

“ANDROID”

Do Androids Dream of Blade Runners?: An investigation into the concept of the postmodern android

Álmodnak-e az androidok szárnyas fejjavadászokkal?: A posztmodern android képének vizsgálata

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1. Introduction

1.1 The topic of the paper

The present paper examines significant transformations in the representation of the android through Philip K. Dick's novel, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968), and its corresponding film adaptation directed by Ridley Scott, *Blade Runner* (1982). Written at the end of the 1960s, the novel tapped into the contemporary thinking of science fiction writers, and in the fourteen years that passed between its publication and the film's premiere, fascinating changes occurred in the collective attitude towards humanoid robots and technology in general. It is this alteration of public opinion that this piece seeks to explore, and the issue is approached by first analysing both works, and then highlighting the discrepancies between the two works. (It is to be noted that the term 'discrepancy' here is not intended to carry any negative connotations.) The main goal is to suggest that the seemingly negative representation of the android in both works actually contains positive elements as well; however, while quite implicit in the novel, these attractive features are more explicit and prominent in the film, to the point of their emphatic presence having socially interesting implications and changing the ending.

1.2 Methodology, approach, and structure

My approach to the subject is both historical, and critical. It is historical in the sense that I find it necessary to include a summary of the timeline of the android in literary fiction, while mentioning other forms of artificial humanoids as well.. The method is critical in the sense that in order to be able to conduct a proper analysis, only two closely related works are analysed with deeper scrutiny, strictly focusing on the relevant points in close reading and excluding the rather tangled immediate historical contexts of the works.

The first part then is a more or less chronological account of the history of the android, and an overview of the prevalent trends in the attitudes towards technology in the Cold War era. This segment examines speculations about the potentials of Artificial Intelligence (customarily abbreviated as AI) and creating androids roughly until the late 1960s, marking the publication of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* The second part presents a close reading of the android characters and the technology-related themes in Dick's novel and

Scott's film, partly synthesizing the existing critical opinion, and partly providing a perspective of hoped-for novelty.

1.3 Terminology

First and foremost, it is important to clarify the nomenclature to avoid confusion and to allow for a discussion of the subject without tending to narrow definitions and unscrambling technical terms. Collating Daniel Dinello's *Technophobia!* and Pamela McCorduck's *Machines Who Think* offers a transparent and consistent taxonomy that will suffice here.

The two most often confused notions are "cyborg" and "android", the distinction of which is based on their internal arrangement (or so to say, ingredients). Externally, they are both humanoids, and it goes without saying that if they look completely human, then in the vast majority of cases they represent exquisite specimens of their respective sexes – if they are in fact sexed. In the android, there is no fusion of flesh and metal: an android is either completely mechanic, like Ash in the first *Alien* film, or "genetically engineered, wholly organic" (Dinello 8), like the "replicants" in *Blade Runner*. A cyborg, on the other hand, "combines the biological and mechanical, and may or may not look identical to a human" (Dinello 8), like the Borgs of *Star Trek*.

"Robot" is a category excluding cyborgs. The term was borrowed in English from the Czech "robota", which means forced labour or slavery (Dinello 47).¹ Its first appearance was in Karol Čapek's play *R.U.R. (Rossum's Universal Robots)*, introduced to English audiences in 1923. Here there is a difference between Dinello's and McCorduck's definitions: while Dinello describes them as mostly electronic and varied in size and form, taking up a human or an animal shape (8), McCorduck defines them as a "special case of androids [that] are mass-produced" (5). Common usage tends to go with the former: according to the Online Merriam-Webster dictionary, the robot is "a real or imaginary machine that is controlled by a computer and is often made to look like a human or animal" (Merriam-Webster.com).

Finally, there are a few other, related, terms that are not widely used in common parlance: automaton, golem, and homunculus. An automaton is any structure, device, or artwork that moves on its own. Homunculi and golems are the antecedents of androids in a

¹ McCorduck identifies the word as simply Slavic meaning "work" (5).

sense: they are imaginary humanoids supposedly made from organic materials, such as clay, mud, or the concoction of sperm and horse manure² (McCorduck 11).

2. A brief history of fictional automata and species of artificial intelligence

The joy of creation has always been a fascination for human beings, be it in art, architecture, constructing sensible or dumb mechanisms. We humans love to build and shape our environment from the smallest particles to objects of enormous dimensions – somehow we feel the need to make our immediate surroundings “our own”, even if the first step towards that is destruction. We comfort ourselves with the principle that “the end justifies the means” and other well-worn saws and maxims. However, if there is a seemingly harmless subtype of creation that is even more astounding to us than the above, it surely must be self-representation. McCorduck writes that from some point of view, “ours is a history of self-imitation” (3). I tend to agree with her observation that we are even more amazed by our own creations mimicking us than by a fellow human doing the same (4). It is the source and manifestations of this enchantment that this historical overview of the relevant literary fiction is primarily concerned with. The following timeline is based on Hultén, McCorduck and Dinello; all these authors conform to the same general timeline, so it is safe to assume that the panorama surveyed below is as comprehensive and well-established as possible. Although it may seem that these are not the most recent studies of the topic, they examine the most important, modern, period thoroughly.

2.1 Fictional robots and androids in literature

The first clearly fictional instructions to create artificial humans were compiled in the 16th century by Paracelsus, who was often called the “father of modern pharmacology” (Dinello 38). He broached the idea of creating a homunculus,³ later claiming that he had actually made one (McCorduck 11). His magic recipe for the wonder of life was to place semen (he believed that each sperm contained a miniature man) in warm horse manure (as nourishment for the growing manikin). Adding blood to this concoction he kept it sealed in a jar (his colleagues were probably thankful for that). Sadly, he never succeeded in producing the creature, but the idea was renewed in later works of fiction, for instance, Goethe’s *Faust* (Dinello 38).

² See Section 2.1 on this matter.

³ See section 1.3 for a definition.

While Paracelsus today is treated with little seriousness, there is another artificial human from the sixteenth century who is taken to be the one most famous artificial human: Joseph Golem. Legend holds that Judah ben Loew, a Rabbi from Prague, created him to serve as a protector of the Jews against anti-Semitic attacks. The creature misbehaved, and the Rabbi had to end its life. As McCorduck notes, important notions combine in the figure of Joseph Golem, which would recur in future works: supernatural abilities are needed to create the figure, and he is treated as a slave, which eventually makes him rebel and attempt to destroy his maker (13). I strongly believe that military application can be added to these notions as well, even if that application is of a defensive nature.

Toying with the idea of an android or an autonomous artificial intelligence was mainly fictional fancy and therefore the subject of ridicule for the most part of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. However, by the beginning of the nineteenth century, people had gradually got used to machinery surrounding them. The machine was perceived to be kind and beneficial. As Buchanan posits, “[t]echnological revolution [...] assumed a major role in ensuring the stability and survival of a society which had lost its natural equilibrium” (203). Although he is talking about overpopulation here, Buchanan’s argument suggests a deeper change in the social perspective, one that he does not make explicit. Namely, that the machine was “necessarily beneficial to mankind” (Hultén 9), and thus the android a benevolent saviour, not a malicious creature – but not for long. It is exactly this optimistic image of artificial humanoids that was subject to drastic change in these centuries.

The beginning of the nineteenth century saw the birth of two prominent androids. Olympia, the android in E. T. A. Hoffman’s *The Sandman* is the “grandma of many a robot woman” (McCorduck 15), for example, of the vindictive robot-Maria in Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis* (Dinello 40). Even more important than Olympia, however, is Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818). Shelley’s story is an amalgamation of almost all the concerns about artificial humans to this day. Intended as a story of psychological depth and moral dilemma, *Frankenstein* explores humans’ aspirations to play God, and the frightening idea that even the best and purest intentions can sometimes lead to horrible consequences (McCorduck 21). The novel is also important for “[c]losing the gap between superstition and rationality” (Dinello 41), as it aims to present a method of creation that is at least vaguely believable (the creature is brought to life with electrocution, a potent source of energy just being discovered at the time of Luigi Galvani’s experiments gaining notoriety). The monster is the “artificial precursor of the cyborg, android, robot, and clone” (Dinello 41).

The pessimistic outlook on androids and artificial creatures was further explored by works as H. G. Wells' *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896), Karol Capek's *R. U. R.* (1921), and Robert Wiene's *Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (1919), just to mention a few notable examples. *R. U. R.* is of profound interest here, because this is the first text where robots are designed *specifically* to annihilate their flesh-and-blood counterparts (Dinello 47). The Machine Age had brought about a very pessimistic change in the general tone of science fiction, and the visions of a technological utopia were completely subverted by the horrors of World War II (Dinello 52). This drastic turn of opinion which took place in less than 50 years culminated in the publication of George Orwell's *1984*; however, techno-believers started to raise their voices once again. It is from this point onwards that the attitudes move to both extremes of an imaginary optimist-pessimist scale.

The optimistic view is reflected in the works of Isaac Asimov and Norbert Wiener. Wiener is considered to be one of the founding fathers of cybernetics, as he was primarily interested in defining human life. He reached the conclusion that human life was essentially information processing, and thus promoted the vision of the human mind being completely transferrable to a binary language; nevertheless, he warned humanity against political uses of artificial intelligence, understanding the dangerous potentials that the technology has (Dinello 60-61). Somewhat similarly to his work, Isaac Asimov translated basic moral principles into his Three Laws of Robotics, which appeared in the short story "Runaround" in 1942. These rules became "the holy commandments of the religion of technology" (Dinello 64), and most artists took them for granted in their works (McCorduck 21). Asimov's robots were kind, subservient, and sensitive; anti-robot people are usually portrayed as narrow-minded racists in his works (Dinello 74).

All this pro-robot propaganda was in vain, as the nuclear scare reached its peak in the '50s and '60s (Dinello 67). Based on the ideas of Wiener and Asimov, a few writers reached their own conclusions and extrapolated their menacing visions about fierce and rebellious androids, robots replacing people, and sophisticated AI creatures running wild and killing humans by the dozen; among these writers was Philip K. Dick (Dinello 67).

3. Do Androids Dream of Blade Runners? – The novel and the film

Philip K. Dick's novel was published in 1968, and in 1982, a film adaptation, directed by a British artist, premiered in the United States. This was a key event in the history of Dick's work, as it led to his reestablishment as a popular writer and the recognition of much of his

work as perfect bases for science-fiction megapics (Bukatman 41). ⁴ *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (from this point abbreviated as *Androids*) was republished under the title *Blade Runner*, and Dick was even asked to write a new novel based on the film (a “tie-in”, or an adaptation of the adaptation of his own work). Understandably, he refused to do so (Bukatman 41); nevertheless, the film (and with its help, the novel) slowly spawned a cult around themselves, resulting in an almost religious respect for the work by science-fiction fans these days (Thompson, Bordwell 692; Bukatman 34).

I believe it is best not to separate the discussion of the novel and the film completely, as the works very subtly complement each other and thus resonate on deeper levels. What follows is a survey of the most important critical assessments of *Androids* and *Blade Runner*; then, I will attempt to point out the “critical gaps” in academic discourse, highlighting two important aspects that appear to be missing from the ongoing professional appreciation.

It is also important to note here that adaptation theory is not the subject matter of this paper, although it is indeed a seminal point when one tries to compare a work with its adaptation that was translated to another medium. Throughout the analysis, I bear in mind that the fidelity principle (Aragay 12) is seen by many as an obsolete concept, and that the task of a film adaptation is not exhausted by some slavish transmediation of the basic material. Consequently, although sometimes it may seem annoyingly punctilious and overly perfectionist to point out all the differences between the works, it is never done without a reason. Thus, comparison of this kind should never be seen as judgemental or condescending towards any of the discussed media; it is merely a necessity for the sake of precision and inclusiveness.

3.1 The titles

First and foremost, a few words about the titles, since they are usually a reader’s first contact with the text; it is not unimaginable that they raised a few eyebrows in this case. The novel’s title is a question – it refers to a very interesting custom in the dystopian world of 2020 described by Dick. World War Terminus (probably World War III) resulted in nuclear pollution on the planet, and Earth became virtually uninhabitable due to the fallout (the effect of the Cold War nuclear scare is evident here). Nearly all the animals are extinct, except for a few species; most humans escaped to off-world colonies. The ones who remained on Earth (or “Terra”), however, show their sense of responsibility and empathy (in other words, that “they

⁴ Term borrowed from Pápai (29), based on Thompson and Bordwell (683).

care”) by adopting specimens of the remaining few animals and nurturing them at home or on the roofs of their apartment buildings.

The main question posed by the novel is whether androids, who were specifically created only for slave labour on the colonies, would be able to empathise with animate creatures or each other. In the beginning, the official claim is that androids do not feel empathy at all, and the ones who escape to Earth from the colonies are spotted because of this emotional defect by the “Voight-Kampff” test, which measures emotional responses. So the problem is simple: do the androids dream of caring for another living being and of achieving a higher social status by this? Implicit in this issue is another: could they fit in society at all? All in all, the title may be the question of an everyday citizen of the year 2020.

The title of the film signals a marked shift in focus towards the protagonist, “bounty hunter” (i.e. android terminator) Rick Deckard. It is not only that the theme of keeping animals is completely missing from the movie, but all the other characters are given less prominence in the adaptation. There were other titles considered for the movie according to Hampton Fancher, one of the screenwriters, including *Dangerous Days* and *Mechanismo* (de Lauzirika 2007). Finally, after a number of radical changes made to the script by Fancher and David Webb Peoples, *Blade Runner* was settled on as a title for the film, a phrase borrowed from William Burroughs (Bukatman 17).

3.2 The narrative voice

One of the most disputed changes that were made to the novel was the inclusion of a voiceover narrative in the film. In *Androids*, the two main protagonists’ (Rick Deckard and J. F. Isidore) thoughts are mediated by a narrator. Deckard’s ponderings are often voiced or expressed explicitly in the novel, but the style does not turn into free indirect discourse or stream of consciousness. It is a “bildungsroman for the cybernetic age” (Galvan 414), but it also distances itself from Deckard by presenting another viewpoint, that of J. F. Isidore (he is a “special”; genetically mutated because of the radiation, so he is condemned to stay on Earth forever).

As a major departure from the book’s narrative, the movie follows almost exclusively Deckard on his mission. Of course, one might argue that this is a necessary decision to construct a different world (Wheale 303), but that does not really explain the need for an almost condescendingly explanatory narrative voiceover by the protagonist (even though it is customarily used in film noir, it sounds obtrusive in *Blade Runner*). At the end of the

“nightmarish production” (Bukatman 29-30), the voiceover was imposed to make the film more understandable, because test audiences expressed confusion over the plotline (Bukatman 32). Ridley Scott (the director) and Harrison Ford (who played Rick Deckard) were heavily opposed to the idea (de Lauzirika 2007), all in vain. The production company was adamant in its demand: the voiceover was recorded in a studio and then imposed on the footage. It was only in May 1990 that Scott’s version was discovered, which lacked the voiceover and the happy ending⁵ (Bukatman 36). A Director’s Cut was released, but Scott was still not completely satisfied. It was only in 2007, when a high-definition reissue on Blu-ray entitled “Final Cut” hit the market that Ridley Scott expressed in a short opening to the movie that he was satisfied: “Out of all the versions of Blade Runner, this is my favourite.” (Warner Bros. Entertainment Company).

What is evident from the above is that film directors are rather unfortunate in questions of artistic freedom, at least in the Hollywood system: some authorial decisions are inevitably motivated by money. However, this fact needs to be kept in mind when one analyses a film that has a history of different versions. Most critical literature disregards the question of changes imposed by the financiers, or treats the previous versions with care. On my part, I will consider Scott’s preferred variant (the “Final Cut”) the default basis for my analysis, except of course for the section that discusses the endings.⁶

3.3 Religion in the novel and the film

One of the important aspects of the novel that is toned down, or rather, alluded to differently in the film is religion. *Androids* describes the use of an “empathy box”, a device by which human minds can connect and feel together the sufferings of Wilbur Mercer, a saviour figure of sorts who infinitely climbs a mountain.

This religion in the book is called Mercerism, the only remaining faith among inhabitants of Earth. Galvan sees Mercerism as a very clever trick on the side of the government: although it may seem to unite people in spiritual outbursts of empathy, its main function is to separate people from each other (operating the empathy box, which provides access to the collective of minds, is after all a solitary act) and create social distance between citizens “[reducing] the potential for public unrest” (416). Galvan goes on to argue that

⁵ Discussed in section 3.5.4.

⁶ For a support of the view that the director is somehow the most important member of the filmmaking crew, see Kovács’ discussion (99-105).

television plays a similar role in the novel, where an inexhaustible comedian, Buster Friendly entertains people 23 hours a day (417). She argues that technology is exploited by the government, but in itself, it is not harmful in Dick's world; in fact, it can be counter-manipulated, as seen in the case of Buster Friendly and Luba Luft (Galvan 418-422). Buster is himself an android, and at the end of the novel, unmasks Mercer as a fraud (a sloppy actor from Hollywood); Luba Luft is a female android who twists the Voight-Kampff test around and avoids being identified for a brief time. Both of them choose different methods of manipulating a form of media, but they *do* actively resist being mere victims of political oppression (Galvan 423). (This active participation on the part of androids will be very important in a subsequent section.) Galvan goes on to say that Mercer eventually prophesizes a human empathic community that includes androids as well, and Deckard can only be part of the "posthuman community" (426) when he discovers this (427).

Sims sees the empathy box differently, saying that "there is the potential to use the ... empathy box as a means of control, ... but Mercer is not a fascist or a tyrant" (82). Sims argues that the empathy box (and Mercerism) was created by humans as a reaction to World War Terminus and the destruction of human civilization (79). Sims disagrees with another critic, who sees the novel as a "protest against the dehumanizing effects of bureaucracies and technology" (McNamara 422); Sims argues that technology (and thus Mercerism) "humanizes [people] by reinstituting the human disposition to social collectiveness" (80). Androids detest Mercerism and try to undermine it (cf. Buster Friendly's actions) because its system, which is predicated upon humans feeling empathy towards each other, completely excludes them (Sims 83). "Deckard is morally and ethically able to perform his duties [of "retiring", i.e. killing off, androids], [which seem] reasonable enough from a Mercerian perspective" (Sims 84). Dick emphasizes the irony that religion in the novel's world operates through technology, even though it poses itself as the guardian of the core of human condition (Sims 86).

This complex viewpoint is missing from *Blade Runner*: neither Mercerism, nor the animal-fetishizing aspect feature in the film. However, the adaptation still touches upon similar themes, "but it does so through visual patterning rather than verbal allegories" (Wheale 301). Naturally, this is mainly due to the difference between the two forms of media. Wheale highlights, among other tropes, the prominence of the eye-motive and obscure references made by Roy (the quasi-leader of the escaped androids) to William Blake and to Milton's *Paradise Lost* (301-3). Roy likens himself to a fallen angel, evoking a religious imagery when he finally meets Tyrell (the omnipotent owner of the Tyrell Corporation that manufactures the replicants, and also the brain behind their creation) – in their clash, Roy

symbolically kills Tyrell, thus subverting the strong hierarchical order presented in the book (where Rosen is virtually untouchable). Other references to biblical imagery in the film include the animal-charmer Zhora's pet snake and Roy creating a stigma on himself and likening himself to Christ by pushing a nail through his hand. After he pulls Deckard up to the roof in the end (and thus becomes his Saviour), comes "easily the most banal image in the film" (Bukatman 85): Roy releases a white dove towards the sky. Hard to miss as an obvious biblical reference, the shot is still problematic: "Roy is hardly a transcendent figure; he is transgressive" (Bukatman 85). As Bukatman argues, Roy takes on several roles during the film, and as opposed to Deckard, he embodies the postmodern self by being always in flux and never really allowing himself to be easily categorised (Bukatman 80-6).

As it can be seen, the religious atmosphere so prevalent in the novel becomes implicit and suggestive in the film. While it is inconceivable to analyse and interpret *Androids* without looking at Mercerism and Buster Friendly's "crusade" against it, the film's themes and understanding do not hinge on the role of religion. Moreover, as it has been pointed out, *Androids* features a new kind of all-encompassing world religion, while *Blade Runner* works within the iconic framework of reference derived from Western Christianity. The absence of this aspect may be credited to (again) the differences between the two forms of media. For instance, a very visual aspect, which features less prominently in the novel, gains utmost importance in the movie: the image of the city as an urban space. It is this issue that I turn to now, because the setting, especially in the film's case, forecasts the problems to be explored and provides a useful background for further discussion.

3.4 A City in Flames – 2019, Los Angeles

Although the novel is set in 2020, the film takes place in 2019, and the reason is very practical: 2020, to most Americans, is usually associated with medical eyesight-examinations (Bukatman 10). The role of the city itself in the novel is less important than in the film, in fact, only a genetically mutated (and supposedly mentally challenged) character contemplates his environment at any greater length. This is of course not to say that urban space is not represented in the original text; but these descriptive parts usually lack the explicitly (maybe overtly) pluralist attitude of the film.

When J. R. Isidore turns off the TV, he experiences the horror of silence. Sims connects the feelings of Isidore with loneliness and fear of being left alone (77). However, he also points to another aspect of silence, which is the most important (and probably the only

direct) reference to the city in the novel: “universal entropy” (78). Sobchack observes a similar stance towards cities in 1960s and ‘70s American science fiction: “[a]ll is decay and entropy” (82). Dick’s world is characterised by dilapidated buildings, grey and stuffy air, and a menacing emptiness because of the war. Deckard in the *Androids*, however, never really descends into the slums and dirty ghettos that we see in *Blade Runner*. Although he is travelling from place to place, his journey through the city rarely gains more importance than a few sentences. This is perfectly exemplified by Fancher’s original idea to make the movie, in Ridley Scott’s words, “very interior” (de Lauzirika 2007). Scott was not satisfied, and pushed Hampton to think about “what is outside the window”. The dazzling visual world of *Blade Runner* was born out of Scott’s perfectionism. Peoples said in an interview that the script he had to rework was already very good (de Lauzirika 2007); it is this possibility of making a good script without emphatic external scenes illustrates the novel’s relative disinterestedness in the cityscape. The contemporary vision of the future city as a place of entropy definitely influenced Dick, but other themes of the novel (religion, existential ruminations) simply take over and force the examination of the city into the background.

The situation is thoroughly different in the film. “The brilliance of *Blade Runner* ... is located in its visual density.” (Bukatman 8) Scott used the techniques of ‘layering’ (meticulous detail in every shot of the movie) and ‘retrofitting’ (creating a strange technology through masking the old as new) in the creative process, thus wrapping the future of the film in the visual style of 1940s noir cinema (Bukatman 10-21). Scott could not have possibly thought that he would initiate a whole subgenre of science fiction films and literature, now collected under the term “cyberpunk” (Wong 98).

The structure of the science fiction city is very important: “the science fiction film city’s spatial articulations provide the literal premises for the possibilities and trajectory of narrative action” (Sobchack 78). The spatial positions of the characters in a science-fiction city is of utmost importance, as it signifies their social and economic status, as well as their place in the social hierarchy (Redmond 77). No wonder then that androids called replicants are moving on ground level, and Deckard has to leave his (arguably) comfortable flat on the 97th floor to descend into the slums. This structure is the result of years of evolution of the science-fiction urban space, summed up neatly by Subchack (80-4). Verticality as the positive sign of human aspiration in the 1930s is subverted in the ‘40s and ‘50s; the city is either destroyed by an external force (be that an alien or a natural disaster) or it is completely emptied, and becomes obsolete. Later, in the ‘60s and ‘70s the crowded urban landscape often signalled an uncomfortable population density, coupled with the oppressiveness of the state.

She argues that by the 1980s, the ideal utopian setting of life moved away from the centre (usually into outer space and other planets), and this gave way for the repopulation of the imaginary megalopolises by marginalised social groups (83). “[T]he postmodernist city is experienced as having no centre; ... it is hardly surprising that the site [of *Blade Runner*]... is Los Angeles” (Subchack 83).

Yet another writer sees the Los Angeles of 2019 as heavily inspired by Hong Kong (Wong 98). According to Wong, Asian culture permeates the street-level of Scott’s city, which he constantly keeps referring to as ‘Ridleyville’⁷; the urban landscape aestheticizes litter and technological scrap (100). He also emphasizes the importance of the monstrous screens shouting their advertisements while hanging above the citizens as loudspeakers for the consumerist lifestyle; this became a common element in nearly every cyberpunk film (101). Though the amalgamation of the most obvious references to Asian culture may seem obtrusive and overly explicit, Scott draws attention to this city’s hybridity and the plurality of voices in Los Angeles, thus creating a perfect background for the struggles of the replicants (102-3).

What can be seen from this multiplicity of interpretations is that Scott’s Los Angeles is indeed “an urban experience of inexhaustible fluidity” (Bukatman 56). Bukatman presents several possible (and not mutually exclusive) readings of these chaotic surroundings, out of which cyberspace deserves the most attention (48-58). Cyberspace, “the ‘space’ constituted by information technologies” (45), is always in flux and circulates information all the time. “[P]eople are always in a rush, driven by an impossible, inhuman tempo” (Redmond 76) in a science-fiction city – this is much like the world of the internet, the most well-known cyberspace of today. This idea of the city has become a recurring theme in cyberpunk fiction; in some works, it is exaggerated up to a point where the city loses its physical dimensions and exists solely in a digital realm (cf. William Gibson’s *Neuromancer* or Neal Stephenson’s *Snow Crash*).

Deckard explores his own self in the environment sketched in above, so when “reading” *Blade Runner* (and *Androids*, for that matter) one should bear in mind the implications of the cityscape. Scott’s vision is captivating because it may have the potential to enhance the appreciation of the novel. It is now that I turn to the self-exploratory process of Deckard’s identity in the novel and in the film, discussing the implications of his findings towards the relationship between humans and the androids as well.

⁷ This nickname was originally given to the New York Street set at Burbank Studios, which was the set that Scott transformed into 2019 Los Angeles (Bukatman 21).

3.5 “More human than human” – The relationship between humans and androids

The issue pursued below is so complex that it might be useful to divide the next section into a set of subsections. First, I examine the situation of androids in the novel and in the film, and the attitudes towards these artificial beings. Then follows a survey of the implications of these relationships, touching upon issues of gender and postmodern existential anxiety. The third section is a summary of the speculations about the role of memory in the works, a critical point for most academic discussions. In the last subsection I turn to the problem of the ending of the film and possibly the most disputed question concerning *Blade Runner*; namely, whether Deckard is a replicant himself or not.

3.5.1 The postmodern condition – Humans and androids

There is an agreement among critics that the world of *Androids* (and conversely, of *Blade Runner*) is a very good representative of the postmodern condition of the human self, existential problems, and questions of what constitutes humanity as such. Certainly, there are a number of metaphors and themes that problematize the vexations of the postmodern age: the failure of urbanisation, capitalisation, and political structures (McNamara 422-7); religion and community (Galvan 413-4); individualism (Sims 73); definitions of humaneness (Wheale 299-300); the implications of mastery over nature (Telotte 47-8); and multiculturalism (Benesch 381).⁸ Not all critics are eager to call the novel postmodern (McNamara 430), but the subject matter and visual world of *Androids* definitely define it as dealing with postmodern issues, even if its style and narrative structure may not.

In the novel it is heavily emphasized that the androids look exactly like humans, and that they exhibit no distinct external indices of their artificiality. In fact, the novel often maintains narrative tension and exemplifies the treatment of the groups through emphasizing the complete similarity between the two (or, if we count ‘specials’ as well, three) species (Sims 72). We cannot distinguish between human and android, not even through their actions; indeed, the problems start to arise in the novel when the defining borders of humanity are questioned or start to fluctuate. The nature of this border is stated as very important by the official standpoint of the authorities; human empathy is posited as the only human trait that

⁸ It needs to be noted that the scholar’s work is difficult in the sense that all the cited critical works treat these aspects at smaller or greater length, as the topic of this subsection is probably the most researched one. Consequently, my citations refer to the works in which the thoughts feature most prominently.

androids lack. It is only a logical decision the government should differentiate, or more importantly, antagonise the Nexus-6 models. As pointed out in the first part of this paper, Western tradition is both fascinated with and terrified by technology. There is an underlying need to “construct human identity as basically different from the realm of the technological” (Benesch 379), in parallel with the aspiration to create a perfect image of ourselves by even subjugating evolution – it is the consequence of bending nature to our own will that *Androids* is concerned about (Telotte 47). Technological inventions so perfect as Roy Baty or Rachael Rosen may as well question the need for real humans at all (Telotte 48-50). By constantly attempting (and towards the end of the novel, failing more and more frequently) to grasp this division between himself as a human and androids such as Luba Luft, Deckard is searching for the essence of humanity (Wheale 298). It is possible though that he is doomed to failure; maybe technology has escaped from the grip of humanity and Deckard is already living in more or less peaceful coexistence with it (Galvan 428).

The need for a definite borderline (the need for such a test as the Voight-Kampff or the Boneli-test) comes from a deep-seated fear of the cultural Other, and this is exactly the place where the androids stand (Benesch 381). If the machine can “[declare] its right to live as an autonomous self, [that] challenges the very categories of life and selfhood” (Galvan 413), and it is this possibility that Deckard (and for a short period, Phil Resch, an unscrupulous bounty hunter) grapples with. Roy and his “wife” Irmgard seem to care for each other; Rachael has sex with Deckard, and then pushes his beloved goat off the roof (implying that she comprehends the strength of the bond Rick feels towards the poor, biologically “authentic”, creature); Luba Luft enjoys art and asks for a replica of a painting before her death. Such manifestations of love, jealousy and aesthetic appreciation are all instances that Deckard (and especially Resch) deem incongruous with the nature of androids and they stand baffled by them. Since the differences are based on a strictly biological reasoning, “the political authorities [need] to ostracize the android, since [it] directly challenges the individual’s perceived biological mastery over the machines that surround her” (Galvan 419). In sum, the creature threatens the place of its master, a trope recurring in science fiction from the very beginnings (cf. *Frankenstein* or the Golem legend, discussed in section 2.4).

So far little has been said about the film in this section, but much of what has been said is true for the adaptation as well. *Blade Runner*, through the depiction of Deckard as a gloomy, morose, and indifferent character with the help of the visual style and tradition of film noir, succeeds in underlining the dehumanizing effect of tossing another species in danger justified by the implementation of a yardstick that seems more and more fabricated

(Sims 70). Deckard's "morally bankrupt actions and attitudes" (Sims 83) are both helped and induced by dehumanization (Sims 83). However, in the film Deckard finally rewrites his disposition towards the replicants (McNamara 425), and this is the main difference between the Deckard of *Blade Runner* and the Deckard of *Androids*. In the novel Rick, although his world seems to be stirred up, eventually suppresses his doubts; while in the film, Deckard comes to see himself in the replicants and the replicant in himself⁹ (McNamara 432). Rick in the novel has the help of Mercerism and his wife in dealing with these issues, and probably the fact that Rachael kills his precious goat does not help in strengthening his emotions towards androids. Rick in the film has somewhat more positive experiences with the replicants: his emotional void is filled by Rachael, and his life is saved by replicants several times. It may be an interesting question to contemplate whether the Deckard of the novel could himself have the epiphany that the film-Deckard has if his experiences were similar to those of the latter. This issue is pursued in the last major section of my paper.

Some critics argue that the replicants of the film appear in a better light than the androids of the book (McNamara 435-7; Bukatman 68). Indeed, Deckard's search for his self is more emphatic in the film, and thus he becomes much more like a replicant than in the novel (McNamara 437). It is this "collapse of human and replicant consciousness into each other" (McNamara 440) that differentiates the world of *Androids* from the murky streets of 2019. In the film, empathy "ultimately fails as a litmus test for humanity" (Landberg 246), because the Voight-Kampff test would show similar result on Deckard and Batty, as both are empathic creatures at the end (246). Landberg argues that the notion of empathy is based on a difference between subjects (otherwise it would be simply sympathy); henceforth, empathy respects fragmentariness and the multiplicity of voices (246). This implication of a future society based on empathy is clearly missing from the novel, and *Blade Runner* has an interesting twist to the traditional science-fiction formula regarding emotions. In most science fiction films and novels, humans have emotions and machines simply do not; in *Blade Runner*, the evidence for feelings in a creature defines it as human (cf. Voight-Kampff test) (Bukatman 69). Suddenly the task of categorising everyone based on the emotional responses they exhibit grows extremely complicated. The realisation that "feeling, especially in the replicants, is the product of technology" (Ryan, Kellner 51) rhymes with the irony of Mercerism being practiced through a technological instrument in the novel (cf. section 3.3), but this notion is arguably even more marked in the film. In the social and spiritual statuses

⁹ Of course, this may be due to the fact that he himself is actually an android, a possibility explored in section 3.5.4.

outlined above there is already implicitly the topic of the next section, namely how the characters behave in this dark world of suspicion and deception, how they are searching for solutions and new horizons, and what they find in the end.

3.5.2 *Nosce te ipsum*, Rick – The exploration of self and gender issues

A recurring idea in critical works is the possibility that Deckard in the novel struggles with schizophrenia (McNamara 440; Bukatman 67), or at least shows some signs of repressing serious aspects of his personality. It is possible that this is explicitly problematized when Deckard meets Luba Luft (McNamara 434), and has the strangest emotions about her death. When he attaches the Voight-Kampff apparatus to himself, he is not surprised to find a significant emotional reaction to the android's grisly death, and Mercer appears to him even after Buster's exposé, without having to attach himself to the empathy box. Although it is not uncommon in Dick's oeuvre to have a schizophrenic character, I would not necessarily go that far in examining Rick's actions.

Pragmatically speaking, Deckard is in a bad position both in the novel and in the film. In a rather politically incorrect world, which is characterised by racism (McNamara 432) and misogyny (Bukatman 76), he is forced to do his job and keep on killing androids. In the novel, the reasons are mostly financial; in the film, mostly social. I certainly am not trying to acquit him of his vices, but it is only understandable that he acts in strange ways sometimes. In the beginning, especially in the film, Deckard seems to be sure of who he is and what his duties are (Knight, McKnight 23); in other words, he is a "rational agent" (Knight, McKnight 32). No wonder that his world is shaken when he not only realizes that he is caught up in the "mystery concerning [his] own [identity]" (Knight, McKnight 24), but that he may easily be a replicant himself. In order to retain the coherence of his own self, Deckard must examine what constitutes the notion of humanity. As it turns out, he can discover this through the replicants (Knight, McKnight 27). In the novel, this rediscovery of self happens through completing his mission, "[b]ut given his growing compassion for the creatures he has been consigned to hunt, why does the narrative require, finally, that he complete his mission?" (Galvan 426). He has to go through with his assignment because only by completely alienating himself from humanity and distancing himself from the others (i.e. through self-dehumanization) can he come to the conclusion that he is in fact a postmodern hybrid self (Galvan 426; McNamara 432; Bukatman 68). In the film, his quest for self-definition is initiated and supported by his emotions for Rachael (Schelde 237). She has a radically

different role in the adaptation, which is examined later, but for now it is enough to say that her relationship with Deckard is consummated at the end of the movie, even if their future seems insecure.

Indeed very complex issues arise in connection with the characters' identities and relationships. Although some aspects may feature more prominently in either *Androids* or *Blade Runner*, the image of searching for self-definition and finding that self complex and fragmented (Galvan 424) is very similar. Both works provoke a view of the self as constant negotiation (Benesch 390), because identity is always an agreement of the self and the Other (388), as Deckard promptly learns at the end.

The other problem often raised in connection with *Androids* and *Blade Runner* is their treatment of women. McNamara notes that the plotline of *Androids* is mostly a "contest of masculinities" (435) and he calls attention to the phallic imagery of the novel as well (436). Another noteworthy observation is that "the novel characterizes women almost exclusively by the shape of their breasts" (McNamara 438). Several critics argue, however, that the film is much more complicated in this respect, and that it offers more room for interpretation (McNamara 438; Bukatman 76), even though it has come under attack as well. As I see it, *Blade Runner* can be seen as both sexist and as critically representative of sexism (McNamara 438).

Both works "[link] masculinity with violence and ... a repressive social order" (McNamara 438). However, it can be argued that the film subverts traditional gender roles by turning some of them around; for example, Deckard is nearly killed twice by fierce replicant-amazons (McNamara 438). As Ryan and Kellner phrase it elegantly: "[a]lthough the film contains several sexist moments ..., it can also be read as depicting the construction of female subjectivity under patriarchy as something pliant and submissive as well as threatening and 'castratory'" (52).

The love scene of Rachael and Rick is the most debated in this respect. It seems to me generally accepted that Deckard quasi-rapes Rachael (Ryan, Kellner 52; McNamara 442, note 10; Barad 28; Wheale 303). The scene in its final form in the film definitely invites that interpretation, as Rachael seems to be able to experience her femininity only through a man's instructions; her transition from replicant to woman is only possible because Deckard treats her accordingly. However, there are two interesting points to be considered here. First, Rachael's memory implants are known to come from Tyrell's 16-year-old niece, and the question arises whether a 16-year-old of the niece's social standing is likely to have had genuine sexual experiences. In other words, maybe Rachael *does* need instructions on how to

behave in the situation, but the style of that instruction (brutal force, as noted by Barad 28) still remains questionable. The second problem is that the scene is heavily cut in the final version, and in its original length, after the violent start it is quite sensuous and erotic. In Fencher's words, they "went explicit" (de Lauzirika 2007). The scene in its full version somewhat loses its 'rape-edge'; the question still remains of course, whether we are justified in taking deleted sequences into consideration in our reading. On the other hand, the film had such a bumpy road to gaining its final form (strictly speaking, the final version only premiered in 2007) that maybe it would be useful to revisit these issues in the light of this.

So far the physical, the spiritual, and the social circumstances have been taken into account for the scrutiny of the characters, and the consequences of the complex interplay between these settings have been demonstrated. For a comprehensive context, however, one important aspect remains to be investigated: the psychological. The next section looks at an indispensable element of this ultimate component; this element appears to be so pervasive, in fact, that the entire discussion of the psychological background is dedicated to the exploration of this sole issue: memory.

3.5.3 Read-Only Memory – The role of memory implants

Memory is central and ubiquitous in both works, although it gains a more significant role (again, because of the possibilities of the visual medium) in the film. It is ultimately seen as a huge chunk in the construction of the self, and in the meantime, a construction itself (Bukatman 78-9). It is not a surprise then that the characters have so much trouble pinning down their identities; when the nature of memory is taken into account as well, the self is revealed as having indeed shaky foundations.

Landsberg calls the androids' memories "prosthetic memories" (239), because they are not created in the process of actual experience. If we take memory to be the trustworthy sign of an event having taken place in reality, it is utterly confounding and terrifying when it is revealed to be false (Landsberg 239). Memory in *Blade Runner* can be seen as not reminiscent of the past, but as a "generative force" (Landsberg 239). In this manner, it is not the lack of empathy that gives away the androids, but the lack of genuine memory (Landsberg 244) – they cannot form complex personalities because they only have a few scanty snapshots of their "past", just enough to "give them a false sense of themselves" (Knight, McKnight 29). Yet, all the replicants hold on to their prosthetic memories, because they simply cannot do otherwise (Landsberg 240). In fact, they should not either; in the film, prosthetic memory is

gradually accepted and demonstrated as a perfect source for one's actions and identity (Landsberg 244). Moreover, by hinting at Deckard being a replicant himself, Scott makes a huge gesture towards blurring the qualitative judgement between real and artificial memories (Landsberg 244).

The reason for planting artificial memories into the replicants besides creating a good illusion of a human being (Bukatman 78) may be to make them controllable as well (Knight, McKnight 29). As mentioned above, the replicants will cling to these implants and rely on them, because they have nothing else to go by; so it is the assumption of Tyrell that a set of memories that are complex enough would suffice to control the personalities of his creations (Knight, McKnight 30). However, we learn soon enough that this is far from the case; in fact, the force that governs the replicants is their emotional life, not the cognitive side of their memory (Knight, McKnight 30). In sum, the emotional life plays a greater role in their actions than their memories of uncertain origin (Knight, McKnight 345). Though this statement may seem in contradiction with the argument of Landsberg, both attitudes to memory reveal the same underlying notion of postmodern thinking: "history is devalued as a guarantor of truth, stability and unified meaning" (Bukatman 80).

The role of memory is less emphasized in the novel. Even though androids have memory implants in the source text as well, they are revealed as far less important than in the case of the replicants. First of all, we do not meet any android that *actually* thinks it is a human; the sole candidate, Rachael, reveals herself to having been completely aware of her origin way before Deckard's Voight-Kampff test is administered to her. Secondly, the only character whose memories at one point appear doubtful to the reader is Deckard, when he is escorted to the fake police station. These issues appear here to support my claim about memory playing quite a different role in the adaptation; they are elaborated on in section 3.6. Before going into further detail about them, however, I address the last scenes of *Blade Runner*, as a closure for the discussion of the intricate relationship between humans and androids.

3.5.4 Show us what you're made of! – Is Deckard a replicant?

The topic of this subsection is the ending of the film, mainly because it is more dubious than that of the novel. The final pages of *Androids*, though they are quite symbolic, do not raise questions as to Deckard's identity or the future of the androids. The implications of the ending of the novel centre around two themes: religion and society. Deckard can imagine himself as

part of a posthuman community (Galvan 426), traditional gender roles are re-established (McNamara 437), and Deckard seems to be in peace with everything (he does not ask for his “mood organ” to calm him down). He may not be happy with the status quo, but he would not stand insecurity either. When he finds out that the toad (an animal of immense value that he finds in the desert) is fake, he is not furious; he simply says that it is good that he knows. He does not mind living along with fakes (that includes androids as well), as long as he is sure of their true identity. He may seem to prefer to keep the categories of “organic” and “mechanical” separated, but he is not frightened of the Other anymore (McNamara 441).

The ending of the novel has not received as much attention as that of the film, and this is understandable. Reactions to the film were at first negative with critics describing the last scene as “tacky” (Wheale 304) and “rightly condemned escapist” (McNamara 443). With this ending, the film celebrates individualism and “[longs] for the certainty of some natural order or a past that is imagined to be simpler and more comprehensible” (McNamara 443). In this last thought, one may discover an implicit critique of the ending of the novel as well. However, Scott’s original vision plants the seed in the audience’s head that Rick may be an advanced combat model himself, and this is the possibility that is examined here.

The “elevator-ending” (Deckard and Rachael simply enter a lift together after Deckard finds Gaff’s origami figure) leaves the viewer wondering. Was this a critique of racism and social oppression or a call to start redefining ourselves in the postmodern age (McNamara 443)? If Deckard is a replicant, that can explain a lot of practical things; for instance, why he was able to eliminate and fight (more or less on his own) four Nexus-6 models, known to be superior to humans in every practical way? Why does he obviously feel sympathy for Rachael from their first encounter? After all, Zhora and Pris are just as attractive as Rachael is; if Deckard’s attraction towards Rachael involves only physical desire in the beginning, he could easily have had problems killing the other pretty replicants. Therefore, his affection for Rachael must stem from other feelings towards her; maybe her hopelessness and disdain strike a chord with Rick’s deeply buried replicant self.

Scott definitely wanted Deckard to be a replicant (Bukatman 80); but he “has his own infatuation with false complexity” (McNamara 435, note 6). There are numerous clues as to Deckard’s true identity, deliberately hidden in the film; of course, some hints are more obvious than others. The most well-known example is the unicorn-sequence and Gaff’s origami figure that he leaves in Deckard’s apartment in the end. Other signs include examples as follows: Deckard’s apparently deep and unexplained knowledge of Rachael’s memory implants and a photograph in Deckard’s possession that is similar to one of Leon’s (Knight,

McKnight 25); the striking similarity between Deckard and the first blade runner that we see (are they the same model?), between the buildings that Deckard and Tyrell live in, between Deckard's and the replicants' eyes (Bukatman 81); the piano-playing skills that Deckard and Rachael share, and Rachael's taunts towards Deckard regarding the Voight-Kampff test (Abrams 14); and the list goes on. Despite all the convincing evidence though, all this investigation may be completely misguided. Bukatman argues that the remaining ambiguity is a conscious artistic decision on the part of Scott and that it is indispensable in interpretation (80-2). Indeed, if we incontestably unmask Deckard as a replicant, what we are left with is arguably an "uninteresting do-I-wake-up-or-do-I sleep puzzle" (McNamara 435, note 6).

3.6 These are not the androids you are looking for – The underground android society

In this last section I examine an episode in the novel that was left out from the film, a part that I truly believe to be the key to the thematic difference between *Androids* and *Blade Runner*. In the first subsection, Rachael's role is briefly looked at in the novel, an aspect that was left out from previous discussion for simplicity's sake. In the second subsection, the aftermath of Luba Luft's first interrogation is examined, dealing with its possible implications as well.

3.6.1 *Cherchez la femme* – Rachael's role in the novel

The Rachael of the film has been widely discussed by critics – she has been seen as the novel's emotional centre (Schelde 437), the initiator of self-exploration (Knight, McKnight 25), and the embodiment of gender criticism (Bukatman 76). What is surprising to me is that even criticism that is directly concerned with the novel barely touches upon her quite active and rather negative role in *Androids*, even though many interesting observations can be made about her in reflection to the film's depiction.

Rachael is first encountered as the niece of Eldon Rosen, the head of one of the android factories in the novel. (The fact that there are other manufacturers mentioned is in itself noteworthy, because it further emphasizes the diverse nature of artificial humans.) Deckard goes there to give the Voight-Kampff questionnaire a test run on a mixed selection of androids and humans in order to establish the method's validity. However, when he "diagnoses" Rachael as an android, he is told that she is in fact a human, raised aboard a spaceship in isolation. The shocked Deckard refuses to believe this, and with a brilliant second turn of examination, unveils that she is in fact an android, and the corporation just

wanted to hold him in their hands for financial and political reasons by making him believe that the test can produce false results. Deckard leaves an agitated Rachael, seemingly shocked by the news that her memories are all just implants.

However, later in the novel, after Deckard and Rachael engage in a physical relationship, Rachael tells Deckard that she knew about her origin the whole time, and his uncle has used her several times before to incriminate, blackmail, and thus control other bounty hunters. With this in mind, the Rachael of the novel appears as a completely different person, a rather cunning woman who uses her sexuality as a weapon. She even kills Deckard's poor goat, possibly to spite him. This Rachael is indeed very different from the shy girl in the film, under a femme fatale masquerade. The novel's Rachael is not only confident about her identity, but uses it in power machinations; her physical attractiveness does not make her a victim, in fact, it helps her manipulate human men.

What might be the reason for this distortion of her character, besides the improbable idea that Scott just wanted to create a romantic affair into the story? I believe it is deeply connected to the existence of the fake police station, a hugely important place in the novel, a place that has been somewhat neglected in comparative criticism.

3.6.2 Dorothy, this isn't Kansas anymore – The other police station

In the novel, after interviewing Luba Luft¹⁰ Deckard is seized by a policeman (Officer Crams) on the request of Luba, and he is escorted to a police station indeed very different from his workplace. It is pointed out by Bukatman that this is the instance in the story when Deckard's identity and sanity are called into question (81), because he does not remember the place at all. Suddenly, the reader starts wondering whether Deckard's memories are implants as well, though we receive an explanation from him right away (which at this point, we either believe or not). The situation becomes uncanny when he meets Officer Garland, a high-ranking chief of the department: Garland informs him that he, Garland, is the next assignment on Deckard's hit list, and that Deckard's previous victim (Polokov) was actually a human. They summon Phil Resch, another bounty hunter, to clarify the situation, because Garland suspects that Deckard is a dangerous android hunting down officials. Rick and Phil agree that they would mutually test each other (as well as Garland), but before Phil leaves for his own test

¹⁰ For a very interesting analysis of the power relations and political implications of the scene, see Galvan 419-422.

equipment, the results of a bone marrow analysis run on Polokov's body arrive: he was an android.

While Phil is gone, Garland confesses to Deckard that the police station is actually completely run by androids who escaped to Earth long before the Batys and their company did. They have been working to protect their newly arrived peers, and to obstruct the functioning of the real authorities; Garland even claims that Resch is an android as well (later this is proved to be a last ditch effort on his side to turn the two bounty hunters against each other). Phil comes back, and he shoots Garland when the latter attacks him. Phil and Rick leave together, with heart in throat as they exit the eerie station. In sum, the scene outlined above depicts an active, underground agency of androids working together in cooperation (and quite surprisingly, showing a degree of empathy towards each other).

No doubt, the film also depicts the "demonization of androids" (McNamara 432) which is paralleled with the United States' social and political public discourse regarding non-white people (McNamara 431). Ethnic pluralism also appears in the film, emphasizing that replicants are only different because they are treated differently, not because of any real, biological reason (Bukatman 74-6). Schelde offers a similar interpretation of replicants as either African-Americans or more generally, "the folklore heroes up against the mechanical dragon" (238). Avila sees 2019 Los Angeles as a subversion of the multicultural US, where marginalised social groups are still on the periphery, struggling with the historical remnants of a white political elite (96). However, I suppose that the situation is quite different in the novel, which can be attributed to the effect of the Civil Rights Movements in the 1950s and '60s in the United States.

In 1953, Rosa Sparks refused to give her place up in favour of a white person, and this symbolic act is often viewed as the ignition point for the process in the United States that later came to be known as the Civil Rights Movements (Blumberg xvii). The following period saw the emergence of equality protests among all marginalised social groups, including African-Americans, Native Americans, Hispanics, the gay community, the young generations, and last but not least, women (Magyarics 127-132). Counterculture was flourishing, charismatic leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm Little (later to be known as Malcolm X) dominated the political discourse, backed up by the growing public dissatisfaction with and incomprehension of the Vietnam War (Magyarics 118-126). However, the movements abruptly ended when Martin Luther King was shot and Richard Nixon was elected President in the same year, in 1968 (Magyarics 129). Nixon successfully discredited the Civil Rights

Movements, and his public discourse was so successful that his ideas stuck in the collective consciousness of the citizens for decades to come (Magyarics 129).

Malcolm X is described in the Foreword of his “autobiography” by Alex Haley as a consistent, uncompromising, strict, and at the same time, extremely emotional and passionate person (Haley 11-78). He became a prominent figure of Elijah Muhammad’s Nation of Islam (or more commonly known, Black Muslim) organization after he was released from prison in 1952 (Blumberg 124). Malcolm X and his group advocated a healthy and abstinent lifestyle, pride in ethnic identity, separation from the oppressive white majority, and most importantly, self-defence against racist attacks (Blumberg 124-5). However, Malcolm X was debarred from the community of Black Muslims, and he formed his own organisation; his radical ideas struck a chord with many African-Americans who were tired of King’s nonviolent peaceful approach, and he was on the other hand feared by the white elite (Blumberg 125). His assassination in 1965 left the movement beheaded, and even though there were several attempts to establish a group in the likeness of his (most notably, the infamous Black Panthers), his legacy never really reached its full potential (Blumberg 126; Morrison 84-91).

Could Dick have been aware of these movements when he wrote *Androids* in 1968? The answer is a definite yes. Jakaitis in his analysis, even though his focus is another work of Dick’s, establishes Dick as a writer who has a “sense of a deep, personal connection to African-Americans and a desire to express his moral outrage at racial injustice” (191). *Androids*, through its narrative, seeks a solution to racial and social problems (Jakaitis 191); and according to Jakaitis, “Dick’s imaginary interventions to excise an irrefutable Real that denies resolution of ... social contradictions” (191), in the end, fail to accomplish their author’s agenda (191). I have to differ here, because eventually when Deckard and Resch escape the police station, they only kill Garland. There are many more androids (possibly even Nexus-6 models) in the building than what the two of them could deal with. Their escape hinges on the discovery of Garland’s elimination by the other “officers”; and after they exit, there is no mentioning of the fake police station at all. The reader does not know what happens to the counterfeit agency; it is not at all improbable that they keep on functioning without a problem – after all, they only lost one member, and the exhausted Deckard at the end of the novel does not seem to be the likely candidate for their termination.

Finally, another intriguing connection to a phenomenon called “passing” at the time of racial segregation in the United States can be observed in a conversation between Pris, Isidore, and Roy; “passing” used to refer to pale-skinned people of African-American or other ethnic origin secretly integrating into the oppressive white society (cf. Nella Larsen’s brilliant

novel *Passing*). After they learn of the death of Polokov, Garland, and Luba, the androids remark that they are “different” and Roy says that their recently eliminated fellows “were so goddamn sure they could pass” (Dick 129). I think that Dick uses this term here in order to allude to a social practice that Malcolm X himself mentions in his autobiography (phrased by Alex Haley): “I’m told that there are in America today between two and five million ‘white Negroes’, who are ‘passing’ in white society.” (383) Malcolm then goes on to say that the situation of these people must be the most horrible, because they live in constant fear of being exposed and they have to listen to derogatory racist comments made by white people in their presence every day (Haley 383). I reckon it is not an invalid leap to connect Luba Luft, for example, and the “passing” African-Americans of the 20th century United States.

It may seem far-fetched to draw a parallel between the fake police station and the radical wing of the Civil Rights Movements, or between Garland and Malcolm X. The narrative, however, is very similar: members of a marginalised social group keep together and protect themselves against the external oppressive forces, and they keep on functioning even after their leader is dead. To me, this seems to be more than mere coincidence. Moreover, the figure of Rachael also points to the androids being active and organised agents in the novel, quite different from the guerrilla-fighter replicants of the film. It needs to be noted that there are no visible minorities in the novel (or in the film), but that just makes Dick’s point even clearer: we are, after all, all of the same essence.

The reason for the change of attitudes between the two works is probably the emerging idea of a postmodern society hand in hand with multiculturalism and pluralism, as it has been argued previously in the essay. What *Androids* and *Blade Runner* become together then is a beautiful composite work of science-fiction art telling us about the societal changes in the United States (and in the world as well) and standing as a memento for the eternal hope for social evolution and prosperity.

4. Conclusion

There is much left to be said about *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* and *Blade Runner*; probably this is the reason for their lasting academic as well as popular appeal. I have tried to demonstrate that they perfectly fit together as two sides of the same coin, looked at with the interval of 14 years. The historical exploration of the robot and artificial intelligence that set the scene for *Androids* to be born was examined in the first part; the second part looked at the postmodern age, or rather, on the edge between the modern and the

postmodern age of science fiction. I am fully aware that the task of offering definite answers to the questions that have been raised is out of the scope of this essay – out of the scope of any essay, probably.

The historical introduction provides an overview of how an initially interesting and highly speculative idea (i.e. the creation of an artificial human) came to be one of the most captivating motifs of 19th and 20th century science-fiction literature. The section traces the android back to Paracelsus and Joseph Golem, and finishes with a discussion of the Cold War nuclear scare, suggesting that by the 1950s robots and other AI creatures ceased to be subjects who are reduced to existing in a far-fetched, pseudo-scientific imaginative world.

It is easy to notice, looking at the weight and length of section 3.5 in my paper, that the problems of the postmodern identity and the exploration of the self have been in the focus of the vast majority of critical works that chose *Androids* or *Blade Runner* as their subject matter. I think that the arguments presented lend support to the idea that the works in question are not just brainless science-fiction action-flicks, regardless of how often they are sadly condemned as such. The last section is an attempt to take this notion even further, and suggests that artistic decisions can be indeed traced back to important societal changes, even if these decisions are not explicitly stated to be the results of real-life events.

Set as a tentative aim of my paper in the introduction, I tried to shed light on why it is fruitful to look at directorial decisions in *Blade Runner* while taking into account on the one hand the discrepancies between the original material and the film and, on the other hand, the non-fictional context as well. It is fascinating how a critically neglected episode can be unveiled as the main candidate for serving as the key for one of the central aspects of both works, the postmodern society. In the lengthy survey of the critical literature, I tried to give a glimpse of my own ideas, aspiring to perhaps offer a new aspect of the works or pinpoint issues that have not been fully considered. If this has been even partially successful, I am content.

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