot* 5), which signifies the occurrence of an overwhelming miracle to Michael by technology that renders him an undefeated entity. In addition, Michael’s case is utilized to socialize technology as is the case with Wilton himself, who, though aged, has a limitless power. Wilton is introduced as a knight, not on a horse, but on a machine: “weathered old face...star[ing] down from the hovering machine” (Larson, *Pilot* 5). In the traditional folklore, a knight is depicted as a brave horseman who is able to defend his people against foes and who is able to lavish a welfare on his people. Pirie shows that the medieval knight is envisaged as “the warrior hero as a loyal and selfless servant to his people” (39). As a knight, Wilton bestows only technology upon his people, rather than the welfare as is the case in the classic tales, which implies a change in the social and cultural codes.

In *Knight Rider* TV show, the aloofness between technology and the human individuals is gradually mitigated until it is totally redeemed by introducing the new Michael. This incident is decisive to the process of socialization because it shows that technology has transformed the weak police officer, Michael Long, into the most powerful crime fighter, Michael Knight. It also marks the Knight Technological Industries as a provider of power and savoir of man. After been shot, Michael is taken into this company, where he receives his new face and new identity. During the surgical process, Michael appears “stirring restlessly... crying out in anguish and anger” (Larson, *Pilot* 6), which is an aspect emphasizing the arbitrary transformation of man from his original cultural mold into a technological one. Michael’s anguish resulting from this transformation also signifies his confusion about himself resulting from experiencing such scientific artifacts that demolish the meanings attached to himself. In Lefebvre’s view, anguish is the outcome of “general sense of meaninglessness [and] lack of significance” (Lefebvre, *Everyday Life* 39) experienced by man as a result of abstracting his reality. In addition, Michael’s transformation also refers to the ancient appeal of changing nature practiced by human beings, which ends in transforming themselves. Humans, as Lefebvre sees, “transform nature and, at the same time, their own nature” (Simonsen 2) because of the mutual relationship between man and space embracing him. Within the course of change, there is a process of de-corporealization occurring to space stripping it from its physical value. Such a process increases over time and can be traced in the structure of the cities

and in architecture, as well as in artistic practices. Simultaneously, the human body also overgoes the same process of loss and it is distorted and presented in an abstract form.

For Lefebvre, there is a reciprocal relationship between the change of the human body and the manipulation of space that the change in space inevitably changes the way in which human beings are conceived of. In addition, he argues that the changes in both of the human body and the space embracing it are related to “their history and the concomitant...politics” (Simonsen 2). Man, as well as the space he produces, is subject to the cultural and political hues of the age in which they occur. It follows that Michael's body is affected by urbanism which is an economic-political movement overshadowing his age. This movement is nourished by the capitalist manufacturer, Wilton, who operates to spread its defining practice, technology. Therefore, Wilton tells Michael that this transformation “will keep you living. Just like me” (Larson, *Pilot* 6). This situation reveals a socialization practiced by Wilton targeting Michael and aiming at making Michael a member of the technological society. However, the change in Michael's practices is inevitable, because his space has been reproduced into an urbanist milieu, which a political product. For Michael to retain his original social and cultural practices, he should live in a social space produced with a social mode of production. In *Knight Rider*, space has been produced with a capitalist ideology causing the social practices to be reshaped into technological because of the change occurring to “the fundamental nature of the space that humans produce” (Archer 431).

The insertion of technology to the human situation also means the introduction of a particular rationale in terms of which man's behavior is measured. It produces technocratic society whose laws deviate the common sense and reflect the ambitions of the political leaders. This aspect is evident in Wilton's explanation of his act of changing Michael's identity. When Devon, the director of Foundation of Law and Government played by Edward Mulhare, complains that this act is illegal and it affects Wilton's career, the latter says: “I make my own rules. So does the government” (Larson, *Pilot* 6). This issue highlights the bond between technology and politics that manipulates man's existence. The adjustments of man led by the political powers by means of technology yields new mold of everyday practices for him. This case, as Lefebvre sees, ultimately eliminates the social existence by dividing the human society into separate parcels. He argues that capitalism changes the social condition through manipulating “the everyday by parceling it out into rationally managed subsystems” (Schilling 33) enabling its sneaky penetrating into the human experience.

The capitalist doctrines are injected into human societies and they are wrapped with technological practices. They are implied in the rules and regulations adopted in technocratic societies which enforce the existence of Capitalism at the expense of the original social norms. In the TV show, this aspect is emphasized when Wilton confesses the doing of illegal acts explaining that they “fake deaths and identities all the time” (Larson, *Pilot* 6). This case shows that he is reckless in applying the law that his corporation is established to maintain. This case also shows that Wilton’s acts are capitalist acts in being characterized with attaining materialistic gains at the expense of morality. They are nonetheless justified with the rationale of technology, which in turns serves Capitalism in preparing the ground for its hegemony. With the bond of the pressing elements of Capitalism and technology, man’s social and cultural practices are expelled out. This issue is highlighted by Devon who defends technology against common man’s fallible state resulting in his failure pursuit of securing his society. Therefore, he emphasizes the necessity of a socializing process making man able “to change and improve the law through evolutionary...processes” (Larson, *Pilot* 19). In fact, this foundation helps the state transform human society into technocratic. It develops laws that guarantee a “city for elites...at the expense of ordinary inhabitants” (Huchzermey 632). This issue means that man needs to embrace technology in order to be recognized individuals. It follows that the techno-political bond aims at fulfilling a bond between man and technology which can be initiated by urging the former to embrace the technological practices.

The notion of change is evident in Michael’s case, who begins this TV show as an ordinary individual and ends it as a semi-mechanical entity. Submitted to the codes of the technocratic society, Michael is changed into a new person with new driving license and credit card with the name of Michael Knight. Therefore, Michael receives a change in his original traits and attributes as well as his mode of existence. Such a change is emphasized by Devon when he reveals that “Michael Long is dead” (Larson, *Pilot* 20). However, Michael experiences a total change in order to become a member of technocratic society, which requires him to cast away his old cultural and social values, because they are invalid in the technocratic milieu. This aspect is highlighted by Devon who tells Michael “You’re a primitive, Mr. Lon....” (Larson, *Pilot* 20) hinting at the necessity of Michael’s transformation. Therefore, this foundation is in fact manufacturing man in capitalist terms using technology. This case evokes Lefebvre’s view concerning the nature of production in capitalist societies, where production deviates its purposes. Lefebvre argues that the capitalist system “engenders consumption, and...consumption is

manipulated by producers” (Lefebvre, *Everyday and Everydayness* 9). In this TV show, production is directed towards the political end of naturalizing the technological practices.

The acceptance of technology occurs over a course of successive socializing phases. The first encounter between Michael and technology occurs when he drives the smart car, K.I.T.T., which is a step in stripping his identity. While driven by Michael, the smart car behaves as partner than a machine. It thinks for and interacts with Michael and this issue makes him hesitant to accept technology. He never refuses technology, but he is only weighing the loss of his nature as a human being against the amount of support that he could receive from it. It follows that Michael becomes subject to the call of capitalism under the guise of a smart car, which is further emphasized in his listening to “the voice of the Knight Industries 2000’s micro- processor. K.I.T.T.” (Larson, *Pilot* 22). As he listens to this voice, Michael experiences the loss of his natural attributes. The pressing change over Michael is highlighted by the confrontation between him and the smart car when he decides to enter the social club of House of the Rising Sun. The car tells Michael to leave about such places explaining that “Social gathering places...can create a causative environment” (Larson, *Pilot* 26). This advice by the car shows a process of formalization to Michael’s social behavior. It implies an adjustment to Michael’s social experience neglecting as such his previous cultural life. It also hints at the false utopian life sought by technocratic societies by means of technology. In fact, utopia cannot be attained because it never complies with man’s natural needs. When imposed on a current reality, utopia appears “complicit with a hegemonic, instrumental rationality [serving] the globalization of capital” (Gardiner 116).

However, utopia seems tempting to Michael because of its association with perfection and this issue is shown by Michael’s strong bond with the smart car that begins to educate him about Silicon Valley. The reference to Silicon Valley made by the smart car is in fact an invitation to Michael to join the era of globalization. Though this area stands as “the most important global hub of electronics” (Walker 562), it has also been a place for concentrating both global capital and intellect, aiming therefore at placing humanity under a capitalist garment. When Michael meets her outside the club, Maggie, the young waitress Michael meets at a nightclub played by Pamela Susan Shoop, describes Silicon Valley as a big technological market where “every shill, con man, or dreamer in the world here to sell something” (Larson, *Pilot* 30). It is also in Silicon Valley that microchips are developed to offer smartness to machines. Therefore, it can also stand as a source for providing technological power for human beings transforming them from natural into

super humans. This aspect is suggested by Maggie's remark she describes Michael as being "a strange man. Nice...but strange" (Larson, *Pilot* 33) alluding to a drastic change in his human aspects. This idea of the extra capacities added to Michael is reflected in his ability to achieve miraculous acts as a result of being accompanied by K.I.T.T. With the limitless power provided by this technological product, Michael goes beyond the boundaries of the natural human being to become a supernatural entity. For instance, Michael becomes able to cross one-hundred roof that surrounds Com Tron company using the flight mode of this smart car. After this experience, a sense of trust develops between Michael and technology reflecting the postmodern view of machine as "a geometric, efficient, precise, powerful and reassuringly dependable creation" (Pinder 68). Nonetheless, with such a conception, man is viewed as a fallible entity who is ranked second, if not less, than the machine.

The debate between naked humanity and mixed reality continues to agitate Michael's social experience. On one hand, he becomes subject to his own fascination with the perfection offered by the technological machine. On the other hand, this issue means taking a step into Michael's aloofness from his original nature. It follows that Michael's identity begins to dissolve in the presence of a smart machine that thinks, plans and talks on his behalf. He complains of this issue to Devon explaining that the car "takes off on its own [and] can listen to my thoughts and make its own decisions" (Larson, *Pilot* 52). It follows that Michael is conscious of the degradation he is experiencing as a consequence of his attachment to this smart car. When he tries to exert control over the situation in car rally, the smart car refuses to submit to his will showing that he is too weak to handle such tough situations as car rallies. However, Michael's first refusal of technology vanishes as he experiences the superpower of the car and he begins to show an ambition of becoming a superhero. He begins to believe that a pursuit is only possible with the assistance of technology that provides him with capacities above his original being. In other words, with his bond with technology, Michael can prove that "one man really can make a difference" (Larson, *Pilot* 62). This case implies the postmodern belief that man's capacities will be elevated with the help of technology, which is regarded as the outcome of human enlightening spirit arising from his own pursuit of idealization. Michael transformation reflects a hectic search for the ideal which he believes to attain through pursuing technology. It follows that technology to Michael a means reflecting the ability of human "power to transform itself if it actualizes the ideal" (Colebrook 690). In *Knight Rider*, attaining the ideal being by Michael also means a shunning of the human identity as well as a submission to the technocratic standards.

The idea of annexing the human being to the technological entities to attain perfection is also elaborated on in the second season of this TV show, which spanned from 1983 through 1984. In its first episode, subtitled *Goliath*, Michael has to confront his original copy, Garthe Knight. Garthe, played also by David Hasselhoff, is Wilton Knight's evil son and his face is given to Michael. In this episode, Garthe escapes from a jail in Africa where he spends three life-long sentences. This episode begins with the arrival of a huge machine, Goliath, on a C-140 cargo aircraft and Garthe is waiting for it inside a black limousine. As the plane lands, Goliath gets down as "an enormous blunt snout...and the oversized, specially modified truck and trailer" (Larson, *Goliath* 2). However, the name 'Goliath' alludes to the biblical story of David and Goliath mentioned in the Books of Samuel and it is employed in this show to emphasize enemies exceeding man's capacities. Goliath is the strong and giant warrior of the Philistines who agitates the Israelites with successive challenges and no one can defeat him with the traditional weapons of the sword and spear. It follows that this enemy should be faced with creative techniques, as the one used by David. David, who is only a young man at this time, manages to defeat Goliath after using the special technique of the sling. In the Biblical story, David resorts to this technique "to give his superior mobility free play" (Batten 63). Similarly, in the *Knight Rider* TV show, Michael would not be able to confront such a giant foe as Goliath without the help of K.I.T.T car. It follows that the allusion made to Goliath is an invitation for man to embrace technology in order to attain the aptitude required in facing the challenges of life.

The episode of *Goliath* also hits upon an even darker side of technology than merely stripping man of his original social and cultural practices. It knocks the warning bell of loathing the familial relationships with the capitalist standards which feed the devilish endeavors of greed and malevolence within the human individuals. This aspect is emphasized by Garthe's pursuit for stealing the design of the K.I.T.T car from his father's foundation. Together with his mother, Garthe plots to rob the secret formula of the highly protective shield of the smart car, as Devon shows that Garthe is "Accompanied by mother, Elizabeth. They're after the formula" (Larson, *Goliath* 12). In addition, this situation is also a realization of the challenge that man faces as a consequence of the change in the nature of human beings under the impact of capitalist values. In Lefebvre's view, man's fear of natural disasters has been replaced by the terror of conversing the "ideological and practical rationality, the terror of society" (Lefebvre, *Everyday Life* 44). In other words, man has to deal with the burden of wicked ideologies adopted by the political leaders causing him endless unrest and fear. It follows that the conflict between

Garthe and the Foundation represents an ideological conflict. Garthe represents a threat to technocratic society because he breaks the self-repressive model naturalized by the neoliberal mold adopted by such societies. He is considered threatening because he opposes the centrality of capitalist sovereignty and captures its technological power. Such a divergent pursuit causes a conflict between Garthe and the Knight Foundation. To win this conflict, Garthe takes a piece of the information about the secret formula of K.I.T.T by poisoning Devon with a special type of African serum. Taking the other piece costs the life of Doctor Karl Elliott, a character who is only mentioned in the TV show, who is murdered in Rio de Janeiro. Such incidents are marked as terrorist actions on the capitalist scale and they therefore represent a justification for Michael to act against Garthe.

It follows that Michael also becomes an instrument for applying capitalist standards ensuring its flourish as legal, as well as social, codes without questioning their truthfulness. This issue is highlighted by K.I.T.T car warning for Michael. After saving Michael from a gunman, this car demands him to listen to its instructions and not to ignore its cautions. His submission to the car becomes necessary when the car saves him from a devastating tank explosion. These situations are parts of the socialization process targeting Michael in order to adjust him in terms of technocratic codes. The success of socialization is highlighted when the narrator shows that when “Michael obeys, diving for the pavement, K.I.T.T. self-activates and drives over him” (Larson, *Goliath* 21). This condition reveals the role of the smart machine in polishing Michael’s character to become member of technocratic society. Therefore, Michael must obey technocratic notions if he is to overcome his mortal nature and become able to face advanced warfare technologies.

The mortal nature of ordinary human beings is further expressed in the confrontation between Kitt and Goliath after the latter becomes equipped with technologies similar to those of K.I.T.T. The production of Goliath alludes to man’s agitation with attaining attributes exceeding his natural capacities, which is an aspect made possible by means of technology. Man’s fallible nature is emphasized by the smart car when it confronts Goliath. After it receives serious damages from the confrontation of Goliath, Kitt shows that it feels as vulnerable as human beings are and it begins to mock Michael’s immortal nature. It shows to Michael that “humans live with the idea [they’re] going to die” (Larson, *Goliath* 40). This situation emphasizes both man’s imperfect nature and the perfection gained from technology with which he survives death. Accordingly, K.I.T.T can itself be viewed as a human being manufactured into a supernatural entity in order

to make him fit the modification in his own social and cultural space. This issue shows that man is subject to a technological rationality that has implicitly helped Capitalism succeed in the pursuit of “control[ing]...the cultural and social spheres of [human’s] existence” (Elden 144). Consequently, Garthe is like Michael, both are foster children of the technocratic rationality and both seek the technological power enabling them to be distinguished members of the technocratic society. It follows that the confrontation between Garthe and Michael is a conflict where the survivor deserves a membership of technocratic society.

The idea of the power rivalry by means of technology is also emphasized in the third season of *Knight Rider*, which was produced in 1984. The first episode of this season, subtitled *Knight of the Drones*, tackles the conflict among technocratic powers. It opens in a jail in San Francisco where Jim Carter, played by Arnie Moore, works as a guard. While checking the solitary confinement area, Carter passes C.J. Jackson’s, played by Jim Brown, cell having a short chat with him. On the telephone, Carter tells his wife that this morning he has been given a strange radio by a woman whom he does not know explaining that this radio can transform itself into a robot. While he is speaking, the radio transforms and “begins its robotic walk closer to the unsuspecting Carter” (Larson, *Knight of the Drones* 2). Suddenly, the robot spreads a mysterious gas into the room and Carter falls unconscious on the ground. The robot moves towards the cell and frees Jackson who finds a vehicle from which a voice calling him to get in. The presence of a transforming robot and an autonomous vehicle suggests a technological race led to the production of a foe equivalent to or more advanced than K.I.T.T. This aspect is evident when Devon describes the convict as being “touch[ing] the very heart and soul of the Foundation” (Larson, *Knight of the Drones* 4). Later on, it appears that Jackson has been the killer of Michael’s predecessor in the Foundation, Ken Franklyn, who would be the experimental person of the foundation program of K.I.T.T. Jackson is in fact an opponent or an enemy of technocratic society in that he prevents the application of their notions and deserves as such to be sued or even terminated. This is so because, in such societies, the “subversive ideas and individuals were judged, condemned” (Lefebvre, *Everyday Life* 144) in order to fasten the socialization process sought for deepening their sovereignty. This aspect is intensified when it appears that Jackson is smuggled by another industrial company, Hunter’s Point Electronics, owned by David Halston.

The conflict between Halston and the giant technological companies is ideological rather than economic. In the beginning, Halston tells Peter Fong, an ex-wireman, and Jackson that his scheme is to rob the federal reserve bank using the Chinese maps of the



city tunnels. In fact, his real goal is to control the Surveillance and Strike Satellite. He utilizes Peter's knowledge of wires to control the security system and Jackson digs in the ground. While digging, Jackson realizes that they are digging in the wrong direction of the bank. A confrontation occurs between Jackson and Halston after the destruction of the robot reveals the ultimate goal of Halston's pursuit. After Jackson learns that the wrong direction is intentionally given to him, he is informed by Halston that "it's not money I'm after, C.J... but glory...and power" (Larson, *Knight of the Drones* 59) before he shoots Jackson dead. This condition involves Michael in more reliance on K.I.T.T to face Halston's advanced technology of the drone cars. It also urges Michael to take a step into handing his own soul to the technocratic society through indulging him in the technological practices.

The collapse of Michael's identity reaches its culmination in season four of *Knight Rider* TV show, which was released in 1986. Its final episode is subtitled *Voo Doo Knight* evoking the Haitian rituals of possessing the human souls by supernatural spirits. The invocation of spirits occurs in temples, with ceremonial practices accompanied with various dances and chants addressing each particular spirit with its preferred dance. The practices of voodoo rituals aim at attaining "communication between spirits and man through possession" (Daniel 61). In Voodoo tradition, songs and dances are employed to invoke various types of spirits, loas, that help them achieve specific purposes in life. In this tradition, the loas control man's action so he becomes wiser and stronger enough to conduct what he desires. People can also choose which loa to possess them by performing the song and dance this spirit prefers. Daniel shows that "Each loa is known to prefer a specific dance...used to invoke or appease" (61) it. In *Knight Rider*, the rituals are technological, rather than traditional, that are provided by Harana, the Princess of Voodoo, hosted by Donald Crane. The rituals are practiced by a tiny chip fixed on man instructing him to fulfill specific tasks. By means of this chip, Harana can control man highlighting man's submission to the technocratic leaders. This aspect is evident from the very beginning of this episode, where Jeremy Towers, Jarrett and Max enter wearing tuxedos and putting "ear clips...discourag[ing] smoking, drinking and motion sickness" (Larson, *Voo Doo Knight* 1). It follows that these men are closer to robots than to human beings because they act in terms of a set of predetermined behaviors. The destructive effect of such a robotic aspect is emphasized with the suicidal acts done by the men equipped with the ear clips. This condition occurs to Mr. Towers who throws himself down to the street from a window three-hundred feet high when Michael is about to capture him. Mr. Towers is predetermined to behave in this way because he is under the

technological spell of Harana, who “graciously consented to give [him] spiritual guidance” (Larson, *Voo Doo Knight* 5).

In this episode, there is a strong link initiated between spirituality and technology because both justify and support political endeavors. This aspect is supported by the presence of the Haitian magician, Harana, who enchants people with technological devices, rather than with magic spells. This aspect is evident in fixing an ear-clip chip to Michael by this woman. Affected by this technology, Michael becomes passive and he remains standing in the middle of the room while “Harana walks around him, giving him orders” (Larson, *Voo Doo Knight* 24). She tells him to take his car and meet Donald Crane, played by Henry Gibson, at Wall Street, and Michael follows her orders. Nonetheless, Michael is saved from Haran’s spell to fall under the spell of technology. This case is emphasized in introducing K.I.T.T equipped “with a decoder. It worked on you” (Larson, *Voo Doo Knight* 28) retrieving Michael into its own control. This aspect alludes to Lefebvre’s conception about the abuse of technology. He argues that technocratic leaders use technology that “does not make the everyday any more alive; it nourishes ideology” (Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis* 53) adopted by the political power to fasten its hegemony. Man loses the meaning of himself because he becomes confused about the elements of space in terms of which he used to attach meanings to himself.

#### **4. Conclusion**

In *Knight Rider* TV show, man appears devoid of his human aspects because his space has been manipulated into an urban milieu. With the change of space, man’s meaning related to himself also changes due to changes occurring to the significations of space elements. Simultaneously, reproducing space into urbanity affects man’s original everyday practices and begins to replace them with technological practices that rationalize political ideologies. Technological practices cast man from his original reality into a new reality where he cannot cope with his everyday life unless in a bond with technological products. This aspect is enhanced by the political mystification that introduces technology as a redeemer of man’s fallible nature urging man to seek perfection by embracing technological practices. In his pursuit to achieve perfection through technology, man loses his humanity to the machine to which he is annexed.

The hero in *Knight Rider* TV show, Michael, experiences a gradual loss of his own identity highlighted in his transformation from ordinary Michael Long into the mechanical Michael Knight. He approaches his life as an ordinary human being adopting a natural social life, but he has been subject to a socializing process that ends with

annexing him to a smart car, K.I.T.T. His departure from his innate cultural and social practices into technological practices is emphasized by the death of his partner, Lonnie, who is replaced with a technological partner, K.I.T.T. However, Michael is subject to capitalist mystification about the role of technology that creates within him the ambition of attaining power enabling him to change the world. This mystification causes him to accept K.I.T.T control over his life and to respond mechanically to its instructions submitting as such his human identity. It follows that capitalist socialization through the rationale of technology alludes to spiritual socialization. In other words, technology has the same effects of spiritual practices in conducting deeds impossible for natural man, as such tempting man to embrace them. The difference is that the effects of spiritual practices are viewed as false because they cannot be proved whereas the effects of technology are provable on a scientific scale. Like a man under a spell, Michael has to free himself from Harana's spiritual influence, but he remains under the spell of technological practices, which seem stronger in effect than spiritual practices. Therefore, Michael cannot decide for himself because he has been under the control of one spell and he becomes under that of another. The only choice Michael has is to choose between one smart device and another, or between one ideological practice and another, and both require him to cast away his original cultural practices and become a member of technocratic society. In technocratic societies, there is no choice between what is natural human experience and unnatural one. Such societies rise on reproduction of space and begin to socialize man in terms of new everyday practices with the aid of mystification.

Therefore, as he senses the unlimited powers, Michael begins to accept his transformation and the power attained by his bond with K.I.T.T blinds him from noticing the gradual loss of his identity. Ultimately, he gives up identity and becomes totally controlled. This case is suggested by the electronic chip attached to him which renders him an enchanted man. It follows that Michael is tamed by technological and spiritual factors that are mixed together to ensure a change to his identity. Both technology and magic share the aspect of casting a submissive role on man where he is obedient to ideological notions. These two elements socialize man in terms of the belief that his freedom is "something spiritual and ideal that fits in perfectly with material oppression" (Lefebvre, *Everyday Life* 146). It follows that Michael is subject to the rationale of technology utilized by Capitalism to enhance its hegemony. This case results in Michael's attachment to technology which makes him on line with other power seekers in *Knight Rider*, such as Tanya Walker, Garthe Knight, Jeremy Halston or Donald Crane. All of them have distorted identities because, as Lefebvre explains, they have lost control over their

everyday lives and become semi-machine entities directed by ideological drives. Conclusively, the present study focused on the relationship between production of space and man's identity. By applying Henri Lefebvre's space theories to *Knight Rider* TV show, the study argues that production of space yields a shift in the main characters' identities resulting from an arbitrary change in their original everyday practices. In doing so, the study provides readers with a postmodern scope for this TV show realized in relating the general mood of attaining technological practices of the 1980s to its severe consequences on man. Finally, the researchers recommend a further study which could discuss the human appearance with the robotic essence of man in postmodern age. Such a study would highlight the extinction of original man's attributes as a result of annexing him to smart machines.

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