

“Replicant” Heroes and Human Anti-Heroes in Philip K. Dick’s *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* and Ridley Scott’s *Blade Runner*

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The purpose of this paper is to examine Philip K. Dick’s novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* and Ridley Scott’s film adaptation *Blade Runner*, with a view to highlighting the way that their leading characters are portrayed. Although neither the novel nor the film is lacking heroic figures, this role is not given to the protagonists but to secondary characters who, due to their empathic traits, are better fit to play this part. As opposed to them, both Dick and Scott’s protagonists are flat characters who do not undergo a noteworthy development in the course of the story.

Keywords: hero; android; replicant; empathy; blade runner; protagonist; real.

Often described by critics as a “humorous, exaggerating, excessive, restless, gloomy, unquenchable writer, affectionate and cynical, empathetic and paranoid, pontificating and undecided” (Palmer, 2003: viii), Philip K. Dick was probably one of the most brilliant and prolific American writers. Comprising forty novels and more than two hundred short stories, Dick’s work emanates a constant feeling of paranoia, hysteria and entrapment. Witty, frightening and hallucinatory, his novels explore issues such as the power of empathy, the different levels of reality and the nature of the human self, issues which were generated by the author’s schizoid personality disorder and his addiction to *psychedelic drugs*.

The “Dickian” characters are in tune with this chaotic world in which they are set, for they experience disorientation and desolation, as well. Caught in a delusory reality, Philip K. Dick’s personages are forced to deal with the uncertainty of not knowing who they are and what their purpose in the world is. Moreover, these characters are not heroes capable of saving the day. They are ordinary “Joes”, minor clerks and simple bureaucrats who, despite their flaws, refuse to declare themselves defeated by the pressures imposed by both the society and the technology that seek to control their existence. They act impulsively, often contradicting their own intentions, and they sometimes lack emotional reactions or behave without minding the consequences. Nevertheless, they are not predictable characters, but they are constantly open for analysis and debates, as it can be seen in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, one of Philip K. Dick’s most renowned literary works.

Published in 1968, the novel focuses on the unnatural relationship that is formed between the human being and the artificial construct, and on the latter’s ability of expressing empathy. Set in the future of a polluted Earth devastated by World War Terminus, the novel depicts twenty-four hours in the life of bounty hunter Rick Deckard. Hired by the San Francisco police department to retire five androids that have escaped from the colonised world of Mars, Deckard’s

mission is hampered by the fact that his targets closely resemble the humans in outward appearance. In his quest for the running androids, Rick is guided by one particular feature which helps him separate the machines from the human race: the androids' alleged lack of empathy. Equipped with an unverified empathy test entitled the Voigt-Kampff test, Rick Deckard's job is to distinguish the humans from the androids, as the latter are perceived as a threat to humanity. The story reaches its climax when the borderline between the humans and the machines is blurred as a result of Deckard's newly discovered empathetic feelings towards his targets, feelings which make him doubt the veracity of the distinction between humans and androids.

Despite the fact that *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* is a deep and complex novel, it reached fame fourteen years after its publication, when director Ridley Scott adapted Dick's work into the *Blade Runner* movie. First released in 1982, revised and reissued ten years later as a "director's cut," *Blade Runner* was voted the "Third Most Favourite Science Fiction Film of All Times (following *Star Wars* and *2001: A Space Odyssey*) at the World Science Fiction Convention" (Bukatman, 2002: 36). Compared to the original theatrical edition, the director's cut illustrates more faithfully Ridley Scott's version of a future in which human life is able to create artificial life. It differs from the 1982 release in three fundamental features: it removes the leading actor's explanatory voice-overs, it inserts a dream sequence of a unicorn, and it replaces the studio-imposed happy ending with a more ambiguous one, in which the protagonist's identity as an artificial construct is suggested. Unfortunately, although the film's release sparked the rediscovery of Philip K. Dick's works, the author did not get to see *Blade Runner* for he died a few months before the official release.

Although it is a film adaptation of Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, *Blade Runner* did not remain faithful to the original source which inspired it. The work of Ridley Scott, a director known for favouring the style and symbolism over plot and realism and for focusing more on mood than on his heroes, *Blade Runner* ignores almost completely the psychological depth of its source. Nevertheless, the two works share one common trait: neither the novel nor the film adaptation portray Rick Deckard, the main character, as a hero.

A writer fascinated by the valuation of the individual subject, Philip K. Dick underlined in his work the traits that make us truly human as opposed to the evil, which, in his view, is embodied by the lack of empathy. Defined as "an affective response more appropriate to someone else's situation than to one's own" (Farrow and Woodruff, 2007: 4), empathy is a theme that the writer used throughout his career. In *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, for instance, empathy is a crucial element used to distinguish the humans, the positive characters, from the androids, their antagonists. Convinced that the machines will never be able to experience this special feeling, Philip K. Dick endows his human characters with this trait as opposed to the androids, which, despite their well-developed intellect, are incapable of caring. The artificial constructs' lack of empathy is what, in the author's view, makes them a potential threat to the human population. Former slaves modelled as mature individuals that never age, the androids represent a menace to the mankind because of their "lack in conscience, moral sense, guilt and human sympathy" (Wheale, 1995: 105). In the author's view, these constructs emanate coldness, a deplorable feeling "like (...) a breath from the vacuum between inhabited worlds, in fact from nowhere" (Dick, 1996: 67), a fact which clearly sets them as the novel's anti-heroes.

Nevertheless, in spite of the android's lack of empathy, the similarities between the humans and the machines are striking throughout *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*. In the first scene in which we are introduced to the main character, detective Rick Deckard, he is debating with his wife, Iran, what "setting" to dial on their Penfield mood organ. "Forget what you've scheduled and I'll forget what I've scheduled; we'll dial a 104 together and both experience it, and then you stay in it while I reset mine for my usual business like attitude" (1996: 6), utters Deckard, in an attempt to convince his spouse to give up her twice a month scheduled depression, dialled as a means of preventing a future mental illness caused by the "absence of appropriate effect" (1996: 5). The scene shocks not only through the revelation that the frame of mind is artificially induced,

but also through the author's choice of assigning a number to each feeling and emotion, a method which makes the artificial simulation even more impersonal. Surprisingly, moods, empathy in particular, are thought to differentiate androids from humans. In Dick's novel, however, the line between these two entities is slightly blurred, which makes it difficult for us to identify Rick Deckard as the hero of the novel. The Penfield mood organ strips the human characters of their humanity, leaving them as devoid of feelings as the androids are, for both Deckard and Iran experience emotions not by interacting and responding to others or to each other, but by artificially inducing them.

Compared to Philip K. Dick's novel, *Blade Runner* misses almost entirely the psychological depth of its source, thus failing to depict one of the author's most enticing explorations, that of the human capacity for empathy. A film which "looks terrific but is empty at its core" (quoted in Bukatman, 2002: 33), as it has been described by Gene Siskel in *Chicago Tribune*, Ridley Scott's 1992 *Blade Runner (The Director's Cut)* focuses more on "eye candy" than on the psychological aspects that Dick approached in his prose. Through the adapting process, novels undergo visual and structural filters and transformations, often compromising their basic meaning and experienced perception. Thus, many important elements of the book ended up being discarded in *Blade Runner*, as part of that compromise, elements such as Deckard's marital problems, the Penfield organ or the extinction of animal life. In addition, the names for the protagonist's profession and of his targets – "detective," "bounty hunter" and "android" – were replaced, due to their lack of evocative meaning, with "blade runner" and "replicant," two unexplained terms. The choice of words faithfully illustrates Ridley Scott's tastes for unfamiliar terminology, the director being notorious for his intriguing combinations of the suggestive and the specific.

The process of conversion from novel to film also plays an important part in the manner in which the characters are depicted. A writer who preferred authenticity instead of heroism, Philip K. Dick created characters that are ordinary people who occasionally have the opportunity of doing extraordinary things. Rick Deckard, for example, the main character of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, is an unhappily married bounty hunter, who routinely executes androids as a means to afford animals. Compared to him, Ridley Scott's character is the typical Hollywood hero, the knight in shining armour destined to save the damsel in distress. An action figure, Rick Deckard (Harrison Ford) is portrayed in *Blade Runner* as the lonely unattached bachelor who is involved in a romantic relationship with the replicant Rachael Tyrell (Sean Young), whom he tries to save from Gaff, the movie's second blade runner. Therefore, as opposed to Hollywood's big screen, which prefers extraordinary and good looking, "bigger-than-life" figures, Philip K. Dick's personages encapsulate the trials of human beings living in a technological society.

However, even though the champion in Ridley Scott's movie seems to be the blade runner, for he is the one who gets to save the damsel in distress, we are soon proven that he is as devoid of humanity as Philip K. Dick's main character is, and that he fails to act as hero. The scenes in which the two bounty hunters, the novel's police officer and the film's blade runner, are depicted performing their duty of killing artificial constructs, are key elements of the two narratives' blurred distinction between humans and androids. While in Ridley Scott's movie, the lack of empathy towards an artificial construct is the key factor which suggests that the protagonist is not exactly a hero, in Dick's work, the situation is reversed. When the novel's protagonist realizes that he started to feel empathy towards a machine, the discrepancy between the human beings and their antagonists, the androids, becomes less clear.

Hired to retire five Nexus-6 androids that have escaped from Mars and have found refuge on Earth, Philip K. Dick's bounty hunter begins to ponder over the nature of the artificial constructs. If after killing his first target, Polokov, an android which has disguised himself as a police officer, Rick Deckard feels the need to call his wife and to tell her about the consequences of his deed, a gesture which suggests the fact that he is starting to feel remorse towards the artificial constructs, the murder of his second victim, Luba Luft, at an exhibition of Edvard Munch's paintings, raises serious questions regarding the distinction between androids and humans.

Drawn by the painter's *Puberty* artwork, attraction explained by the fact that the android never experienced this developmental stage (Wheale, 1995: 106), Luba's features resemble those of an inanimate object when facing Deckard and Gaff, her executioners: "Her eyes faded and the colour dimmed from her face, leaving it cadaverous, as if already starting to decay. As if life had in an instant retreated to some point far inside her, leaving the body to its automatic ruin" (1995: 131). When the bounty hunter's laser beam pierces her stomach, Luba's still face morphs into one of Munch's most famous paintings: "she began to scream; she lay crouched against the wall of the elevator, screaming. Like the picture ... [Then, her] body fell forward, face-down, in a heap" (1995: 134). Her reaction puzzles Deckard. From one angle, the android resembles "a motionless illusion of lifelikeness, artfully constructed and ultimately lifeless. From another angle, Luba Luft comes across as a twisted portrait of subjectivity so forceful, so raw, that the frame of portrayal itself is nearly brought to life despite its explicit unreality" (Chu, 2010: 223). This duality blurs the bounty hunter's vision of humans and androids and makes him regret that he had "retired" Luba Luft, thus realizing that he is feeling empathy towards an artificial construct. "She was a wonderful singer. The planet could have used her. This is insane" (Dick, 1996: 136), states Deckard, witnessing the opera singer's violent death.

Similarly, when Rick telephones the office after having retired all the androids, his secretary informs him: "Inspector Bryant has been trying to get hold of you. I think he's turning your name over to Chief Cutter for a citation. Because you retired those six" (1996: 234). To this message, Deckard bluntly replies: "I know what I did" (1996: 234). His gesture of interrupting the woman's speech before she refers to the retired artificial constructs as "androids" or "skin-jobs," suggests that he has come to view these entities in a new light. Although he does not call the androids "humans", the scene implies that Deckard no longer considers the line separating the human beings from the machines as being so clearly demarcated. "So much for the distinction between authentic living humans and humanoid constructs", reflects Deckard (1996: 142). The more Philip K. Dick's protagonist empathizes and identifies with the androids, the more it is suggested that he might be a machine as well, since it has been proven throughout the book that these artificial beings are only capable of empathizing with each other.

While in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* the distinction between androids and human beings is blurred due to Rick Deckard's sudden sympathy and compassion towards the artificial constructs, in *Blade Runner* this confusion is generated by the leading character's obvious lack of empathy. "A man of two minds about everything" (quoted in Kerman, 1997: 232), as Harrison Ford described him, Rick Deckard is probably the less humane figure of the movie, a fact which is successfully emphasised in the scenes in which he retires the escaped replicants. Compared to Dick's protagonist, Ridley Scott's character feels no remorse when he murders Zhora, Luba Luft's counterpart in the film. The violence with which the blade runner kills the replicant becomes artful under Ridley Scott's direction. After a visually exciting and physically challenging chase on Los Angeles's crowded, neon-lighted streets – as opposed to the desolate atmosphere depicted in Philip K. Dick's work – Deckard shoots Zhora in the back, to the viewers' dismay. Unarmed, dressed in a black bikini, a metallic bra, boots and a transparent vinyl coat, the woman seems vulnerable to Deckard's handgun. When shot, the replicant crashes in slow motion through multiple glass panels of store window, under the gaze of inanimate mannequins displayed in the adjoining glass cases, as to suggest the fact that she has been driven back to her object status.

Another replicant who is brutally murdered in *Blade Runner*, under the gaze of inanimate dummies, is Pris. Hosted in the house of J. R. Sebastian, a genetic designer who works for Tyrell Corporation, the company that builds replicants, Pris disguises herself as a puppet, in order to hide from Rick Deckard. In the scene where the replicant tries to kill the blade runner, she clearly shows resentment towards her status as an artificial construct. Pris squeezes Deckard's head with her legs in an attempt to break his neck, an action which alludes to the birth process. "Here, instead of a male baby's head emerging from between his mother's legs, an adult male's life is threatened when his head is almost crushed by the legs of a female who does not have a mother" (Barr,

1997: 26). Her physical appearance – blond, messy hair and cold, blue eyes covered by a black make-up raccoon mask, which creates a disturbing frame for her visage –, in contrast with her mechanical, acrobatic moves, gives her a very inhuman look. Nevertheless, in spite of Pris's artificial look, her death throes, which are emphasized by the convulsive moves of her body and by the red blood that oozes from her torso, make us, the audience, sensitive to her pain. While we wince at her death, Deckard, as in Zhora's case, remains untouched by the murder he commits, a fact which, once again, suggests that he might not be the movie's true hero.

Therefore, the two media, the novel and its film adaptation, suggest, through different coating layers, that Rick Deckard is far from being a hero. While in the novel his dependence on technology, in order to generate affection, and the empathy that he feels towards the androids suggest that he might be a machine as well, in *Blade Runner* the roles are reversed. It is the protagonist's lack of empathy that puts him in a negative light, thus causing the viewers' aversion towards this character. The slight possibility of Rick Deckard being one of the "chitinous reflex-machines who aren't really alive" (Dick, 1996: 193) that he is paid to "retire" highlights his anti-hero traits. Throughout the novel and the film we are given important clues that the bounty hunter might also be an artificial construct.

In *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, for instance, the character that openly calls Rick a humanoid robot is the opera singer, Luba Luft. "Then (...) you must be an android" (1996: 102), she utters, in an attempt to play with the bounty hunter's mind. In addition, the confusion deepens when Deckard, after making contact with Luba, is taken to a police station that he has never seen, which is staffed by androids and led by Inspector Garland, who, after a long conversation with Rick, reveals that both he (Garland) and Phil Resch, the station's bounty hunter, are artificial constructs. The peculiar situation makes Deckard question the differences between humans and androids more directly than he has ever done before. Asking Garland's opinion regarding the way Resch will react when revealed that he is not a human being, Rick is given a frank reply: "I don't have the foggiest idea (...). He may kill me, kill himself; maybe you, too. He may kill everyone he can, human and android alike. I understand that such things happen, when there's been a synthetic memory system laid down. When one thinks it's human" (1996: 122).

It is distinguishable how Philip K. Dick juggles with the notions of "real" and "reality" in his work. Strongly influenced by Plato's metaphor of the cave, the author believed that the empirical world in which we live is not a real one. According to the ancient philosopher's allegory, the "veracity" of things does not lie in the way they directly appear – not in the shadows of the wall, but in the pictures which cast them. In Plato's view, in order for humans to be able to perceive the truth, to break through to the true, archetypal reality that is not visible by means of our senses, they have to think and reason.

Another scholar who tried to delimit the reality as humans perceive it, was Jacques Lacan. A 20th century philosopher and psychoanalyst, Lacan extended Sigmund Freud's theory of the unconscious and differentiated among three "intertangled levels" (Žižek, 2006: 8), or categories. According to him, these registers are: "the imaginary," "the symbolic" and "the real." While the first two are closely linked to what we know as "reality" – "the imaginary" is identified as the realm where the ideal visions of ourselves dwell, and "the symbolic" as the place for the everyday "reality" that we understand, experience and talk about using language –, "the real" is completely distinct from the knowable reality that we assert every day. It should not be mistaken with the reality, since it stands for what is neither symbolic nor imaginary.

Closely related to the concept of "the real", Lacan also introduced the notion of "the experience of the real", a breakdown which occurs when the orders of "the symbolic" and "the imaginary" collapse, and which usually takes place in the early stage of a mental illness. Lacan's idea of the "experience of the real" was further on theorized by the Slovenian post-Lacanian philosopher and cultural critic, Slavoj Žižek, who, in *The Matrix, Or, The Two Sides of Perversion* highlighted that this "breakdown" happens "as soon as the stable, symbolically constituted reality is revealed as the symbolic reality that it is, as soon as it is revealed that there is nothing but words and sym-

bols behind the identities of familiar objects” (1993: 159).

Rick Deckard experiences this type of “breakdown”, for he is faced with the sudden realization that the reality he had experienced throughout his entire life might be manufactured. In both the novel and the film, the character does not escape being a subject of ontological uncertainty, and his identity remains open to the interpretation and speculation of the audience. Nevertheless, there is a difference between the two mediums in which the story is rendered, the film and the novel, difference which lies not in the clarity of its clues, but in their quantity; careful analysis and comparison demonstrate that the movie features more hints of a replicant Deckard than the book does.

As opposed to Philip K. Dick’s protagonist, who seems to be dreaming about replacing his electric sheep with a real one – because owning a living animal in Rick Deckard’s fictitious world offers the possibility of expressing an individual’s empathetic disposition, thus confirming one’s status as a human being – Ridley Scott’s hero fantasizes about unicorns. Deeply connected to Rick Deckard’s inner thoughts, this mythical being functions as a clue which seals the case on the blade runner’s status as a replicant. Although throughout the movie we are given hints that Rick might not be a human, hints generated by the solitary life that he leads or by the disrespectful, patronizing behaviour that Gaff, the film’s second blade runner, displays towards him, our suspicions are confirmed in the final scenes of the film. After Rick manages to retire all the escaped androids, Gaff arrives at Batty’s murder scene and tells him: “You’ve done a man’s job, sir” (*Blade Runner*), as if implying that Rick has performed a human’s task when he is merely a machine. Before exiting the scene, he adds, “It’s too bad she won’t live. But then again, who does?”. This clear reference to Rachael reminds Deckard that she is still in danger, a fact which determines him to run away with her, in order to save her life. In the last scene of the movie, the two are shown entering the elevator in Deckard’s apartment building after he thoroughly checks if no one, particularly Gaff, is waiting for them. On their way out of the apartment, Rachael’s foot disturbs an origami unicorn. Deckard picks it up and realizes that it is another of the tinfoil figures that Gaff has folded throughout the film. The blade runner’s choice of leaving behind the origami unicorn suggests that he has access to Rick’s implanted memories, thus creating more ambiguity regarding the latter’s situation. The puzzled look that Deckard cannot hide while picking up the folded paper, and the nod of his head confirm to us that he has just experienced the “breakdown” that Lacan mentions. The orders of “the symbolic” and “the imaginary” collapse for Rick, and he is forced to face the reality of his true identity. Slavoj Žižek also acknowledges Rick’s status. According to him, “Deckard is a replicant (and we can safely surmise that in the true director’s cut, he viciously informs Deckard of this fact)” (1993: 11). Žižek’s comment also makes reference to the differences between the 1982 theatrical release of the movie and the 1992 director’s cut, for only in the latter version we are given hints of Rick’s true nature.

Despite the fact that Rick Deckard clearly does not fit the role of a hero, neither the novel, nor its film adaptation is devoid of one. If Philip K. Dick endows one of his secondary characters, J. R. Isidore, with heroic attributes and qualities, Ridley Scott is more original and designates the antagonist to play the coveted champion part. “A special”, also known as a “chickenhead”, whose mental capacity has been affected by the radioactive dust that destroys the Earth, Isidore is the only human being in the novel who shows compassion, not only towards animals, but also for the humanoid constructs. Although he is mentally impaired, Isidore is aware of the disastrous conditions around him: “He lived alone in this deteriorating, blind building of a thousand uninhabited apartments, which like all its counterparts, fell, day by day, into greater entropic ruin. (...) kipple piled to the ceiling of each apartment. And, after that, the uncared-for building itself, would settle into shapelessness” (Dick, 1996: 20).

As a means of resisting the nothingness which is slowly encompassing the Earth, Isidore fuses with Wilbur Mercer, “an [alleged] archetypal entity from the stars” (1996: 69) through his experience-inducing empathy box, fusion which is not complete because of his lack of a real animal: “he was not ready for the trip up those clanging stairs to the empathy roof where he had

no animal (1996: 21). During his first encounter with Pris, the female artificial construct, he presents his world as a “kipple-ized” (trash-strewn) decaying space, where his only comfort comes from his participation, through his empty-box, in “the upward climb of Wilbur Mercer” (1996: 66). Despite the simple-minded tone that characterizes his explanation to Pris, his description of Mercer shows him as a receptive being, who is trying to distance himself from a society moving towards decay.

As opposed to the three main human characters of the novel, Deckard, Iran and Phil Resch, Isidore does not treat as slaves the three androids that find refuge in his apartment building. Moreover, he acknowledges that his situation is not different from theirs. While the machines are forced to stay on Mars, where they labour or work as servants, Isidore is not allowed to emigrate to Mars because of mental impairment. The solitary life that he leads contributes to the excitement of meeting Pris. When he realizes that the girl for whom he started to develop a certain affection and her two companions, Roy and Irmgard Baty¹, are androids, Isidore concedes to help them escape from the bounty hunter, Rick Deckard.

Unfortunately, the encounter with the three humanoid robots leads to ‘the special’s’ loss of innocence. Although the androids seem to empathize with one another, they have no regard for other creatures. The scene in which the female android named Pris cuts off a spider’s legs, an act whose brutality is reinforced by the fact that living non-human creatures, such as the arachnid, were on the brink of extinction on the polluted planet Earth of the future, confirms the androids’ cruelty and, at the same time, has a strong emotional impact on Isidore. In addition, the revelation that his two favourite public figures, the television radio personality, Buster Friendly, and Wilbur Mercer, the archetypal superior entity, are frauds, greatly affects him. The spider’s death coupled with these shocking revelations trigger Isidore’s hallucinations that the world is being transformed into kipple, a sign which warns of the future entropic decay of the universe. During this hypnotic experience, “the chickenhead” fuses once more with Mercer, who gives him a restored spider and confesses that although he is a fraud, an alcoholic actor paid to act out as a god-figure in this Sisyphean experience that humans undergo through the empathy box, Mercerism does not cease to be an authentic experience. Isidore’s breakdown suggests that, in any “simulation”, something real can be found, a notion that can also be extended to the androids.

One of the novel’s most vivid characters, who constantly seeks spiritual release, Isidore no longer plays the same important role in *Blade Runner*. In *Notes on Do Android Dream of Electric Sheep?*, a 1968 work dedicated to Bertram Berman, the filmmaker who had purchased the rights to Dick’s book, the writer concluded that “Deckard, rather than Isidore, should be the film’s viewpoint character” (quoted in Vest, 2007: 16). However, the director who eventually adapted Philip K. Dick’s book into a film, Ridley Scott, considered that this role should be attributed to Roy Batty, the character who gets to deliver one of the most famous speeches in the history of science fiction movies: “I have seen things you people wouldn’t believe... Attack ships on fire off the shoulder of Orion. I watched c-beams glitter in the dark near the Tannhäuser Gate. All those moments will be lost in time, like tears in rain. Time to die” (*Blade Runner*).

Often associated with John Milton’s notorious Satan, Roy Batty is probably the most complex figure in *Blade Runner*, for he embodies both negative and positive traits. An ambiguous character, Batty, and not Deckard, has often been considered the movie’s real protagonist, due to the heroism that he displays, “heroism [which is] of a richer mythical nature as he becomes a true questioning hero, one who is on a metaphysical as well as a literal search, whereas on one level, Deckard is merely a man doing a job” (Desser, 1997: 55).

Driven by the desire to prolong his life and to confront Dr. Eldon Tyrell, his creator (God), a desire which evinces his greatest satanic characteristic, the replicant is in fact inquiring about the meaning of his life. In order to reach Tyrell’s “Heaven” – the penthouse of a 700-storey pyra-

¹ In the movie, the character’s name is spelled with double “t”, as opposed to the novel in which the author used only a single “t” letter.

mid – Roy Batty has to penetrate its security by winning a chess game. Therefore, he has to pass an intelligence test similar to the one taken by Oedipus. Like the ancient king, the replicant is a tragic hero himself. When faced with the harsh reality of his existence, reality which confirms him that in spite of his superiority to mankind, he is not allowed to live more than four years, Roy kills his maker as a punishment for purposely creating him flawed. Before crushing Tyrell's skull, Batty, like Judas, passionately kisses his "God" on the lips. The murder scene is both tribal and violent, in spite of the fact that it is not shown directly. Nevertheless, elements such as the close-up of an artificial owl's eyes and of Roy's distorted face, the non-diegetic sound and the blood on his hands suggest that not only he crushed Tyrell's head, but that he also gouged his eyes in the process. By pressing his fingers through the human's eye sockets, Roy takes more than his creator's life. He takes away the organ which, in his view, grants knowledge, gives one the possibility of seeing, of discovering new worlds. His gesture ultimately explains his famous remark, "I've seen things you people wouldn't believe..." (*Blade Runner*).

If in the scene in which Batty encounters his creator, he is portrayed as a fallen angel, during his meeting with Deckard, he is transfigured into the Son of God, images of him as Christ being scattered throughout the last part of the movie. The first scene that emphasizes the Christian imagery is the one in which Batty inserts a nail through his hand as a means of stimulating pain. As Roy's body begins to cease functioning, a sign that he is on the brink of expiring, he searches for a life stimulant to help him continue his pursuit of Deckard. The nail inserted through his palm is a clear reminder of Jesus's Crucifixion. Moreover, the dove that he releases while shutting down, a clear symbol of the Holy Spirit, and the fact that he saves Deckard's life when he could have let him die, portray Roy Batty as the true saviour of the movie. He does not salvage only the blade runner's life, he also changes his perception of reality. Roy's spirituality, his deep emotionalism and the profound speech that he utters before his death, "[mark] for Deckard not simply the completion of his job (all the renegade replicants are dead), but the beginning of a new commitment for him, the commitment to his relationship with Rachael" (Desser, 1997: 56). As he releases the dove, the first ray of light of this film noir floods the screen, a clear sign that Deckard's reality has changed as well.

Although neither *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* nor *Blade Runner* are devoid of heroic characters, both the novel and its film adaptation disturb their audiences by not assigning their protagonists as heroes. Nevertheless, this twisted formula preferred by both the writer and the director is closer to what we experience in our everyday life, for although we might be the "protagonists" of our existence this does not necessarily make us heroes as well.

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