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BLADE RUNNERS AND ELECTRIC SHEEP IN CYBERSPACE: THE QUESTION OF HUMAN IDENTITY

por

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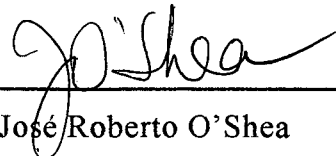para a obtenção do grau de MESTRE EM LETRAS

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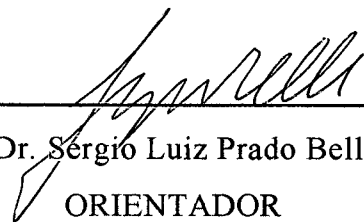pelo Programa de Pós-Graduação em Inglês para a obtenção do grau de

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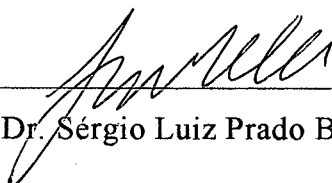
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To my mother,

without whom none of these

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ABSTRACT

BLADE RUNNERS AND ELECTRIC SHEEP IN CYBERSPACE: THE QUESTION OF HUMAN IDENTITY

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The aim of this dissertation is to discuss the meaning of the term humanity in the postmodern context, through the analysis of two representative texts, Philip K. Dick's novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* and Ridley Scott's film adaptation of Dick's literary work, *Blade Runner*. Taking as a theoretical basis American theorist Fredric Jameson's reading of late capitalist society and French philosopher Jean Baudrillard's concept of the simulacrum, this study focuses on the new subject which articulates the postmodern condition and all its contradictions. The introductory chapter characterizes the postmodern universe with a new treatment of time and space and the notion of the simulacrum. The first chapter analyzes Dick's literary work and its dominant postmodern themes.

The second chapter focuses on the visual narrative and its reading of a late capitalist society. The final chapter presents the notion of the individual that emerges from the symbiosis between humans and machines. The conclusion shows that the concept of humanity requires constant broadening and that the definition of humanity will depend on individual observers. Therefore, the postmodern emerging sense of the individual ends up in an open-ended process.

RESUMO

Esta dissertação tem como objetivo discutir o significado do termo humanidade, no contexto pós-moderno, através da análise de dois textos importantes: o romance *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* de Philip K. Dick, e a adaptação cinematográfica de Ridley Scott para a obra de Dick, *Blade Runner*. Tomando como base teórica a visão do americano Fredric Jameson sobre uma sociedade pós-capitalista e o conceito de simulacro do filósofo francês Jean Baudrillard, este estudo enfoca o novo indivíduo que articula a condição pós-moderna e todas as suas contradições. O capítulo introdutório caracteriza o universo pós-moderno, com um novo tratamento do tempo e do espaço e a noção de simulacro. O primeiro capítulo analisa a obra literária de Dick e seus temas pós-modernos mais importantes. O segundo capítulo enfoca a narrativa visual e sua interpretação de uma sociedade pós-capitalista. O capítulo final apresenta a noção de indivíduo que surge da simbiose entre humanos e máquinas. A conclusão mostra que o conceito de humanidade requer uma expansão constante e que a definição de humanidade vai depender de cada observador. Portanto, a definição pós-moderna de indivíduo acaba num processo aberto.

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INTRODUCTION

"What does it mean to be human in the postmodern world?" In the course of finding an answer to this question, classical cyberpunk science fiction formulates its own definition of humanity by rearticulating the postmodern condition of the individual. The starting point to define humanity is, thus, a broadening of the notion of reality in which boundaries between reality and representation are no longer precise. Postmodernist texts attack conventional perceptions of reality and subvert the traditional paradigm of the subject and of its representation. Reality, composed of images or simulacra, can no longer be located and one's life is, then, governed by the new technology of simulacra.

The present study is an attempt to explore the science fiction idea that, in the age of technological reproduction, every feature of the human being can in principle be so precisely described and replicated that a machine can be made to simulate human life to the point that it can no longer be identified as human. The endeavor to identify the individual in the culture of simulacra foregrounds one of postmodernism's main concern, that is, the questioning of the existence of a specifically human identity.

In dystopias such as Philip K. Dick's novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* and Ridley Scott's film *Blade Runner*, the same attempt to define humanity becomes blurred because the difference between human beings and replicants has faded away. Replicants are perfect copies of human beings and as such they challenge the possibility of identifying the human in the postmodern world. The erasure of those features that distinguish natural beings from artificial ones reveals the inevitable outcome of mechanical reproduction, that is, the challenge to identify the origin of reality in the human self.

In Dick's novel and in Scott's film, even the most detailed examination of human behavior can fail to produce a final distinction between replicants and humans, since the former are perfect copies of a no longer existing "original". In this context, the technology of simulacra undermines the notion of an original by rejecting any differences between human beings and replicants.

Replicants as well have reached such a perfect simulation that they can not identify their own status. This aspect is highlighted by the female character Rachael, a replicant so perfect that, in the search for identity, she fails to grasp her artificial status. Rachael thus embodies the paradox that replicants have not only fallen within the frame of humanity but they have also surpassed their originals and, thus, threatened the possibility of distinguishing between reality and representation. In this context of

simulacra, everything is reduced to representation and the individual can no longer be located in this technology of reproduction.

The concern with the location of the individual in postmodern hyperspace is an indication of the present-day crisis of identity and of the need for new definitions. The prevailing picture of man in our days, one of uncertainty and self doubt, motivates writers to search for the origins of human identity. This search signals the loss of a self that can no longer be located behind his simulacrum.

In searching for a redefinition of the notion of humanity, postmodernism challenges conventional perceptions of reality and witnesses the disappearance of originality within the age of endless proliferation of copies. To discuss this point I will single out some of the relevant concepts for the postmodern redefinition of humanity, namely, the concept of simulacra, the new rearrangement of time and space, and, as a result, the new concept of the individual.

1. The Concept of Simulacra

In the postmodern world the term simulacrum becomes a hallmark because it generates a new concept for the word "real". The simulacrum, which is the central concept in French philosopher Jean Baudrillard's

theory of history, is "the identical copy for which no original has ever existed." *(1)* The real is not what can be reproduced but that which is always already reproduced, namely the hyperreal. In the hyperreal age "the real is produced from miniaturized units, from matrices, memory banks and command models—and with these it can be reproduced an indefinite number of times." *(2)* Therefore the preoccupation with originality emerges because of the proliferation of copies which witnesses the disappearance of the referent.

The hyperreality mentioned above highlights the real as "the product of an irradiating synthesis of combinatory models in a hyperspace without atmosphere." *(3)* In other words, the real will be generated by a conflation of models that nowhere touch a reality because in the hyperspace models reproduce themselves in an endless circuit where origins are unattainable by continuous movement. From this perspective, the real ceases to exist and one comes across a proliferation of models. This is the principle of technological reproduction which is incapable of demarcating the limits of reality and reproduction due to the rapid spread of copies. Needless to say, the result of this proliferation of copies is the loss of originality by the shattering of one's own identity.

In Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* and Scott's *Blade Runner* the concept of replicants illustrates the hyperreal world cited above, as they are perfect copies of human beings and as such they can

hardly be identified. Remaining within the frame of the simulacrum "replicants undermine the notion of an original by disavowing any differences between themselves and their creators." (4) It is particularly clear that humanity's new perspective, rather than simply reproducing the human race, is crossing the border of natural and artificial to become something new. Technology defines this new reality which pervades individual lives in all aspects by the concept of replicants. The artificial beings become at last representatives of the new reality which rejects all notions of originality.

Steeped in the latest technological innovations, replicants have not only become a perfect simulation of human beings but they have also surpassed them. Replicants have what no human being appears to have:

> Possessing the best of both worlds, cyborgs combine human attributes with the perfection of a technological anatomy, signifying a final breakdown of the boundaries between spirit and matter. (5)

The exchange of features between human beings and replicants reveals a collapse in the definition of humanity by the erasure of those attributes that used to distinguish natural beings from artificial ones. Replicants become humanized by the appropriation of human features, like feelings, whereas human beings become mechanized by the replacement of their bodies for artificial features.

By combining human features with the most advanced technology, replicants become a final source of evidence for the threatening of a specific human identity. So, in the postmodern moment, human identity is dissolved by an image which evokes the real by a technological representation, namely replicants. The postmodern identity arises, thus, at the intersection of a variety of images which in a circular relationship exchange features and fragment one's own self. The conventional concept of humanity based on the autonomous self is thus challenged. The age of simulacra is thus an age in which everything is reduced to the image, to representation. Contemporary image not only mirrors life but structures and reproduces it and, thus, provides a new identity for the postmodern subject. In the words of Celeste Olalquiaga,

> gradually, technological images have become the mirrors in which to look for an identity. Characterized by proliferation and consumptiveness, these ready-made images are easily interchangeable. Like all commodities, they are discardable identities. Mobile and perishable, their traits wane after a few uses. *(6)*

The postmodern identity is thus defined by the new technology of simulacra which dissolves the individual's sense of identity by the proliferation of copies. The emphatic reduplication of copies shatters the referent and replaces it by repetition. Given this point, the task of the postmodern individual is to establish his identity from transitory images which circulate endlessly in a space without depth.

Baudrillard's concept of the simulacrum implies precisely the inability to locate the referent in the presence of a depthless image. In a depthless world, everything circulates in a space without depth, in an endless circuit. In other words, the depthless image "is a derealized simulacrum (filmic images without density) which can not be filled out by a determinate identity." (7) The replicants presented in Dick's novel and Scott's film are examples of depthless images that threaten human identity. The articulated pictures of natural and artificial beings can not be distinguished as images of either because none of them holds a particular identity.

In a world devoid of originality, the simulacrum, by abolishing the referent, can not be other than a perfect copy of itself. This is to deny a theory of correspondence between images and their objects of reference. As Baudrillard argues, the image "bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum, a copy only of itself." (8) Accordingly, in the postmodern world, one comes across a deconstruction of the opposition between images and reality for "the object world itself-now become a set of texts or simulacra," (9) where the picture itself, that is, the sign, has become reality.

At issue in the context above is the very definition of the hyperreal which, in Baudrillard's account, means a coincidence with itself rather than a copy of the real. In his words,

> (i)n the absence of rules of the game, things become caught
> up in their own game: images become more real than the real;
> cinema itself becomes more cinema than cinema, in a kind of
> vertigo in which (to return to our initial problem, that of
> resemblance) it does more than resemble itself and escape in
> its own logic, in the very perfection of its own model. *(10)*

In the hyperreality of pervasive simulacra, the principle of representation is

displaced by the principle of reproduction:

> The principle of representation, which worked as long as a
> certain notion of reality could guarantee their secondary
> status—the real as a model for representation—have been
> overturned by a multiplication of images that has literally left
> no space for such distinction. *(11)*

Such an observation emphasizes the postmodern concern with the image

which simultaneously effaces and valorizes the real and undermines the

very possibility of representation.

Being as real as, or even more real than, the reality they replicate,

replicants challenge the idea of human beings as models so that at a certain

point, the question which emerges is whether the model, namely the human

being, is not already a model itself. Technology ultimately challenges the

definition of humanity, as in the case of artificial intelligence:

> (w)hat is crucial in the debates on artificial intelligence is
> that an inversion has taken place which is the fate of every
> successful metaphor: one first tries to simulate human thought
> with the computer, bringing the model as close as possible to
> the human 'original', until at a certain point matters reverse
> and the question emerges: what if this 'model' is already a
> model of the 'original' itself, what if human intelligence itself

operates like a computer, is 'programmed', etcetera? *(12)*

In this context, the notion of originality and of truth have to be redefined. As Baudrillard puts it, reality has been so perfectly reproduced by technology that representation has become true, for "the simulacrum is never that which conceals the truth—it is the truth which conceals that there is none. The simulacrum is true." *(13)*

2. The Postmodern Idea of Time and Space

The problem of defining humanity in the postmodern world is also related to the contemporary concern with locating the individual within some postmodern hyperspace. In this context, the search for identity becomes also a function of place and time, that is, if one does not know where one is one probably does not know who one is. In other words, if one can not locate oneself in space and time one can not find one's own identity. And space and time, in hyperreality, have been redefined since the advent of technologies which foreground the collapse of the boundaries between the two dimensions conventionally thought of as separate:

> Spatial and temporal coordinates end up collapsing: space is
> no longer defined by depth and volume, but rather by a
> cinematic (temporal) repetition, while the sequence of time is
> frozen in an instant of (spatial) immobility. *(14)*

The new sense of time and space provided by post-industrial technological changes stresses a collapse in temporality, characterized by a new rearrangement of the historical time; and a collapse in the spatial boundary which challenges the conventional limits of space.

The postmodern moment is, then, portrayed by a temporal disruption in which all boundaries between past, present, and future are effaced. Incapable of demarcating the limits of historical continuity, postmodern timelessness locates the individual in a perpetual present time. The present contains both past and future, as advanced technology makes signs from the past and the future circulate in the present. In this way, rather than viewing events in a linear model of historical time, that is, from earlier to later times, postmodernism regards history as collage. Postmodernism articulates this collage as a narration made up of a series of multiple perspectives in which the signs from the past, the present, and the future circulate together in a nondogmatic way. As the American theorist Fredric Jameson writes,

> (t)he postmodern is ... the force field in which very different kinds of cultural impulses - what Raymond Williams has usefully termed 'residual' and 'emergent' forms of cultural production - must make their way. If we do not achieve some general sense of a cultural dominant, then we fall back into a view of present history as sheer heterogeneity, random difference, a coexistence of a host of distinct forces whose effectivity is undecidable. (15)

Therefore, postmodernism rejects the idea of a general consensus and asserts the preference for a process of differentiation which undermines the

feelings of continuity. The past has become "a vast collection of images, a multitudinous photographic simulacrum." *(16)*

Freed finally from temporal restraints, postmodernism succeeds in representing the past by reconstructing it from images that convey a nostalgic feeling. The result of the new historical situation is that "we are condemned to seek History by way of our own pop images and simulacra of that history, which itself remains forever out of reach." *(17)* Therefore, nostalgia texts maintain a lively presence of the past within the present by means of representations. This is the case of Dick's ***Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*** and Scott's ***Blade Runner,*** which reappropriate images from the past and keep them alive circulating among advanced technologies. To illustrate this point one may consider the Greek column in Tyrrel's house. The column becomes the hallmark of a past which circulates among replicants and computers, namely the signs of a technological world.

Such a pragmatic view of temporality is well suited to the postmodern individual who tries to shape its identity by holding a sense of continuity from past, present, and future time for, as Jameson states, "the personal identity is itself the effect of a certain temporal unification of past and future with the present before me." *(18)* In this way, one's version of oneself depends on the past which proves to exist only in terms of the present. Paradoxically, the past suddenly acquires a great significance for

postmodern man, for when one connects past and present one finds the narrative thread that supports one's own historical identity.

By breaking the rules of historical continuity, the postmodern individual is condemned to live in a perpetual present time. Replicants in Dick's novel and Scott's film articulate this issue very clearly, as they are condemned to a life composed only of a present and lack a sense of continuity with the past. Deprived of past and future, replicants lose their existence over time and, consequently, the sense of who they are. In Olalquiaga's account,

> (t)o counter this threat to humanity, people of both the space age and the postmodern age have attempted to imagine themselves as characters from another time, belonging either to the future or to the past, and hoping to retain a sense of identity through that vicarious experience. Yet the irony of this schizophrenic exchanging of identities is that vicariousness is the ability to become, however fleetingly, another—exactly what the fear of dehumanization tries so hard to avoid. *(19)*

In Dick's novel and Scott's film, history turns out to be a human trace which threatens replicants' lives. One of the greatest difficulties in achieving a human status is thus the disappearance of the historical referent which renders replicants entirely unstable.

With individual lives pervaded by technology in almost all levels, man becomes aware of his own existence over time and extended his control over it. The impact of this particular scientific advance on humanity is great

because it generates new systems of concepts and values which challenges

the limits of time. As Olalquiaga writes:

> (h)igh technology and the space age retro fashion flatly deny
> the passing of time: the former by producing systems, such as
> cyborgs, apparently immune to natural deterioration; the
> latter by defying continuity in the replacement of time with
> space. *(20)*

In this way, postmodern time acquires meaning when it is replaced by space

for "we no longer perceive ourselves as continuity but as location, or rather

dislocation in the urban/suburban cosmos." *(21)*

Another aspect of hyperreal space is the blurring of the spatial

frontiers of the body. Demarcations of the limits of the body become

difficult when copies of the body cannot be different from the original, as

in replicants. A world devoid of spatial boundaries, thus, challenges one's

identity as the conventional limits of one's own body is transcended. The

body can no longer be compared to something different, which would

function as "the last refuge of identity." *(22)* In this way the postmodern

individual ends up in a state of despair to preserve his identity, for the body

has been replaced by technological innovations:

> (n)o longer distinguishable from computers, the body is
> thought of as a system whose parts are perfectible and
> replaceable. Slowly, body and computer have begun to
> exchange their peculiar traits: the body becomes mechanized
> at the same rate that technology is made human. *(23)*

The exchange of features between the organic and the technological bodies portrays a condition of deterioration and fragmentation of the self. One is unable to generate an account of one's own body and, consequently, of one's own identity. Therefore, establishing one's image has become the most challengeable task for postmodern man.

Defying a perception of space by the fusion of organic and technological bodies, man transcends his present state to become something other. This successful mutation is portrayed by replicants in Dick's and Scott's texts. "Both an organic and a technological body, the fictional cyborg represents the ultimate spatial transgression, an accomplishment that it shares with holograms." *(24)* As has been noted, technology has raised the confusion of spatial boundaries and stressed the postmodern phenomenon of exchange of features, leaving room for an open-ended evolutionary process. In this way, the concept of humanity is to be found in change rather than in an established image.

When neither organicity nor technology prevails, man reaches a stage in which one is unable to assure who is who and who is what, who is machine and who a human being. Replicants have reached this stage because they "develop in time the only feature that distinguished them from their makers: emotions." *(25)* The inability to distinguish replicants from their originals convey both, replicants and human beings, a sense of loss.

Postmodern hyperspace

has finally succeeded in transcending the capacities of the
individual human body to locate itself, to organize its
immediate surroundings perceptually, and cognitively to map
its position in a mappable world. (26)

At issue in the paragraph above is the very concept of a psychological

phenomenon called psychasthenia. Olalquiaga writes that,

(d)efined as a disturbance in the relation between self and
surrounding territory, psychasthenia is a state in which the
space defined by the coordinates of the organism's own body
is confused with represented space. *(27)*

The postmodern space widened its scope and exceeded the human capacity

to comprehend and direct it. Therefore, dislocated in the postmodern

hyperspace, human beings and replicants live in places where referentiality

is lost. In Dick's novel and Scott's film, modern and old architecture stand

side by side along with people from different origins conveying a feeling of

referential absence which situates natural and artificial beings in all places

and all times. As a result, characters in both texts establish a fragmented

image of themselves and their world.

3. The Postmodern Concept of the Individual

Remaining within the field of a technological world, the postmodern

emerging sense of the individual is a result of the collapse of boundaries between human beings and machines. The blurring of frontiers between the artificial and the natural, the temporal and the spatial entails the destruction of a unified concept of the human self. In stressing the interdependence of all phenomena, postmodernism challenges the idea of the unified self. Paradoxically, at the starting point for a new concept of humanity stand replicants whose presence challenges the very possibility of a specific human identity. In the postmodern world, the main difference between human beings and replicants is a matter of degree rather than kind. From a contemporary point of view, one can argue that at least three conditions have to fall into place before finding a definition for the term humanity. First of all, the new sense of time; second the new sense of space; finally the rearrangement of the concepts of natural and artificial.

All these variants are displayed in the two representative examples of postmodern texts to be discussed here, namely Dick's science fiction novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* and Scott's film adaptation of Dick's novel, *Blade Runner*. Both works unveil the standardized motif of science fiction texts, that is, the thematic of a human and inhuman symbiosis which leads to a collapse of the definitions of natural and artificial. By means of different aesthetic forms, Dick's and Scott's texts reinforce the postmodern concern with locating the real in a society full of fakes and imitations.

Although Dick's novel and Scott's film offer a wide range of aspects to be analyzed, the present study focuses mainly on the problematization of the real in a postmodern society. Obviously, the metaphor of natural and artificial described in both texts is used in relation to the theme of technology. The novel's and the film's emphatic employments of technology suggest that technology is a threat. The problems related to a new reality pervaded by technological changes will then be analyzed here in the two different narrative forms, of literature and film.

Another aspect of my investigation resides in an underlying premise of science fiction narratives which undertake the theme of defining humanity. My main intention is to analyze the variants of the robot motif which, in a postmodern context, are used to propose a redefinition of the term humanity. Besides, my analysis will also deal with the notion of the individual which has been redefined according to a radically new order of things, which is best represented by Fredric Jameson's reading of late capitalist society and Jean Baudrillard's account of the era of simulation.

In order to proceed with the investigation, I have divided the study into four major stages. This introductory discussion of the postmodern universe will be followed by the treatment of time and space and the notion of the simulacrum in Dick's literary work. The aim will be to analyze how Dick's novel deals with the notion of fakery and imitation. I will next present a more detailed analysis of Scott's film. By raising the postmodern

world I intend to see how Baudrillard's concept is presented in the 1982 version of **Blade Runner**. Then, it will be time to demonstrate the importance of the visual narrative and its contribution to the great success of the film. Finally, I will analyze issues related to the notion of the individual that can emerge from the symbiosis between humans and machines. My purpose is, thus, to define the term humanity in the postmodern realm.

4. Notes

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20 OLALQUIAGA, p. 56.

21 OLALQUIAGA, p. 93.

22 OLALQUIAGA, p. 93.

23 OLALQUIAGA, p. 12.

24 OLALQUIAGA, p. 13.

25 OLALQUIAGA, p. 11.

26 JAMESON, p. 60.

27 OLALQUIAGA, p. 1/2.

CHAPTER I

Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*

And Its Dominant Postmodern Themes

In this chapter, I shall first present Dick's novel, then review its dominant postmodern themes and, finally, articulate the issues which shape the postmodern identity. By raising the quest for identity I attempt to fit Baudrillard's call for a new definition of reality and Jameson's reading of late capitalist society to Dick's novel. In a world where the real becomes a set of representations and individuality is completely manipulated by false memory implants, technology redefines reality by questioning old concepts and proposing new definitions in a renewal of knowledge arrived at the destruction of any unified conception of truth.

A key point emerges when the cultural logics of late capitalism provides new versions of the postmodern individual. In Dick's novel, androids replace real people and become reconstructed bodies. The reconstructed body becomes a commodity which replaces old values and

threatens the established concept of humanity. The dilemma in Dick's characters is, thus, to find an essential humanity in an endless representation of reality in which the cultural logics of the simulacrum, with its simulated appearance counting as reality, interact with the logics of late capitalism and its values of utility and prestige.

The postmodern commodity system radically alters and shapes the meaning people give to themselves and to the world around. The aim of this chapter is to show how Dick's characters achieve understanding of the fragmentary reality in which they live and how they build up new systems of values and concepts. I begin by defining the novel's genre.

1. The Novel's Genre: Cyberpunk

Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* is a cyberpunk science fiction novel, namely a science fiction text which incorporates elements of postmodernism, or in Brian McHale's words, "a science fiction which derives certain of its elements from postmodernist mainstream fiction which itself has, in its turn, already been 'science-fictionized' to some greater or lesser degree."*(1)* Fredric Jameson identifies it "as the supreme literary expression if not of postmodernism, then of late capitalism itself."*(2)* On the whole, cyberpunk texts have a cycling process that conflate elements from both science fiction and postmodernist texts.

Dick's novel joins the most significant features of postmodernist texts: the limitations on human knowledge of truth and reality, with the traditional science fiction repertoire of space ships, futuristic weaponry, androids, other worlds, etc. The narrative gives legitimacy to the identity crisis in our technological era, a common issue in Dick's texts. As Scott Bukatman explains,

> the central characteristic of Dick's protagonists involves their crisis of subjectivity; crisis which begin when the categories of the real and the rational begin to dissolve their boundaries. *(3)*

In the quest for a new subject, Dick's narrative articulates the following postmodern features: a new concept of "real"; a new depthlessness; a schizophrenic condition of time; a loss of subjectivity; a process of obsolescence of commodities; pastiche, as an appropriation of the past; a new logic of space; and the waning of affect which grounds intense emotional experiences.

2. Entering the Novel's Terrain

The novel is a nightmare vision of the futuristic, postmodern society which portrays a place destroyed by the nuclear war in the year 1992. The world in Dick's text is, at the opening panel, being threatened by extra-clever androids, namely the Nexus-6 brain units. These androids, who

surpass many human beings in terms of intelligence, were created by the system's largest manufacturer of humanoid robots, the Rosen Association. Rick Deckard, a skilled bounty hunter, is assigned to retire the renegade androids. In order to detect the Nexus-6 android types, or replicas of human beings, Deckard uses the Voigt-Kampff Altered Scale. The scale is needed as a device to determine whether individuals are natural beings because some androids do not know what they really are.

As the story unfolds, one becomes aware that Deckard's postmodern world is a place of total passivity where technology pervades individuals' lives at their most intimate level. Even memories are artificially implanted. In this setting in which there is no established hierarchy of truth, the cultural logic of the simulacrum interacts with the economic logic of contemporary capitalism. Such place is an allegory of the consumer society organized by the logic of use and market value which turns everything into a commodity that is bought and sold in markets. Thus genuine animals in Deckard's world, are important as particularly valuable commodities.

> The near eradication of Earth's animal life other than man has resulted in the measurement of wealth by ownership of live-stock, and in accordance with a catalogue that gives current values as if for antiques or second-hand cars, people acquire goats, sheep and cows as status symbols. If they can't afford genuine animals, they settle for working models. *(4)*

In this way, artificial animals have become commodities that circulate in a society full of fakes and imitations.

In this unreal world of simulation, to acquire a live animal not only gives status but also measures a person's wealth. Deckard, for example, uses the money he makes in his search for renegade androids to buy genuine animals. This question is addressed right at the opening of the story when Deckard tells his neighbor Bill Barbour that he wants to buy a genuine sheep to replace the artificial sheep he owns. Paradoxically, this artificial sheep has already replaced a natural sheep Deckard received from his wife's father. In this replacement of natural with artificial and vice-versa, the novel characterizes the commodity production of a consumer society.

2.1. The New Concept of "Real"

Deckard's world commodifies individuals, human emotions, status, prestige, time and place. The result of such commodification is a change in the concept of reality. The 'real' has become a commodity transformed into something that has market value. In this context, people and objects are easily manipulated according to society's interest. They become reconstructed "truths" and turn out to be more real than reality itself, for they articulate a set of values which displace old forms of truth and introduce a new logic to the world. The real, to use Baudrillard's words, has become the hyperreal. In a hyperreal world, the individual becomes discourse and simulacrum.

The apocalyptic image of the future portrayed in the novel reflects the fear of technology with its rejection of all notions of originality and subjectivity. Dick articulated this idea in his use of androids. Androids have overturned the notion of a uniquely human identity of natural beings for they simulate human beings so perfectly that they end up being indistinguishable from their originals. The real is, thus, confused with its image.

Living in this unreality, or hyperreality, the individual in Dick's novel must define reality according to its surface reflection, which can easily be commodified. This commodified world becomes unstable and ungovernable, for the 'real world' becomes a set of reconstructed truths. The politics of truth in the novel displaces literal models of truth and knowledge and establishes new codes which reduce everything to commodified myth.

Made up of a discontinuous series of simulations, Deckard's postmodern world, organized by the logic of the simulacrum, conveys the idea that things and people have lost their early connections with origins, as the originals have been replaced by copies. Artificial beings in Dick's novel articulate this issue with precision, for they are technologically developed to simulate natural beings and reproduce the 'real' so perfectly that they can hardly be identified. This is the case of androids, who simulate human beings, and artificial animals, which replace genuine

animals. The former,

> the Nexus-6 android types ... surpassed several classes of human specials in terms of intelligence. In other words, androids equipped with the Nexus-6 brain unit had from a sort of rough, pragmatic, no-nonsense standpoint evolved beyond a major- but inferior-segment of mankind. *(5)*

Artificial animals, in turn, acquire a heightened significance because they give status and are signals of wealth. Both, natural animals and human beings, reinforce the postmodern anxious concern with simulation, for they become symbolic of a society which over-valued reality and its lived, emotional experiences as these real experiences are becoming extinct. The society presented in Dick's novel must be thought of in terms of new sociological formations. These tend to produce anxiety in the individual who is always faced with commodification to the extent that one can never distinguish between reality and simulacra. The Nexus-6 group of androids is of course the main example of this postmodern reality.

2.2. The Nexus-6 Android Group

The Nexus-6 android type, part human, part machine, is almost indistinguishable from real people. These artificial beings, whose life-span is only four years, are genetically programed and made from organic material. They are so perfectly manufactured by the Rosen Association that some of them do not know their own status, whether humans or androids. Rachael Rosen articulates this dilemma very clearly:

> To Eldon Rosen, who slumped morosely by the door of the
> room, he said, "Does she know?" Sometimes they didn't;
> false memories had been tried various times, generally in the
> mistaken idea that through them reactions to testing would be
> altered.
> Eldon Rosen said, "No. We programmed her completely. But
> I think toward the end she suspected."*(6)*

Individuality is completely manipulated by false memory implants which grant androids a false history. Rachael is unable to identify her status because her memories are drawn from various images. She becomes a "terminal of multiple networks," as Baudrillard puts it. Because of the endless proliferation of images, androids are only identified by means of the Voigt-Kampff scale, which reveals the so-called flattening of affect, namely a schizophrenic characteristic which unveils a defective emotional life.

The dialogue cited above shows Deckard talking to Eldon Rosen, from the Rosen Association, about Rachael. Like the other Nexus-6 androids, she is the latest development of technology in terms of artificial beings. Rachael is apparently human and has been raised by Eldon Rosen as a family member. When Deckard asks Eldon for the first testee to undergo the Voigt-kampff test, Rachael offers to take it and Eldon challenges Deckard:

> Rachael said, "Give me the test."
> "Why?" Rick said, puzzled.
> Speaking up, Eldon Rosen said hoarsely, "We selected her as

your first subject. She may be an android. We're hoping you
can tell."*(7)*

The test confirms Rachael's status as an android. She is literally reduced to

a machine status, bereft of any empathy,

> He put his pencil down, shut off the beam of light, removed
> the adhesive patch from her cheek. "You're an android," he
> said. "That's the conclusion of the testing," he informed
> her—or rather it. *(8)*

Rachael, thus, embodies the precarious condition of the individual in a late

capitalist society where people become objects to be manipulated. She is

reduced to a commodified status which turns 'her' into 'it'. In other words,

she is dehumanized and regarded as an object which circulates inside

Deckard's simulated world.

Another example of a commodified status is Phil Resch, who is

treated by Deckard as "the man beside him, or rather, the thing beside

him."*(9)* Both Rachael and Phil differ from human beings in terms of the

signifiers that people attach to them. They are classified as objects, not as

persons, by undergoing a test. This successful mutation of status shows how

postmodern society produces the concept of an open-ended evolutionary

process which manipulates people and objects placing the individual in a

world of uncertainty where reality can not be taken at face value. The result

is an individual frightened with feelings of anxiety.

Technologically developed to be the same type as Pris Stratton, one of

the Nexus-6 androids who escaped, Rachael feels the fragility of her

condition when she has to eliminate Pris:

> 'That last goddamn Nexus-6 type,' Rachael said, enunciating
> with effort, 'is the same type as I am.' She stared down at the
> bedspread, found a thread, and began rolling it into a pellet.
> 'Didn't you notice the description? It's of me, too. She may
> wear her hair differently and dress differently - she may even
> have bought a wig. But when you see her you'll know what I
> mean.' She laughed sardonically. 'It's a good thing the
> association admitted I'm an andy; otherwise you'd probably
> have gone mad when you caught sight of Pris Stratton. Or
> thought she was me.' *(10)*

The simulated world where they live, which is based on reproduction,

brings about a crisis of identity, as the individual is never sure about his/its

own status. The individual is reduced to a code and his essential self is lost

under ideological assumptions. Rachael becomes representative of such

postmodern individual who witnesses the disappearance of his autonomous

self.

For all that, Rachael's sense of identity deepens and she is faced with

the challenge of being replaced by Pris, namely the android she and

Deckard are hunting. In other words, Rachael is confronted with the

paradoxical situation of hunting none other than herself:

> 'Something like that; there goes I. My god; maybe that's
> what'll happen. In the confusion you'll retire me, not her.
> And she can go back to Seattle and live my life. I never felt
> this way before. We are machines, stamped out like bottle

caps. It's an illusion that I—I personally—really exist; I'm representative of a type.' She shuddered. *(11)*

The passage above evokes the postmodern process of simulation in which the original can hardly be located and a copy replaces another copy in an endless circuit. Accordingly, Rachael, a copy of human beings, can be replaced by Pris, an android with the same type as Rachael. Rachael ends up being a duplicate. As Deckard says, "there is no Pris ... 'Only Rachael Rosen, over and over again." *(12)*

2.3. Depthless Images

Within the process of simulation, identities become discardable and reveal the precarious condition of the individual. Rachael functions within a system of classification which is identifiably artificial. She is, however, confused by her own image. Such image shapes her in terms of her surface appearance only. In this way, Rachael becomes an example of the postmodern depthless image which does not hold a particular identity. As Jameson puts it, the human being is itself commodified and transformed into its own image. Images and signs, Baudrillard argues, come to stand for objects and commodities that make up everyday life. In an endless chain of signifiers, people become commodities with discardable identities. Like all commodities, Rachael's constructed "self" can easily be discarded and replaced by another "human" machine.

The result of such multiplication of images is a crisis of identity because, as Olalquiaga puts it,

> images are central to the shaping of identity: largely constituted by the perception of the self as a separate totality, identity must resort to an image to acquire a sense of wholeness. Without such a reflection of the self onto a literal or figurative mirror, self-perception remains fragmented—exactly as if we had never seen our own images in full. *(13)*

The postmodern individual is, thus, constantly searching for confirmation of its existence, as his/her/its emerging self brings about a feeling of fragmentation. This sense of fragmentation portrays a condition Jameson identifies as characteristic of late capitalism, that of schizophrenic individuals.

2.4. Schizophrenia

As Jameson puts it, schizophrenia is a breakdown in the relationship of "signifiers among each other." *(14)* Schizophrenia appears "in the form of a rubble of distinct and unrelated signifiers."*(15)* These fragmented signifiers characterize a new relationship with time and history. As Jenny Wolmark writes,

> Since understanding of the relationship between past, present and future, and of temporality generally, depends on the inter-relations between signifiers, once the chain of meaning is broken the schizophrenic subject is condemned to live in what Jameson describes as 'a perpetual present'. *(16)*

The postmodern individual is introduced to a new logic of time which reproduces fragmented experiences and establishes new temporal codes.

In the temporal loss proposed by late capitalism, the individual experiences a behavioral disruption. In Dick's novel, androids stand at the core of such process of temporal loss. Androids have neither past nor future, they are isolated from history and their lives are limited to the present moment, as they are programed to have a life-span of only four years. They live, as it were, in the present only. This question of temporality applies also to the issue of child bearing. Androids, of course, can not bear children as a signal of continuity and immortality through time.

Devoided of any history, androids lack a sense of continuity with the past and experience the fragility of their status since they are forced to accept the brevity of their existence. The result is a sense of fragmentation of the self as the structure of time that gives unity to the individual breaks down. Only when one connects past and present one finds the narrative thread that supports one's identity. In this way, the past acquires a heightened significance for the postmodern man whose history becomes a proof of a previous existence which grants him the right to exist and to understand himself as an effect of previous codes.

Androids' lives are, on the other hand, undermined by the past.

Because androids have neither past nor future, they have no existence over time and lack the connection with their original selves. They have no history, and without a history they are fated to forge the consciousness of their selves. They experience the fragility of their existence because they cannot establish a contact with their selves and are thus prevented from achieving an understanding of their reality. They ultimately experience a temporal breakdown which is typical of schizophrenic individuals.

The schizophrenic temporality of androids, characteristic of the postmodern condition, finally reduces them to discardable commodities. They can be retired, that is, eliminated from a "normal" productive life by being withdrawn from the market,

> Rick liked to think of them that way; it made his job
> palatable. In retiring—i.e. killing—an andy he did not violate
> the rule of life laid down by Mercer. *(17)*

As the temporality of androids is thus manipulated by their creators, they feel the anguish of those who never know their life time.

2.5. Loss of Subjectivity

The impossibility of locating the individual within 'the endless chain of signifiers' of the postmodern world provides the individual with a sense of loss. The postmodern individual thus permanently fears the void of subjectivity. Ironically, such concern is a common trait between human beings and androids in Deckard's world. Both live in a world of

multinational capitalism in which none of a person's feature is really his, everything has been artificially implanted, even one's most intimate memories. Humans and androids experience a feeling of complete void conveyed by the destruction of the self. They share this trait and experience a sense of fragmentation of reality:

> You're not an escaped android on Earth illegally; you're the property of the Rosen Association, used as a sale device for prospective migrants.' (18)

In this passage, Eldon Rosen tries to comfort Rachael when she becomes aware of her artificial status. Rachael's status is commodified and she becomes a sales device for emigrants. As such, she is overwhelmed by a sense of void.

In his search for androids, Deckard also experiences his own loss of subjecthood. When Luba Luft, one of the Nexus-6 female androids who has just realized her artificial status, asks Deckard if he had ever undergone the test, he is filled with self-doubt,

> 'An android,' he said, 'doesn't care what happens to another android. That's one of the indications we look for.'
> 'Then,' Miss Luft said, 'you must be an android.'
> That stopped him; he stared at her. (19)

Deckard is confused because the undermining of his humanist assumptions challenges his unified sense of identity and his view of reality. Near the end of the novel, Deckard also experiences a similar feeling when he finds

out the truth about Mercerism.

Deckard's reaction to the threat of losing his identity points to the postmodern condition of the individual and all its contradictions. How different is the "real" Deckard from a "copy" like Luba? The comparison raises the very question of simulation and of the possibility/impossibility of boundaries between reality and copies. Can one identify the real in the age of technological reproduction? Unable to see beyond his own condition, Deckard remains trapped in his own world by technology. He identifies androids only by means of the Voigt-Kampff scale, which finally seems to be unreliable. When challenged by Rachael and later by Luba to take the test, Deckard's uneasiness reveals his uncertainty about being human:

> 'Maybe there was once a human who looked like you, and somewhere along the line you killed him and took his place. And your superiors don't know.'
> She smiled. As if inviting him to agree.
> 'Let's get on with the test,' he said, getting out the sheets of questions.
> 'I'll take the test,' Luba Luft said, 'if you take it first.'
> Again he stared at her, stopped in his track. *(20)*

The test remains finally only a poor indication of one's human existence. Identity revealed by technological means ultimately proves to be useless.

2.6. Commodities and Deterioration

The scale used for the test is just another discardable commodity in

the late capitalist market. Like the discardable identity of individuals, it can be easily replaced. The scale has become a commodity in a new system of legitimation which values new representations of reality and undermines previous codes. The impact of this scientific conquest on humanity is significant because it reduces the individual to a "human" commodity.

Although the scale worked out to identify Rachael's status, there is clear evidence that the device is already obsolete. The Voigt-Kampff scale can not keep pace with the development of new machines and thus becomes rapidly useless. This accelerated process of obsolescence of commodities is identified in the novel as 'kippleization':

> The apartments in which no one lives—hundreds of them and all full of the possessions people had, like family photographs and clothes. Those that died couldn't take anything and those who emigrated didn't want to. This building, except for my apartment, is completely kipple-ized.
> "Kipple-ized?" She did not comprehend.
> 'Kipple is useless objects, like junk mail or match folders after you use the last match or gum wrappers of yesterday's homepaper. *(21)*

'Kippleization' as the proliferation of commodities is, moreover, an endless process:

> When nobody's around, kipple reproduces itself. For instance, if you go to bed leaving any kipple around your apartment, when you wake up the next morning there's twice as much of it. It always gets more and more. *(22)*

Kippleization sustains the illusion that nothing is permanent, as things must be quickly replaced in late capitalist society.

At the heart of the process of obsolescence lies the Nexus-6 androids whose four-year life span is discarded by more sophisticated models. Androids do not die because of their age but because they are replaced by new models. In Olalquiaga's words,

> Often made for a very short life span, these artifacts die without age marks, still shining new. Their deterioration is caused more by abandonment than by use: they are left to the decomposition occasioned by lack of maintenance and often relegated to the realm of trash. *(23)*

Androids, like all machines, begin to desintegrate and become useless: "We are not born; we don't grow up; instead of dying from illness or old age we wear out like ants."*(24)* These words, said by Rachael, reveal the precarious condition of the individuals and machines in a post-industrial society of commodities. Human beings, like androids, wear out and vanish in the dust. This society proposes a new aesthetic of decay that reduces the new and old, waste and garbage, human beings and machines to discardable commodities.

Deckard's post-industrial world is characterized by urban decay. Empty, old and dark buildings are filled up with self perpetuating increase of waste and garbage:

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.
Eventually everything within the building would merge,
would be faceless and identical, mere pudding-like kipple
piled to the ceiling of each apartment. And, after that, the
uncared-for building itself would settle into shapelessness,
buried under the ubiquity of the dust. *(25)*

John Isidore lives in such a place. He, like the building, is in a process of

decaying,

So maybe it's I, John Isidore said to himself. Maybe when
you deteriorate back down the ladder of evolution as I have,
when you sink into the tomb world slough of being a
special—well, best to abandon that line of inquiry. Nothing
depressed him more than the moments in which he contrasted
his current mental powers with what he had formerly
possessed. Every day he declined in sagacity and vigour. He
and the thousands of other specials throughout Terra, all of
them moving toward the ash heap. Turning into living
kipple. *(26)*

Human beings as well as buildings are thus literally and metaphorically in a

state of despair, as theirs is a condition of entropic disintegration.

The postmodern politics of waste extends to people and places and

grants a new meaning to the postmodern scenario of space without time:

Thinking this he wondered if Mozart had had any intuition
that the future did not exist, that he had already used up his
little time. Maybe I have, too, Rick thought as he watched the
rehearsal move along. This rehearsal will end, the
performance will end, the singers will die, eventually the last
score of the music will be destroyed in one way or another;
finally the name 'Mozart' will vanish, the dust will have won.
If not on this planet then another. *(27)*

Hence people and places do not get old but they are left to decompose and vanish in the dust. The accumulation of dust provides, thus, a feeling of depression highlighted in Dick's novel by John Isidore's apartment building: "the rubbish-littered, lifeless roof of his apartment building as always depressed him."*(28)* In Isidore's building, everything is transformed into ruins and becomes kipple. The result of such politics of kippleization is a compulsive accumulation of objects which produce a reappropriation of the past in the form of pastiche.

2.7. Pastiche

As Jameson remarks, the postmodern cultural logic of time erases all boundaries between past and present. Deckard's is the postmodern world in which things are not ordered in a linear model of historical time but as a series of multiple perspectives. These multiple perspectives make consensus impossible and allow only for an open-ended evolutionary process in which signals of the past circulate among advanced technology in a non-dogmatic way. Thus, in the novel, natural and artificial animals are presented together and can hardly be distinguished. The former are remains of the past which are overvalued in the present because they are almost extinct. The latter are the most developed constructs of technology. Such an on-going presence of the past within the present tends to convey a feeling of timelessness.

Freed finally from temporal restraints, Deckard's world succeeds in grounding high-tech with obsolete objects. The place is, thus, populated by the latest developments of technology and by objects which have been abandoned and are now in a process of deterioration. Deckard's world exemplifies Jameson's concept of pastiche, in which wearing out and waste stand next to high-tech. The result is a destruction of boundaries of time and space.

The postmodern relationship between past and present is based on interaction and on the interdependence of all phenomena. This interactive, interdependent world view is revealed in the description of the Mission Street Hall of Justice building:

> The Mission Street Hall of Justice building, onto the roof of which the hovercar descended, jutted up in a series of baroque, ornamented spires; complicated and modern, the handsome structure struck Rick Deckard as attractive. *(29)*

There is, thus, an interaction of old architecture in the postmodern realm which fits Jameson's definition of pastiche as an aesthetics of quotation. Such aesthetics incorporates dead styles such as the baroque and ornamented spires in a postmodern context. Deckard's world draws from the old and the new in a non linear way as it bridges old architecture and technology and rejects any idea of temporal uniformity. The result is a transformation of historical time into a series of multiple perspectives. This world presents a synchronic rather than a diachronic view. Uniformity is

rejected and gives way to a mix of styles from different historical periods.

The dominant aesthetics of decay of Deckard's world evokes a new relationship between the myths of the past and the present. Following late capitalist's 'both-and' logic, it attempts to legitimate the values of the present and the past by applying a new meaning to them. So, in this fake environment, high technology stands alongside waste producing a conduit between present and past. Olalquiaga remarks that modern cities,

> defying a perception of the passing of time that would attribute decay and deteriotation to old age, ... often display a mixed layering of times in which the carcasses of twenty-and-thirty-year-old structures stand alongside buildings that have aged over centuries. (30)

In Deckard's world, this layering of times is displayed in hovercars in the middle of a city in ruins or in the most valuable thing one may have, that is, genuine animals that compete with artificial animals. While hovercars and electric animals represent the present, genuine animals are symbols of the past.

Another example of the postmodern logic of time which keeps the past alive in the present is the display of androids produced by advanced technology in decaying buildings. This is the case of Pris Stratton, who moves into Isidore's decaying building. She is a Nexus-6 type, the most developed form of android, representative of the present time circulating in a decaying building. The result is a mixing of the aesthetics of decay with

advanced technology which foregrounds the postmodern timelessness.

The process of timelessness of a post-industrial society which discards things not by age marks but by abandonment results in a replacement of temporal coordinators for spatial coordinators. In the novel this is metaphorically portrayed by the various android types and also the very detection devices used to identify them. Both, the replicants and the scales, are representative of a politics of accelerated obsolescence which replaces time with space. In this way, things are not measured by time progression but by the obsessive production which results in an accumulation of unused objects.

2.8. Hyperspace

The obsessive production implies an expansion of spatial frontiers sensed both in outer and inner spaces. The former is represented by the endless accumulation of waste as a result of the rapid production of objects, whereas the latter is represented by a conceptual space sensed in the physical confusion between the human and the technological bodies.

At times the accumulation of waste renders borders between people and places useless. People and things get lost in the waste and fuse into one another. As Olalquiaga writes, this fusion can be compared to a psychological phenomenon called psychastenia, in which "being and

surrounds fuse into one."*(31)* In ***Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?***

the description of Hannibal Sloat illustrates this point:

> Too old to emigrate, Hannibal Sloat, although not a special,
> was doomed to creep out his remaining life on Earth. The
> dust, over the years, had eroded him; it had left his features
> grey, his thoughts grey; it had shrunk him and made his legs
> spindly and his gait unsteady. He saw the world through
> glasses literally dense with dust. For some reason Sloat never
> cleaned his glasses. It was as if he had given up; he had
> accepted the radio-active dirt and it had begun its job, long
> ago, of burying him. Already it obscured his sight. In the few
> years he had remaining it would corrupt his other senses until
> at last only his bird-speech voice would remain, and then that
> would expire, too. *(32)*

Sloat incorporates dust in his own body and wears out like buildings. In this

way, there is a break of boundaries between his body and the dust with the

consequent abandonment of an organism and the formation of another one.

Therefore, Sloat is unable to locate himself in the space where he is

because his self is progressively fragmented and dissolved. When the

knowledge of the self is not achieved and a confusion takes place between

the realms of bodies and dust, the concept of space calls for a redefinition.

Similarly, the physical confusion between the human body and the

technological one and the consequent exchange of identities produce a

fragmentation of the self because one never knows what is properly the

realm of humans and the realm of technology. As Bukatman puts it,

> What is at stake in science fiction is no longer the fusion of
> beings and the immortality of the soul, but the fusion of

being and electronic technology in a new, hard-wired subjectivity. *(33)*

The Nexus-6 androids, part human, part machine, can hardly be identified because they possess almost all the range of human features. These androids are machines inside human bodies, that is, biologically they are pure technology but physically they look like human beings made of organic material. Deckard articulates this issue when he addresses Rachael: "Biologically. You're not made out of transistorized circuits like a false animal; you're an organic entity."*(34)* In this technological era, Rachael embodies the image of the cybernetic organism, "a figure of indeterminate interface."*(35)*

The body, which used to be "the last refuge of identity"*(36)*, becomes a site of multiple discourses:

> The dissolution of boundaries, the "end of borders and frontiers"... , the waning of affect, the erosion of meaning and representation, the rise of spectacle and simulacra, and the demise of history—all of these familiar tropes are played out upon the physical manifestation of the subject—the body. *(37)*

The dilemma of the individual is to construct a coherent self out of all these discourses which reproduce fragmented experiences.

When the concept of self as an organized core vanishes, the individual experiences a behavioral disruption. In the novel, androids reproduce this

disruption regarding emotional experiences,

> 'Roy Baty is as crazy as I am,'Pris said.
> 'Our trip was between a mental hospital on the East Coast and here. We're all schizophrenic, with defective emotional lives—flattening of affect, it's called. And we have group hallucinations.' *(38)*

Flattening of affect is considered to be the only source of evidence to identify androids. It is measured by means of the Voigt-Kampff scale which is "applied to a carefully selected group of schizoid and schizophrenic human patients. Those, specifically, which reveal what's called a "flattening of affect." *(39)*

2.9. The Waning of Affect

The flattening of affect portrayed in the novel may be compared to a condition Jameson identifies as the "waning of affect." Jameson states that,

> As for expression and feelings or emotions, the liberation, in contemporary society, from the older anomie of the centred subject may also mean, not merely a liberation from anxiety, but a liberation from every other kind of feeling as well, since there is no longer a self present to do the feeling. This is not to say that the cultural products of the postmodern era are utterly devoid of feeling, but rather that such feelings—which it may be better and more accurate to call 'intensities'—are now free-floating and impersonal. *(40)*

In postmodern society, the individual's sensibility has been changed as feelings are not sensed directly but by high-tech simulacra or media imagery. Accordingly, the individual experiences emotions in an imaginary

way where there is no real contact. As Olalquiaga puts it,

> The new sense of time and space generated by telecommunications—in the substitution of continuity and distance with instantaneousness and ubiquity—has transformed the perception of things so that they are no longer lived directly but through their representations. *(41)*

Characterized by absence and alienation, this condition requires a "cultural overdose of intense emotions."*(42)* Real contact is thus replaced by recurrent media imagery or high-tech simulacra which provides intense emotional experiences.

In the novel, humans also experience this condition of alienation for they "are so out of touch with their emotions that they must resort to machines in order to feel anything at all."*(43)* Accordingly, humans dial numbers to be affected with artificial feelings:

> 'At that moment,' Iran said, 'when I had the TV sound off, I was in a 382 mood; I had just dialled it. So although I heard the emptiness intelectually, I didn't feel it. My first reaction consisted of being grateful that we could afford a Penfield mood organ. But then I realized how unhealthy it was, sensing the absence of life, not just in this building but everywhere, and not reacting—do you see? I guess you don't. But that used to be considered a sign of mental illness; they called it "absence of appropriate affect."*(44)*

Humans are unable to feel, just like androids. Feelings have to be produced artificially. Humans are thus encouraged to make use of the empathy box.

The empathy box is described by Isidore as "the most personal

possession you have! It's an extension of your body; its the way you touch other humans, it"s the way you stop being alone."*(45)* Accordingly, the box appears as an element of (pseudo)social interaction. It attempts to connect the individual and society by means of artificial contact. The box suggests that individuals are out of touch with real, lived experience.

Deckard's world is a site of everything that is alienating: the empathy box, the television sets, and Mercerism, namely the state religion. All these elements produce individuals with similar personal experiences. No individuality remains. Hence, humans and androids share another common point. Their feelings and individuality are completely manipulated as they are produced artificially. However, they experience this common point in different ways, the former by making use of empathy boxes, television sets, and by following Mercerism, namely the state religion, the latter by having false memory implants controlled by the Rosen Association. Both the box and the television set reinforce what Jameson identifies as the waning of affect, in which individuals have no personal contact.

In Deckard's world, television is all around even in decaying buildings. This characterizes Jameson's logic of the simulacrum with its lived experience transformed into television images. In other words, life in this late capitalist society can be better grasped when it is contained within images or high-tech simulacra like television sets and empathy boxes. Such devices are produced by the social structure and transform reality into

simulated images. This language alters the individual's relationship to reality and to simulacra for they are ideologically controlled. As Bukatman puts it,

> Images and their promise of the satisfaction of desire are manipulated and controlled. The consumer of images becomes a consumer of commodities as the subject becomes further colonized by the forces of capital. The coherence of the subject is revealed as illusory, indeed, imagistic. Control over these images is elusive; in fact, impossible. *(46)*

Within this process, the individual and reality are delineated by a mass culture highly oriented by the media, which reaffirm values like religion and a consumer lifestyle. Everything in Deckard's late capitalist society is produced and controlled by the state ideology, which centered discourse on the old values of the past. In this way, the most valuable thing one identifies in such a world are natural animals, the possession of which measures an individual's wealth and gives him status as they are nearly eradicated from Earth.

In this simulated world, images replace reality and place the individual into an unreal world of simulacra where they try to reaffirm the old values of society. Mercerism, the state religion which ends up being a fake, is the main example of these values:

> 'I am a fraud,'Mercer said. 'They're sincere; their research is genuine. From their standpoint I am an elderly retired bit player named Al Jarry. All of it, their discourse, is true.' *(47)*

Wilbur Mercer as well as Buster Friendly, the entertainer who presents radio and television unending shows, have a huge influence on people's lives. The former controls people's minds by means of the empathy box which helps people fuse with Mercer and find transcendence. The latter presents radio and television shows which "continue twenty-three unbroken warm hours a day."(48)

Both the box and Buster's endless television show are postmodern versions of the media power which exert total control of the individual. Bukatman states that,

> The media are the extensions of the state at the expense of the power of the citizen. For most of the population, then, the new information technologies represent intrusions rather than extrusions. (49)

This discourse reinforces the idea of a social structure dominated by media imagery. In the novel, both Mercer and Friendly fight to control people's minds:

> Maybe Buster is jealous, Isidore conjectured. Sure, that would explain it; he and Wilbur Mercer are in competition. But for what?
> Our minds, Isidore decided. They're fighting for control of our psychic selves; the empathy box on one hand, Buster's guffaws and off-the-cuff jibes on the other. (50)

Mercer and Friendly are symbols of a media-saturated society which gives legitimacy to an atmospheric artificiality. This artificiality presented in the

novel pervades society from one's most intimate thoughts represented by artificial memory implants to the state religion which controls and delineates one's life. In other words, this place produces individuals devoid of any original thoughts whatsoever.

It is particularly clear that Deckard's world is the site of everything that is alienating and alienated and both, Mercer and Friendly, stand as the main emblems of such features. By adopting such devices constructed for the production of alienation, Deckard ends up in a state of despair. Near the end of the novel he experiences the most profound dilemma of his life, that is, the doubt about the legitimacy of Mercer and, consequently, the doubt about the legitimacy of his reality and his own identity. "Mercer isn't a fake,'he said. Unless reality is a fake."*(51)* To doubt Mercer is to doubt his own existence and thus to lose any dimension of truth and reality.

Deckard illustrates the very concept of the postmodern world where appearances count as reality and simulacra is all around undermining any unified concept of truth and reality. In such realm where the concept of truth is lost, Deckard senses the fragility of his own identity as he can not achieve understanding of his fragmentary reality, that is, he can not see beyond the simulated world that he lives in. He, like the androids, ends up trapped in his own (un-)reality.

3. Notes

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21 DICK, p.52-53.

22 DICK, p.53.

23 OLALQUIAGA, p.67.

24 DICK, p.146.

25 DICK, p.20.

26 DICK, p.58.

27 DICK, p.76.

28 DICK, p.111.

29 DICK, p.87.

30 OLALQUIAGA, p.65.

31 OLALQUIAGA, p.1.

32 DICK, p.60.

33 BUKATMAN, p.244.

34 DICK, p.149.

35 BUKATMAN, p.245.

36 OLALQUIAGA, p.93.

37 BUKATMAN, p.246.

38 DICK, p.122.

39 DICK, p.33.

40 JAMESON, p.41.

41 OLALQUIAGA, p.39.

42 OLALQUIAGA, p.23.

43 OLALQUIAGA, p.12.

44 DICK, p.8/9.

45 DICK, p.54.

46 BUKATMAN, p.76.

47 DICK, p.162.

48 DICK, p.58.

49 BUKATMAN, p.77.

50 DICK, p.60.

51 DICK, p.176.

CHAPTER II

Scott's *Blade Runner* and the Logics

of Late Capitalism

> Early in the 21st century the Tyrell Corporation advanced
> Robot Evolution into the Nexus phase—a being virtually
> identical to human being known as REPLICANT.
> The Nexus-6 replicants were superior in strength and agility
> and at least equal in intelligence to the genetic engineers who
> created them.
> Replicants were used Off-world as slave labor, in the
> hazardous exploration and colonization of other planets.
> After a bloody mutiny by a Nexus-6 combat team in an Off-
> world colony, replicants were declared illegal on Earth -
> under penalty of death.
> Special police squads - Blade Runner Units - had orders to
> shoot or kill, upon detection, any trespassing Replicant.
> This was not called execution.
> It was called retirement.
> Los Angeles - November 2019. *(1)*

This is the beginning of Ridley Scott's 1982 film, *Blade Runner,* which

places the audience into the postindustrial, technologised society of Los

Angeles, in the year 2019. Ruled by what Jameson called the logic of late

capitalism, the city is totally controlled by the Tyrell Corporation. The

main purpose of the Corporation is the production of artificial "human

beings" that can hardly be distinguished from their human counterparts.

Blade runners, namely bounty hunters, try to identify artificial beings by finding out if memories are implanted. In this way, the quest for memories ends up being the quest for one's identity.

Paradoxically, such existential problem proves to be a common trait between natural and artificial beings. Both experience the void of subjecthood as none of their features are really theirs. Their social, economic, cultural and even their most intimate lives are controlled and manipulated under the law of multinational capitalism. Because of this high control over the individual's life, natural and artificial beings are constantly trying to assure their status by raising questions of origin.

My discussion of *Blade Runner* moves between Jameson's view of a multinational capitalist society, where even one's thoughts are controlled, to Baudrillard's concept of the simulacrum which surpasses representation and reproduction and produces a hyperreality. The starting point for this chapter is, thus, to demonstrate how Scott's film challenges the established concept of the individual by raising the very problem of distinguishing between the human and the simulacra in the postmodern context. Accordingly, the main source of evidence for the identification of humans and replicants in the film involves questions of identity and memory, as human memories become the symbol of authentic humanity.

Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* has become a hallmark of postmodernist

cultural production. Aesthetically the film labors to reconstruct the most representative features of a postmodernist society. The first shot of the film shows a futuristic city, namely Los Angeles, where a constant downpour of acid rain falls. The scene is accompanied by Vangelis's music score. Both visual and sound effects help create a pessimistic atmosphere of a future world which recycles the 1940's film noir style. This is a nostalgic pastiche where the old and the new keep showing through. To sum up, Scott's Los Angeles is a world of simulacra where science and technology end up defining reality.

The city portrayed in the film is an allegory of the postmodern, postindustrial society. The place evokes the restructuring of social relationships and living patterns as a consequence of the new reality provided by technology. This new reality is best represented by the Nexus-6 replicant group, perfect copies of human beings genetically engineered by the Tyrell Corporation. Human beings, in turn, are threatened by these "human" machines:

> As in legendary Atlantis, the underwater city whose
> perfection led to self destruction, human beings in Blade
> Runner have technologically replicated themselves to such an
> exact degree that their own existence is now endangered. *(2)*

Indeed, the Nexus-6 replicant type is not only identical with human beings. The replicants are, as their creator Eldon Tyrell claims, "more humans than human beings." In other words, they have surpassed their originals and,

thus, have embodied Baudrillard's concept of the hyperreal.

As the story unfolds, skilled blade runner Rick Deckard is informed that six representatives of the Nexus-6 generation, three males and three females, have escaped illegally to Earth. They are identified as: Leon Kowalsky, Roy Batty (probably the leader), Pris, Zhora, Rachael and another replicant whose name is omitted as he was killed earlier in an attempt to invade Eldon Tyrell's corporation. All the replicants, except Rachael, have escaped to Earth to demand a longer life from Tyrell, as they are created to last for only four years. Rachael differs from the group in that she has no termination day. This makes her a perfect simulation, since human beings also lack a specifically defined termination day.

Because they bear much resemblance with human beings, replicants have redrawn boundaries between natural and artificial beings and have challenged the value of originality. They thus articulate Baudrillard's notion of the simulacrum, a notion that radically alters the traditional concept of humanity until it can no longer be called such. As a replacement for humans, replicants transcend their originals and embody the very definition of the hyperreal, namely a "generation by models of a real without origin or reality."(3) One of the steps to understand this notion of hyperreality is to characterize it as dimensions in which boundaries between reality and simulacra blur. As a result, humanity must be redefined.

In Scott's simulated Los Angeles, nothing seems to have any reality whatsoever, not even human beings, as they differ from replicants only in terms of the signifiers they can attach to themselves. This aspect renders human existence completely unstable as the individual who is born under humanist assumptions experience the void of subjecthood, just like the replicants. This is the case of Deckard, whose task is to put replicants into retirement so as to restore order and rid the society of renegade replicants. In the search for the remaining replicants of the Nexus-6 group, Deckard experiences the undermining of his own identity as the replicants' features prove to be his own. Thus, he himself is from the very beginning implicated in a quest for his own threatened identity. For all that, Deckard becomes a representative of the postmodern individual who experiences the fragmentation of the self and can hardly achieve understanding of the reality he lives in.

In a closer look at **Blade Runner's** main protagonist, one can find clear similarities between Deckard and the replicants. These similarities foreground the postmodern rupture between man and machine. The difference between natural and artificial beings has faded away and the postmodern individual becomes the perfect example of simulacra. In the film, the first events which highlight this aspect are related to photography and memory. Photographs are memories that may alter one's relation to the present and the future, and in Deckard's world they become a certificate of

origin, the proof of a previous existence, that which replicants do not have.

By means of photographs, replicants try to rebuild their world, to restore from fragments their history so that the past and the present can be symbolically reconstructed. So, when replicants connect past and present they find the narrative thread that supports their own identity. In this way, replicants rely desperately on photographs so as to prove their existence over time. This can be clearly illustrated in the shot which shows Roy and Leon standing outside Leon's apartment. Roy asks ironically: "Did you get your precious photos?" For Leon the photos grant him a symbolic identity, that which allow him to enter the human discourse and to remain alive. *(4)*

However, the metaphor of the photographs as documents that prove one to be a human being is questioned when one sees that Leon's photographs as well as Rachael's might well be false. Their history is forged and their features are the result of their creator's mind, Tyrell. Such issue illustrates the very logic of a late capitalist society which controls every feature of an individual's life, even his most intimate memories, so that the individual himself can not achieve understanding of his own identity. In what follows, I consider some relevant moments in the film when photograph and memory threaten one's personal identity.

The first moment happens when Deckard goes after the first replicant, Leon Kowalsky. The scene shows Deckard in Leon's apartment trying to

find some evidence about Leon's artificial status. When Deckard comes across some pictures in a drawer he astonishedly asks himself: "Family photos? Replicants did not have family, either." From this moment on, photographs become another unreliable element in order to identify human beings. Deckard becomes increasingly suspicious of evidences for one's historical identity, such as photos. He thus experiences the postmodern anxiety of the individual that can not find an anchor, an organized core to base his personal history. In Deckard's world photographs become, thus, destituted of meaning as they are registers of a reality which may not be true.

Another moment when photography plays a major role happens in Deckard's apartment. After leaving Leon's apartment, Deckard goes home and there he meets Rachael. She has brought a photograph of her mother, namely a document which recaptures a memory of her history. The photograph represents to her the trace of an origin, a certificate of a past life, that time which replicants do not possess. For Rachael, the photography is the only means by which she can try to prove she is not a copy of her master, Tyrell, but a human being. When Rachael shows Deckard the photograph and claims that she is not a replicant, he replies that her memories are all false.

Deckard's argument is that the photograph belonged to Tyrell's niece and that Rachael's memories are implanted from her. Shocked by this

revelation, Rachael's eyes are filled with tears as she realizes she is a replicant unaware of her own status. She loses the connection she imagined she had with her original self and the sense of who she is. She experiences, thus, the void of subjecthood. This is a process in which the individual lacks the sense of his own identity because he can not project a coherent picture of himself as an integrated self. In other words, the individual who can not establish a contact with his inner self projects a fragmented image of his condition, an image that symbolically portrays the lack of harmony between the individual and the universe. Ironically, when Deckard notices that Rachael cries over her artificial status he himself expresses some empathy towards her. Deckard apologizes and says he is wrong, that is, he shows some concern towards a replicant. Deckard is thus confused about his own identity in confrontation with the Nexus-6 replicants. This aspect can be highlighted when Deckard claims, just after Rachael leaves his apartment: "Replicants were not supposed to have feelings, neither blade runners. What the hell is happening to me?". Right at this moment Deckard looks at Leon's and Rachael's photos. There is, thus, a clear implication that the frontiers that divided their worlds are vanishing.

. Deckard's ambivalent feelings in his relationship with replicants suggest that in fact Deckard does not know his real identity. This loss of identity is caused by the limitations existing in a postindustrial, technologized society in which technological developments exceed the

human capacity to keep pace with them. The greatest difficulty of the individual who lives in such society is, thus, to have an account of his own condition since he can not achieve a complete understanding of the world around. The individual's condition ends up being one of alienation to what he and the others are. In *Blade Runner,* Deckard remains the main example of such individual.

The film presents two moments when photographs become an important source of evidence to redefine one's condition. In both cases the setting is Deckard's apartment. The first shot shows Deckard alone playing the piano. Then, while one hears the music, the camera shows several family pictures over the piano. Among these pictures one can identify Deckard's pictures mixed with Leon's and Rachael's. Doubtless, such parallelism serves the purpose of destroying any opposition between Deckard and the replicants. In the process of self awareness, Deckard establishes meaningful ties with the world of replicants, as he can not assert his own separate identity in relation to them.

The key moment in the film in which such link is most clearly seen is the scene which shows Rachael in Deckard's apartment for the second time. Rachael and Deckard share the same feeling, that is, both are shaking because Rachael has just shot Leon when he is about to kill Deckard. Finally, right after this scene, there is a sequence of shots which shows Rachael looking at the pictures over the piano and then at Deckard

sleeping. After that, Rachael goes near the piano, takes a closer look at the pictures and then plays it. Photograph and music help her recapture a memory, a past moment.

While Rachael is playing the piano, Deckard comes to her. Visually, the scene provides a direct parallelism between Deckard and Rachael so that one can not distinguish between the human and the simulacrum. Such a combination of parallels puts Deckard in the same position as Rachael, a replicant, and foregrounds the postmodern world where appearances, which are counted as reality, are so commodified that real identity behind simulacra becomes inconceivable. The postmodern individual is defined, thus, according to his surface reflection without any depth (Fig. 1).

As the story goes on, Deckard and the replicants become more and more alike (Fig. 2). The conventional features that distinguished them gradually disappear and the artificial being has access to human discourse. The issue may be illustrated by Rachael, whose emotional feelings places her near Deckard, and also by Deckard's reaction towards Zhora's death. He feels sick about shooting her and wonders about her death report:

> The report would be routine retirement of a replicant which
> didn't make me feel any better about shooting a woman in the
> back.
> There it was again.
> Feeling for her, for Rachael.

Fig. 1

Fig. 2

67

The dialogue shows that Deckard has accepted these artificial beings under humanist assumptions and that he expresses deep empathy with them. In Deckard's mind, the machine has vanished under the surface reflection of replicants which portrays human features.

Due to the technological developments that permeate Deckard's world, the individual witnesses transformations which place him in a world of uncertainty. As a result, replicants and human beings share feelings of anxiety and doubt. When the policeman Gaff says to Deckard: "It's too bad she won't live but then again, who does?", the opposition between replicants and human beings vanishes as both are victimized by the power of a late capitalist society which manipulates one's features to the point that no individuality remains. People, like machines, are programmed and commodified to such a degree that they can not see beyond their world. This is a world reduced to an image and the postmodern individual is defined according to its surface reflections. Deckard and Rachael remain as examples of this postmodern individual who can not hold a determinate identity because they are "commodified and transformed into their own images."*(5)*

Living under the cultural logic of the simulacrum, the postmodern individual hardly succeeds in finding an identity as he lacks an anchoring point in reality. In such a depthless reality, as Jameson puts it, only images

unsupported by reality are communicated. In **Blade Runner,** replicants may

be taken as examples of such depthlessness, as their images do not reveal

their real identity. Rachael, for instance, is not in fact Tyrell's niece but a

replicant who has replaced his real niece. Rachael is the perfect example of

the postmodern individual who is reduced to a commodified, depthless

image. This issue foregrounds technology as a power that

> can alter reality and produce nonexistent identities or switch
> existing ones even deleting people from the annals of the
> living and resurrecting the dead. *(6)*

As a result, the only way to find one's real identity is searching endlessly

for one's origin, namely, one's anchor point in reality. Ultimately, **Blade**

Runner deals with the related questions of origin, maternity and

temporality to identify natural human beings.

In the film, photographs juxtapose fragments of memory and

maternity to illustrate the question of origin and temporality. The figure of

the mother represents the chain which links past, present and future and

provides a sense of continuity throughout time. Both, photograph and

mother, precede the present moment and are representative of one's history.

As Giuliana Bruno writes,

> as a document of 'that has been', photography constitutes a
> document of history, of its deferred existence ... History is
> that time when my mother was alive before me. It is the trace
> of the dream of unity, of its impossibility. *(7)*

Photograph and mother incorporate elements on a symbolic level. Photos enable the individual to recover some moments of those years which are gone, whereas the mother helps the individual to establish a historical narrative which supports one's identity. When one searches for the mother, one tries to reach a time before oneself so that one can have an imaginative version of oneself. Metaphorically, the mother is a manifestation of a primordial self, a chain which establishes ties between the individual and his selfhood.

In *Blade Runner*, Leon, Rachael, and Deckard are examples of the postmodern individual who strives to keep his selfhood by means of his link with the mother. When Leon undergoes a test at the Tyrell Corporation to identify his status and is asked to talk about his mother, he says: "My mother? I'll tell you about my mother!" Suddenly Leon stands up and shoots the inquirer. Leon can not talk about his mother because she incorporates direct references to a false heritage. Actually, he has no real family ties and no evidence that he has a past leading to a present.

By the same token, Rachael shows Deckard a photograph of a mother and a daughter claiming to be hers: "Look, this is me with my mother!" Rachael's photograph of her mother is an element which reveals the ambivalence of her condition. It remains as an encoded subtext within the postmodern world as it is allusive of a reality which does not exist. Rachael's search for a maternal history represents then her search for the

original self, for that place within discourse where the referent names something real, that is, the real version of him/herself. Simbolically, she touches and reconstructs an old, original self, a history which can establish her identity over time.

Deckard uses the photographs of his mother to restore fragments of memory and history so as to define himself. The mother is a memory of a primeval reality, a manifestation of a narrative model which represents truth and reality, a possibility of experiencing the dimensions of past and future. Entailed in the reliance of having a mother, Deckard affirms his status as a natural being. Ironically, this aspect is undermined throughout the story because the mothers are portrayed only by means of photographs which, as pointed out before, have become unreliable evidence. In Deckard's world, photography becomes unreliable memory. Thus a crucial element in the formation of a self turns out to be a false feature artificially fabricated.

Memories have a heightened significance for the postmodern individual: they are images of previous moments retained in the mind. Memory registers impressions, stores information, reorders it, and establishes meaningful ties between items so that one can make sense of one's own world. When Rachael goes to Deckard's apartment for the second time, she plays the piano to recapture a memory, a moment of history which is omitted in her mind. Although Rachael claims that she did

not know she could play the piano, her false memory implants enable her to sort out what she thinks are her emotions, but which are actually Tyrell's niece's emotions. Fabricated memories are thus a crucial element in the replicants' lives, as they help replicants to bridge the gap between past and present and provoke "human" emotional responses.

Deckard touches the very issue of memory in the scene in which he analyzes Leon's and Rachael's pictures. He wonders: "I don't know why replicants would collect photos. Maybe they were like Rachael, they needed memories." Paradoxically, memories are also important for Deckard. As he makes a description about himself he says that he is an 'ex-cop, ex-blade runner, ex-killer' and he even mentions his 'ex-wife'. In other words, Deckard does not have a present identity, he is only a reflection of a past life. Living under the cultural logic of late capitalism, Deckard keeps the past alive by attempting to join his present image with his referent in the past, just like replicants. His present moment only makes sense in terms of the past which is kept alive by means of photographs and memories.

Needless to say, in Deckard's postmodern world photographs and memories become unreliable elements in the specification of an identity as both can be fabricated: photos are commodities and memories are "parts" of a machine. In this manner, Deckard's world becomes a metaphor of a late capitalist society which controls every feature of an individual so that he can hardly establish boundaries between reality and simulacra. The

individual who lives in such a simulated world can not grasp the unreality of his own life because the information that circulates all around can be commodified to such an extent that his own self is reduced to a discontinuous series of representations. In Baudrillard's account, this individual is nothing but a simulacrum.

The task of the postmodern individual is to search for his origins, that is, to find a historical link so as to guarantee his status. In *Blade Runner* the replicants' search for the father also becomes a metaphor for the search for origins since the father is a source in the production of a self. Because replicants can not find the father, they have no established sense of selfhood, so they can not avoid the feeling of emptiness that their condition involves. This aspect can be illustrated by the female replicant, Pris. While in Sebastian's apartment she claims: "I think, therefore, I am." At the core of the philosophical implications of this assertion stands a replicant who tries unsuccessfully to confirm her existence as a subject. Pris becomes a representative of the postmodern individual who experiences the void of subjecthood because all her memories and fantasies are implanted. Pris's assertion foregrounds the need to find an identity to herself as she, like the other replicants, is still enslaved to her maker. Pris wants to find her maker in order to be free of the links which tie them and also to assure her temporality.

For the same reason, the other replicants go after Tyrell, the "father" who gave life to them. They want to demand a longer lifetime as they are programmed to live for only four years. In addition to the direct references of Tyrell as maker and father of replicants, the film also offers an allusive reading of Tyrell as the one who embodies late capitalism's power to control people's lives not only in social discourse but also at the level of the discourse of the self. As Michael Ryan and Douglas Kellner state,

> *Blade Runner* ... calls attention to the oppressive core of capitalism and advocates revolt against exploitation. The Tyrell corporation invents replicants in order to have a more pliable labour force, and the film depicts how capitalism turns humans into machines. *(8)*

In late capitalist society, boundaries between human and technological values are cancelled. This is metaphorically portrayed in the film by the relationship between Deckard and the replicants. While in Tyrell corporation, Deckard says to Rachael: "Replicants are like any other machine. They can be a benefit or a hazard." Paradoxically, Deckard falls in love with Rachael, a replicant.

The film also illustrates late capitalism's control in the scene which follows Rachael's test. The shot shows Deckard asking Tyrell about Rachael:

> Deckard: 'How can it not know what it is?'
> Tyrell: 'Commerce.'

In a society of total controls, even the individual ends up molded into a powerful consumer machine. As Rachael tells Deckard, "I'm not in the business. I'm the business." Rachael's words reinforce the economic formation of late capitalism which classifies everything according to the logic of utility and prestige value. The individual becomes a commodity trapped in a new emergent social and economic order.

Moreover, Tyrell's power is portrayed even geographically, as the Tyrell Corporation pyramid, namely the place where Tyrell makes his genetic experiments and also his own home, dominates the city. Tyrell is the master who exerts control over the replicants' own sense of identity: he is the patriarch who creates replicants and programs every feature of their lives. In this way, Tyrell grants replicants not only a symbolic identity but also an imaginary one, that is, a self with all its values previously defined, including their lifespan.

Being totally determined and yet powerfully "human", replicants end up in a state of despair both because they can not have a sense of the individual self and also because of their short temporality. The result is a confrontation with Tyrell and a cry for more life. A sequence of shots shows J. F. Sebastian and Roy in Tyrell's building:

> Tyrell: 'What? What is the problem?'
> Roy: 'Death.'
> Tryell: 'I'm afraid it's out of my control.'
> Roy: 'I want more life.'

Replicants are representative of the postmodern individual with his fragmented temporality. This condition denies a past and seals off any hope of a future life placing the individual in a constant present.

Deprived of the dimension between past and present, replicants remain as examples of the schizophrenic individual with his fragmented temporality. The schizophrenic individual is constantly threatened in his self identity because his chronology is disrupted. Again, this condition is characteristic of the postmodern moment. As a result of his feeling of fragmentation, the schizophrenic individual can not grow, can hardly have an existence over time. As Jameson states, the schizophrenic is reduced to "a series of pure and unrelated presents in time." *(9)* In other words, the schizophrenic can not make a connection between his present time and the various moments of his past. In this way, he has no conceivable future because he ends up living in a circular reference, trapped by his own temporal breakdown.

In *Blade Runner*, replicants articulate this fragmented temporality in their condition of beings with a lifespan of four years. In other words, replicants can not have a sense of continuity with the past and consequently they question their future. This issue can be illustrated almost in the end of the film when Roy has just died. Deckard wonders about what Roy wanted to know:

'Where do I come from?
Where am I going?
How long have I got?
All the questions all of us ask.'

Thus, the most profound dilemmas of replicants, namely the search for their temporality, is a common trait of human beings, too.

Still, the dominant idea of individuals who have their lifetime already determined portrays the total control that a late capitalist society has over the individual as it determines even the time to be born and the time to die. "Time to die", says Roy in the final scene of his battle with Deckard. Roy, like the other replicants, is doomed to live a life programmed by a superior entity. In other words, late capitalist society organizes not only the public issues that define the individual's life but also the private ones. The logic which permeates such society turns everything into a commodity, from one's lifespan to one's own values, as it organizes one's work, family and sexuality.

Nonetheless, late capitalist society articulates a set of patterns which value life and its intense emotional experiences. In Deckard's world, replicants portray such aspect as, despite their short lifespan, their life is lived very intensely. This issue can be best exemplified by the male replicant, Roy Batty. When Roy meets Tyrell in his home and complains that replicants were not created to last long, Tyrell compares Roy to a light that burns faster but brighter. Furthermore, in the battle scene with

Deckard, Roy says melancholically: "I've seen things you people wouldn't believe." In other words, despite the short lifespan, replicants experience life with much more intensity than humans who live longer. Hence, in their urgent and intense life, replicants end up making their existence much more meaningful in precisely "human" terms.

One of the moments in the film which illustrates this aspect is again related to the battle scene between Roy and Deckard. When Roy has won the fight and Deckard is almost falling from the building, the replicant holds Deckard's hand and saves his life. Roy is aware of the brevity of his existence but he wants more life. Metaphorically, Deckard means life to Roy. Thus, in this moment, replicant and bounty hunter share a feeling of fragility. Deckard depended on Roy to continue living and Roy relied on Deckard in order to carry feelings of continuity into the future. Some moments later, Deckard experiences again the dimensions of his own life and the feeling of fragility that his society imposes on the individual. The last sequence in the film shows Deckard flying away with Rachael. He claims: "I don't know how long we have together. Who does?" In late capitalist society, the future is controlled and undermined by a superior power which turns the subject into an object to be manipulated. The individual is, thus, constantly placed in a world of uncertainty.

The question of fragmented temporality is also exemplified in J.F. Sebastian. He is twenty five years old but suffers from cellular decrepitude,

that is, he is ageing prematurely. There is, thus, a clear identification between replicants and Sebastian as they share a common trait, both have a short lifespan. Ironically, as the story unfolds, Pris and Roy realize that Sebastian is a member of Tyrell's team, the one who designed replicants. Sebastian becomes a link between replicants and Tyrell and later takes Roy to Tyrell's building to meet his creator.

Sebastian's internal process of time duration becomes a metaphor of the postindustrial condition of wearing out which creates an aesthetics of decay. The timeless Bradbury building where Sebastian lives is representative of this aesthetic, since one finds garbage all around. Actually, all the city of Los Angeles created by Scott exposes the dark side of technology and its consequence in the environment and in the individual's life. What is ultimately being revealed is the precarious condition of the human being's identification with the world around and the disturbing image of his own self:

> Human beings in this film are in a state of spiritual decay metaphorically portrayed in the condition they've brought upon Earth, a planet so unhealthy it must be abandoned for better (however artificial) colonies. *(10)*

In other words, the film juxtaposes the individual's and the city's decaying process. This process transforms everything into transient things which do not last long and leave no seeds to take root. This issue is metaphorically portrayed by Roy when he says to Deckard, some minutes before dying, that

the things he saw throughout his short lifespan "will be lost in time, like tears in the rain." After his death, nothing will be left from him, not even his memories.

In postmodern Los Angeles, the aesthetics of decay is reinforced by the constant rain fall which provides a dark scenery throughout the film. The individual submerges in the rain and in the shadows of the enormous towers which populate the city. Night is constant, and the environment is a fake one devoid of any trace of nature. Environmental pollution is pervasive, massive advertising videoscreens covering the sides of the buildings or shown by flying cars. The opening scene of the film illustrates the negative look of this futuristic city as it combines the endless rain, the eletronic advertisements, the constant explosions, and the smoke which permeates all the atmosphere.

In this postmodern city, the peculiar urban decay portrays the postindustrial politics of waste and recycling. One of the examples which foreground such politics of recycling is the look of the female replicant, Pris. She is found by Sebastian in the middle of the garbage. Her visual look is the exact expression of the aesthetics of decay reinforced by the white wig, the exaggerated make up, and the costume which seems to be in a process of disintegration (Fig. 3). As Bruno puts it, "consumerism, waste, and recycling meet in fashion, the 'wearable art' of late capitalism, a sign of postmodernism."(11) Pris is labelled the 'basic pleasure model'. For all

Fig. 3

that, Pris embodies a text which is allusive to the postmodern values and conceptions.

In terms of architecture, the style of **Blade Runner** evokes a nostalgic pastiche which produces a new spatial logic. In Jameson's words, pastiche is "the imitation of dead styles, speech through all the masks and voices stored up in the imaginary museum of a now global culture." *(12)* In Scott's city the main examples of decay are the Bradbury building, where Sebastian lives, and the Tyrell Corporation. The former remains as fragments of the real Los Angeles Bradbury architecture, whereas the latter evokes quotations from the past, from the architecture of the building itself which resembles an Egyptian pyramid (Fig. 4), to the Greek columns inside the building. Commenting on the columns, Olalquiaga remarks that,

> their indexical value as signs of power and authority has been transformed into an intertextual one. What matters now is the columns' vague allusion to a history that has become a still scenario where eras, locations, and characters figure merely as props. *(13)*

Such relationship between past and present is based on interaction and not on rejection. Therefore, history does not mean any progress but it is transformed into a series of multiple perspectives. Past and present are viewed together and are recreated to form a new history.

Scott's Los Angeles inserts the viewer in a complex set of cultural and historical references which rearranges time and space. In the film,

Fig. 4

Roman and Greek columns provide a retro mise-en-scène for the city. Signs of classical Oriental mythology recur. Chinese dragons are revisited in neon lighting. A strong Egyptian element pervades the decor. The Tyrell corporation overlooks what resemble the Egyptian pyramids in a full sunset. The interior of the office is not high-tech, but rather a pop Egyptian extravaganza, to which the choreography of movement and make up of Zhora adds exoticism. Elevators might have video screens, but they are made of stone. The walls of Deckard's apartment are reminiscent of an ancient Mayan palace. *(14)*

This spatial structure, which is a perfect example of pastiche, mixes high technology with stylistic quotations from a number of historical periods. In this way, the city portrays the postmodern politics of space which replaces time:

Constantly referring to a plethora of different times and cultures, with buildings from all epochs anachronistically aligned side by side, space becomes an imaginary territory where instead of a casual organization, a pastiche of seemingly random selections prevails. *(15)*

In this architectural pastiche, the new interacts with the old in a synchronic construction. The past is symbolically reconstructed and valorized as it is infused with a positive nostalgia. And the present moment is the result of the interaction between past and present as it absorbs everything that has come before.

Free from a chronological sequence, the postmodern 'both-and' logic turns everything into a commodity that circulates in hyperspace. Thus, the signifiers of the past, like the Greek columns, circulate among advanced

technologies, like replicants, placing the individual in an endless present time. In other words, the economic and cultural pastiches with their logic of utility turns anything from the past into a commodity in the present time. **Blade Runner**, with its peculiar mixture of the mythic past with the technologised future, celebrates Jameson's cultural logic of the times with the effacement of the boundaries between past, present and future and asserts a preference for a spatial narrative rather than a temporal one.

The spatial narrative focuses on a new concept of space which is free from restraints, the cyberspace. In cyberspace, limits can hardly be grasped by the human perception as spaces are characterized by boundlessness. Scott's Los Angeles is the main example of a place devoid of boundaries. It is indeed,

> a decentered and boundless space dispersed, thanks to the
> hovercars and rooftop chases, across all three dimensions of
> the urban topography. *(16)*

The aesthetics of the city, one of spatial loss, creates a crisis of representation of space:

> the urban territory is marked by an infinity of space, a
> multiplicity of surfaces: time is displaced within a field of
> inaction and, ultimately, inertia as the city, the universe,
> circles back upon itself in a closed feedback loop: in the
> language of the situationists, the city-state has become *the*
> *cybernetic state.(17)*

In cybernetic space, the individual is trapped in the circular relationship of images. The individual can not escape because there is no way out, no boundaries to be crossed. The city is overcrowded and spaceless. As Bukatman puts it, "the new urban space is directionless-coordinates are literally value-less when all directions lead to more of the same."*(18)* In other words, this place is full of intersections which lead nowhere.

The new logic of space can be illustrated by Moebius's and Alexander Jodorowsky's comics "The Incal", in which the hero is thrown from Suicide Alley (Fig. 5). The picture shows his fall into a place without limits. This spatial looping reveals chaos in all levels:

> there is no logic or order to the space which lies littered and cluttered, a morass of high and low technologies, a chaos of intersecting lines. The only constant is the drop, which serves as much to reveal the entire urban space in a glance as to transform it into an environment of threat and spatial dislocations. *(19)*

The picture provides a 'totalizing gaze', as Bukatman puts it, in which one can grasp only the global space. All tendencies toward referentiality are denied.

Bukatman compares the picture from Suicide Alley with the shot in which Deckard and Gaff approach police headquarters (Fig. 6). He states that the viewer is presented with two spaces,

Concentrated cities: *The Incal* by Moebius and Alexander Jodo-
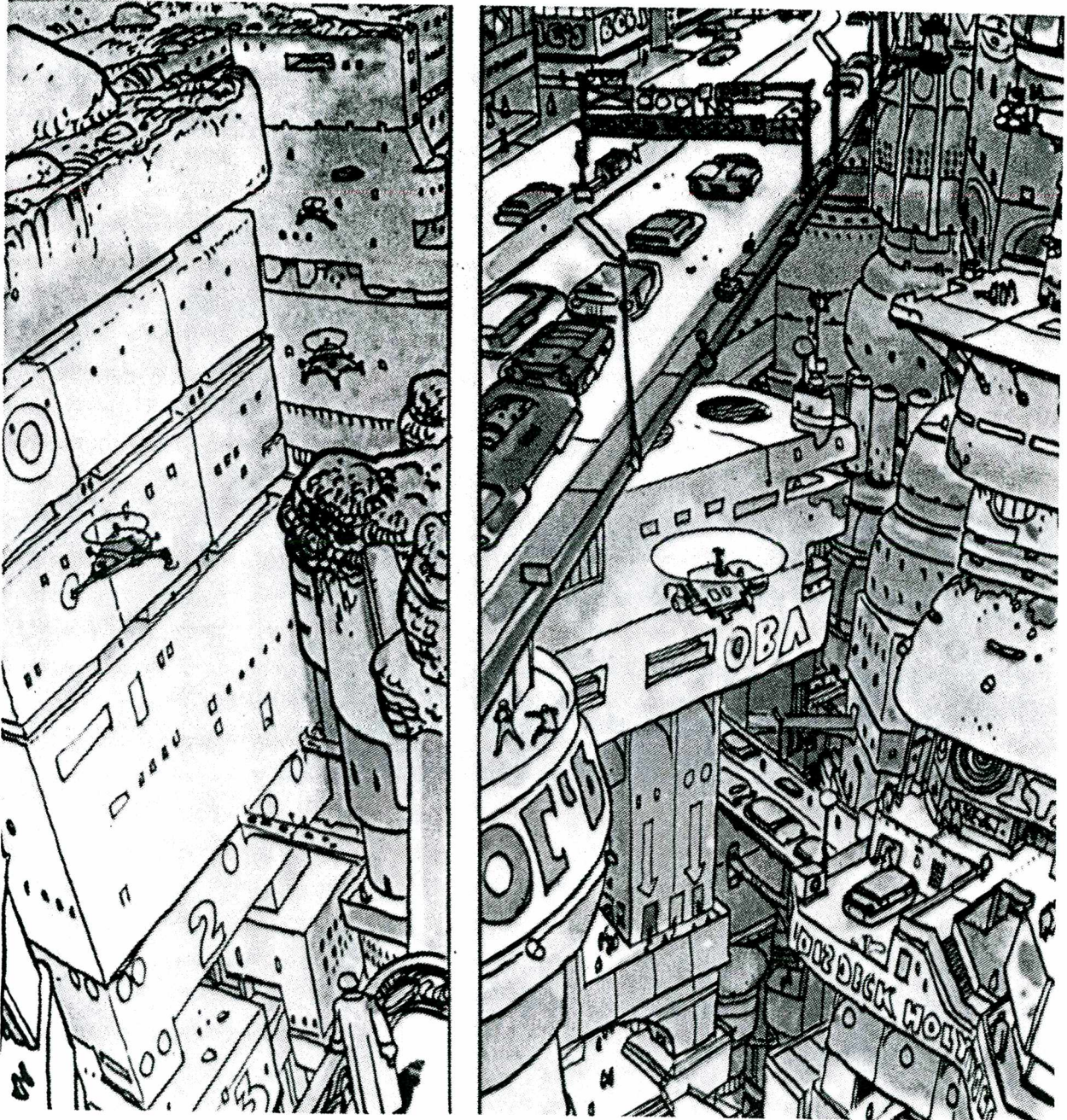rowsky. (Marvel Comics)

Fig. 5

Fig. 9

the first is the superbly detailed urban space which dominates
the film, an effect produced by a seamless blend of miniature
vehicles, models of varying scales, computer controlled
camerawork, and multiple layers of traveling mattes. *(20)*

The second field, as Bukatman calls it, is "defined by the controls and data

screens of the hovercar."*(21)* The viewer's perspective is highly restricted

in scope. Hovercars move vertically and horizontally through ways which

undermine any perceptual evidence. As cyberspace is infinite and

boundless, the individual can hardly achieve any spatial consensus.

This new spatial dimension becomes clearly visible in some of the

images used for the film, such as "The Long Tomorrow" figure by Moebius

and Dan O'Bannon (Fig. 7). The figure presents a place without any central

reference point. The postmodern individual feels lost in this hyperspace

because he can not identify any spatial center. In such a decentered

aesthetic, the individual can only suspect that there is a global logic that

cannot be fully known and mapped.

Jameson's reading of John Portman's "Bonaventura Hotel" also

illustrates the new urban spatiality (Fig. 8). As Jameson writes, the

"Bonaventura Hotel aspires to being a total space, a complete world, a kind

of miniature city."*(22)* In other words, the Bonaventura is not a part of the

city, but a separate microcosm which replaces the city in all its features. It

is a self-referential space that has cut itself off from the rest of the city. The

outer space, made of glass skin, produces a distorted image of the city

Inverted cities: "The Long Tomorrow" by Moebius and Dan O'Bannon (Marvel Comics). A major influence on the design of *Blade Runner*.

Fig. 7

The Westin Bonaventure (Portman)

Fig. 8

outside. As Jameson puts it,

> the glass skin achieves a peculiar and placeless dissociation
> of the *Bonaventura* from its neighbourhood: it is not even an
> exterior, inasmuch as when you seek to look at the hotel's
> outer walls you cannot see the hotel itself, but only the
> distorted images of everything that surrounds it. *(23)*

The Bonaventura celebrates inner space as an homogeneous site in different
scalar levels (Fig. 9). In Jameson's words, this is a space of loss for the
individual moves around and can hardly locate himself.

The cyberspace narrative illustrates a conceptual shift in terms of
space which evokes an 'imploded' urbanism. *(24)* The main example of
such urban space is the shopping mall. Bukatman states that the shopping
mall,

> possesses a monadic self-sufficiency in which the outside
> world is denied (the mall has no windows and no weather,
> while points of egress are hidden off to the sides), but this is
> coupled with a recapitulation of forms that strongly connote
> *exteriority*—"streets" are lined with carefully planted and
> nurtured trees; a central "food court" mimics the piazzas and
> plazas of a more traditional urban space. *(25)*

In this simulated city, as the inner and outer spaces are inside, illustrations
of spatial boundaries are disrupted.

In Scott's film, "imploded" spatial dislocations can be apprehended in
two ways: biologically and geographically. Biologically, by the replacement
of parts of the body from organic to artificial. Geographically, in the

The Westin Bonaventure, interior (Portman)

Fig. 9

expansion of life into far-distant planets. In this way, the postmodern spatial frontiers have expanded its limits to the extent that one can hardly locate oneself in space. Replicants illustrate very clearly the new perception of space between the organic and the artificial bodies. As Olalquiaga puts it,

> Having turned into a classic because of its complex treatment of a high-tech reality, Blade Runner explores the threat posed to the body by technological reproduction and questions the assumptions underlying this menace. *(26)*

In ***Blade Runner***, the integration of technological parts into the human body raises the very question of defining humanity.

After a history of mutation, the organic body is no longer a source of evidence to identify humanity because, in a technological world, "neither is humaneness exclusively organic, nor is the organic a guarantee of humanity." *(27)* With the technological developments the duality that separated organic and artificial bodies has vanished as the body has become artificial, whereas technology has been taken into the human realm. In other words, humanity has used technological devices in order to overreach itself and, thus, has commodified itself to such a degree that new boundaries must be drawn between the so-called natural and artificial individuals.

The commodification of bodies is also illustrated in films like ***Robocop.*** In this film, the robot embodies a territorial struggle as he is the

result of a "techno-humanoid fusion."*(28)* Robocop shows clearly the 'introjection' of electronic apparatus into the human body (Fig. 10). As Bukatman observes,

> in the current era of techno-surrealism similar ambivalences pertain, and as the represented body moves ever more emphatically toward a symbiosis with electronic technology, it becomes ever more emphatically armored. *(29)*

Robocop, like the replicants of **Blade Runner,** is a pure example of the cyborg. He is part cop and part machine, and in his search for social order he produces human as well as technological discourses. As Bukatman puts it, this armored body resists definition.

In terms of its geographical scope, the film portrays life in other planets and space travels to distant places. The universe is in a process of expansion and replicants are used off-world in the exploration of other planets. Furthermore, the Los Angeles where Deckard lives suggests a geographical displacement as it presents oriental features in an American polluted megalopolis. As examples of the oriental domination, one can name the Japanese girl who appears in the huge advertisements throughout the city and also the oriental merchants in the streets who sell from food to artificial eyes. As Bruno puts it,

> the city is a large market; an intrigue of underground networks pervades all relations. The explosive Orient dominates, the Orient of yesterday incorporating the Orient of today. *(30)*
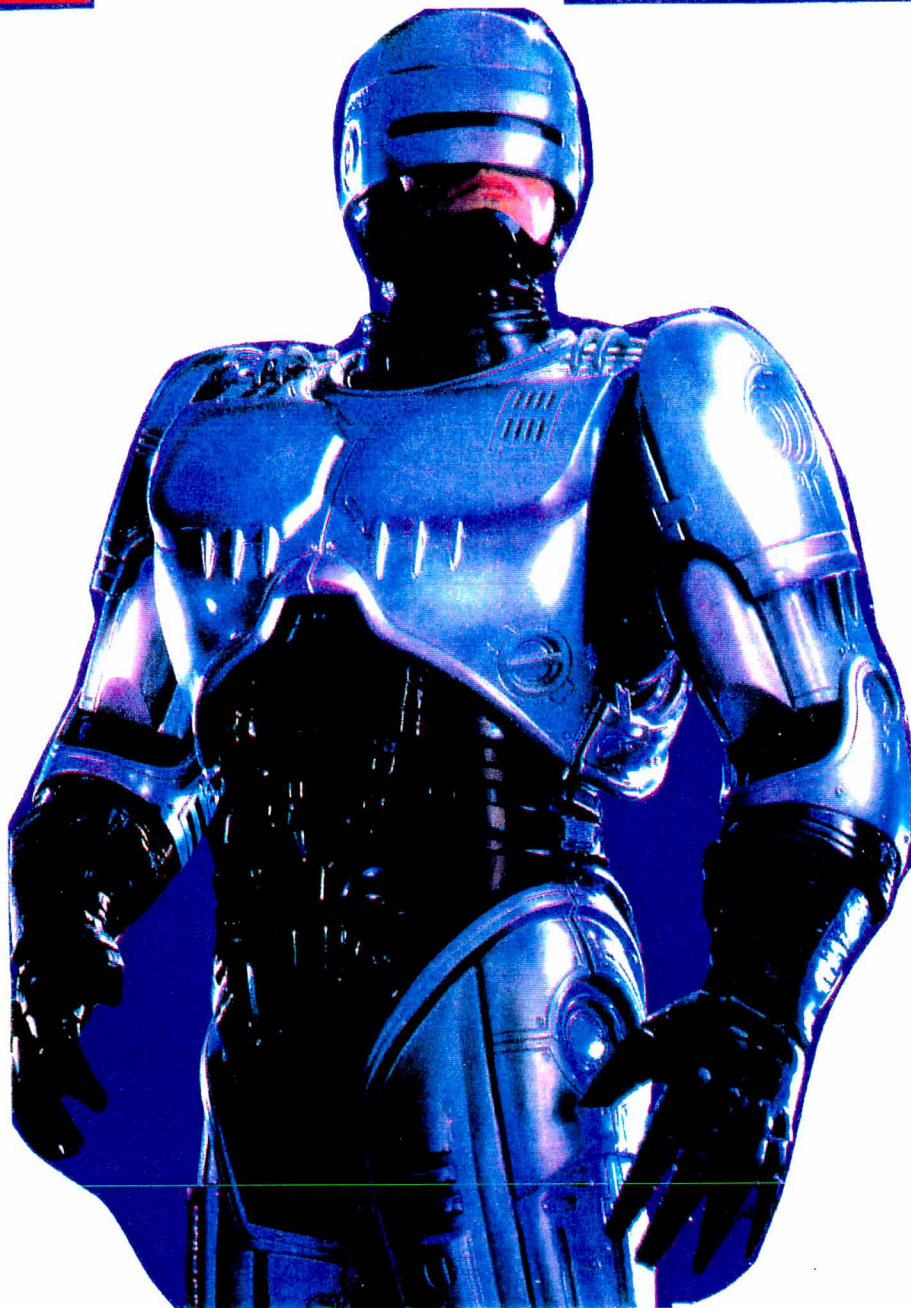
Fig. 10

Moreover, the city is overcrowded with all kinds of people: punks, oriental merchants, hare-krishnas, heavy metal and others whose language is a mixture of Spanish, German, Japanese, and English. In other words, the language is a pastiche as well as the architecture of the city. In one shot, for example, one can identify different groups of people, different cultures spread around in neon lighting signs, and a pervasive smoke, typical of postmodern cities (Fig. 11). This is a chaos of signs which portray the condition of fragmentation and alienation of the individual. The sense of fragmentation is reinforced by the scene which shows Zhora's death. As she is shot, she breaks several store windows which are spread all around. The fragments of the window glass become a metaphor for the feeling of fragmentation of the individual.*(31)* In this place where individuality is highly controlled, the individual can hardly move because of the crowds of people and garbage spread all around. Therefore, the individual walks and behaves like a robot concerned more with function than with emotion. In the process of decadence of the postmodern city, the individual is transformed into a passive being.

Scott's allegory of consumer society, highlighted throughout the film by the coca-cola advertisement, recreates the postmodern realm with all its commodifications, from one's identity to one's photographs. The logic that permeates the city portrays an oppressive domain of capitalism over every social formation. Accordingly, the individual who lives in this place

Fig. 11

observes the invasion of his life at all levels. Actually, even the individual's own history is reconstructed to such an extent that he can not identify his status, either natural or artificial. The consequence is that the postmodern individual lives in a constant threat of non-being, trapped by his own creation, namely replicants. Such issue foregrounds the logic of simulation which undermines any concept of truth and reality in the film. Living in this unreal world, the individual submerges under the reality principle and then emerges from fragments to celebrate representation and reproduction.

1. Notes

1 *Blade Runner.* Dir. Ridley Scott. With Harrison Ford, Rutger Hauer and Sean Young. USA, 1982. All further quotations are taken from *Blade Runner*, the film.

2 OLALQUIAGA, Celeste. *Megalopolis: Contemporary Cultural Sensibilities.* USA: University of Minnesota Press, 1992, p.11.

3 BAUDRILLARD, Jean. "Simulacra and Simulations." *Selected Writing.* Stanford University Press, 1989, p.166.

4 On questions of memory and photography, see Giuliana Bruno, "Ramble City: Postmodernism and *Blade Runner*", *Alien Zone: Cultural*

Theory and Contemporary Science Fiction Cinema. Verso, 1990: 183-195.

5 JAMESON, Fredric. "Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism." *New Left Review*, nº 146. July-August, 1984, p.38.

6 OLALQUIAGA, p.15.

7 BRUNO, p.191.

8 RYAN, Michael and Douglas Kellner. "Technophobia." *Alien Zone: Cultural theory and Contemporary Science Fiction Cinema.* Verso, 1990, p.63.

9 JAMESON, p.49.

10 OLALQUIAGA, p.11.

11 BRUNO, p.185.

12 JAMESON, p.42.

13 OLALQUIAGA, p.21.

14 BRUNO, p.187.

15 OLALQUIAGA, p.65.

16 BUKATMAN, Scott. *Terminal Identity: The Virtual Subject in Postmodern Science Fiction.* Duke University Press, 1993, p.130.

17 BUKATMAN, p.128.

18 BUKATMAN, p.126.

19 BUKATMAN, p.129.

20 BUKATMAN, p.132.

21 BUKATMAN, p.132.

22 JAMESON, p.58.

23 JAMESON, p.59.

24 See Bukatman, p.126.

25 BUKATMAN, p.126.

26 OLALQUIAGA, p.11.

27 OLALQUIAGA, p.11.

28 BUKATMAN, p.304.

29 BUKATMAN, p.304.

30 BRUNO, p.186.

31 See David Harvey, "O Tempo e o Espaço no Cinema Pós-Moderno." *A Condição Pós-Moderna*. Edições Loyola, 1992: 277-289.

CONCLUSION

Philip K. Dick's novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* and Ridley Scott's film *Blade Runner* take up the theme of defining humanity by means of different aesthetic forms. In their printed and visual pastiches Dick's novel and Scott's film draw from a complex cyberpunk science fiction universe which equates the stereotypes of detective literature, a variety of futuristic gadgets, and the cultural logics of late capitalism. Accordingly, one finds the traditional hero, whose task is to defend a community from an evil entity, living in a place where the setting and technology are clearly futuristic. Such place evokes a full range of values which characterizes the postmodern politics: the erasure of boundaries between the past and the present, a rearrangement of space, and the commodification of individuals which revolves around the definition brought to human subjectivity.

Although Dick's novel and Scott's film address these same features, in some parts both texts differ significantly. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* is a third person narrative which portrays a planet destroyed by a nuclear war. The story takes place in San Francisco in 1992. In this setting everything is artificially produced. Natural animals have

become almost extinct and have, thus, achieved a symbolic status. Thus Rick Deckard, the main protagonist, searches out the renegade replicants so as to afford a natural sheep. This fake background is the source of everything that is alienating, like mercerism, the state religion, the empathy box and the television sets. These features are omitted in the film, whose search for originality focuses on another element, namely photography.

The screen adaptation is a first person voice-over narrative which places the audience into the postindustrial, technologised society of Los Angeles in the year 2019. *Blade Runner* combines elements of the film noir of the forties and fifties with science fiction in a futuristic scenery. Anyone familiar with the film can recognize among such elements the film noir detective performed by Harrison Ford, the science fiction idea of a future world populated by masses of individuals, huge traffic jams, and the pervasive presence of artificial beings. In such scenery there is an emergence of a new politics which alters the meaning people give to things as it stresses previous aesthetic codes. The result is a complex cyberpunk aesthetic realized through visual narrative technique.

Scott's film used the novel's actions as the basis for a filmic narrative with striking visual effects which recycles the past as pastiche. In his visual pastiche, Scott draws from architectural aesthetics of all epochs and places to convey a link between past and present. A key question emerges when the past is brought into the present by means of photography, an element

which is not explored in the written narrative. As a symbol of a past life, photography becomes a representation which undermines the individual's identity.

These main differences between the novel and the film have as their counterpart a fundamental similarity. The structure of plot and characters that supports the novel and the film explores the same theme, that is, the definition of human subjectivity in late capitalist society. This society, whose technological advances have modified the postmodern sensibility to such a degree that one can hardly identify reality, undermines the opposition between natural and artificial beings. The individual who lives in this society is reduced to a commodified image which deals only with surface reflections. Such image fails to recognize conventional reality and its lived experience and places the individual in an unreal world of simulation.

At this point, I would like to take up the discussion raised at the beginning of my dissertation, where I state that the postmodern discourse threatens the discourse of the real by celebrating Baudrillard's concept of simulacra. Such concept is introduced in the novel and in the film by means of replicants. These technologically developed beings redraw the boundaries between natural and artificial individuals as they are no longer distinguishable from natural individuals. The emerging notion of the individual is shaped according to a series of cultural formations which

systematically deconstructs any unified concept of reality.

The world has become unreal as its social formations have been built on representations of lived experience. Everything has been reduced to the representation, the simulacrum, which reveals an illusion. Individuals, history and places are no longer real as they have been commodified and transformed into their own images. The ideology which permeates such world breaks boundaries and inserts the individual into a complex network of references which confuses organic and artificial bodies, historical and geographical discourses.

Lost in a world of signs which deals only in reflections, the postmodern individual is unable to identify a real or a simulated version of the postmodern self as the self has been fragmented and multiplied. The task of the postmodern individual is, thus, to construct an identity out of different images which undermine any unified concept of man and reality. The world ends up full of reconstructed truths and artificial beings which make problematic the question of defining humanity.

In Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* and Scott's *Blade Runner*, one finds the ambiguous image of human/replicant which opens up new grounds of discussion for the term humanity. In both works the individual is characterized according to his surface reflection which lacks in revealing his real identity. Humans and replicants turn out to be so alike

that real identity behind simulacra becomes inconceivable. They become, as Baudrillard puts it, perfect copies of themselves and embody the hyperrealism of simulation.

Incapable of dealing with truth and simulation, the greatest difficulty of the postmodern individual is to achieve a specific understanding of individuality. In Dick's novel and Scott's film, natural and artificial beings differ from one another only in terms of the signifiers they can attach to themselves. Paradoxically, replicants end up being a contrast to the mechanical and dehumanized features attributed to human beings. In both texts there is a pervasive exchange of features between humans and replicants which turns the question of humanity around as one sees humanized machines and mechanized human beings.

The process of dehumanization is most clearly articulated in the film by Roy Batty, the lead replicant played by Rutger Hauer. Starting as a violent and sadistic individual who is able to crush the skull of his creator, he progressively achieves human status as he embodies humanity's deepest concerns. This is most palpable in the battle scene when Roy saves Deckard's life and teaches a lesson in compassion. In this scene, Roy carries a white dove that is released as he dies. The dove becomes a "symbol of charity and forgiveness."*(1)* In Michael Ryan words, Roy himself "becomes a figure for Christ as he lowers his head and dies."*(2)*

A Christ-like figure, Roy becomes the personification of salvation. *(3)* Like Christ, Roy bears a nail in his hand, and his decision of saving and forgiving his pursuer could be taken as examples of christian charity and compassion. The analogy with Christ makes Roy an extremely complex character: he is human, but also divine, therefore better than human, but also a machine, therefore sub-human. The film ends up portraying Roy as a traditional hero who dies so that others can live. A question emerges then: 'Can one identify Roy as an artificial being with all its burdens when faced with such particular image?'

In the disorienting reversibility of roles between humans and replicants Roy evokes a more affectionate and humanly meaningful response than any of the so-called human characters portrayed in the film. Clearly, the spectator may accept Roy as human based on his compassion and gratitude, characteristics usually legitimated by human beings. No longer distinguishable from humans in physical and emotional terms, Roy becomes a perfect example of simulacrum, as he reaches the depthlessness proposed by postmodernism.

Roy enters the human discourse as his actions and beliefs turn out to be more 'humanly' acceptable. That is, Roy differs from other artificial individuals only in terms of the signifiers he attaches to himself, which give legitimacy to actions rather than to physical features. Ironically, it is his pursuer, Rick Deckard, the one who first succeeds in accepting Roy as a

human being in the face of mutual concerns and affection.

By the same token, Deckard empathizes with other replicants like Luba Luft, in Dick's novel, and Zhora, in Scott's film. In the novel, Deckard has a reversed feeling in relation to Luba Luft and Phil Resch,

> So much for the distinction between authentic living humans and humanoid constructs. In that elevator at the museum, he said to himself, I rode down with two creatures, one human, the other android...and my feelings were the reverse of those intended. Of those I'm accustomed to feel—am required to feel. *(4)*

Deckard has lost his sense of value because he is constrained within the cultural logics of a postmodern society which controls all the conditions that determine lived experience and its values. In Scott's film, Deckard feels sorry for Zhora as he considers her a woman, just like Rachael.

There is, thus, a systematic deconstruction of the opposition between replicants and humans as the artificial beings enter the human discourse with all its burdens. Conventional devices fail to recognize Luba and Zhora as artificial beings because they have the full range of human responses expected from human beings. Similarly, Rachael embodies all the emotional baggage that labels her human. Even Deckard, the one who at first relegated Rachael to an artificial status, ends up portraying her as being so human that he refers to Rachael as 'she' instead of 'it'. In other words, Rachael becomes a truly human person instead of a simple machine

which imitates the so-called humans. Such aspect is highlighted when Rachael realizes that she is not a human being as she used to think. Her doubt about being human or not, her relationship with Deckard, namely a human being, and her decision of helping Deckard find the other replicants are steps which move her toward the human realm.

The issue of gender identity is central in the case of Rachael. In Deckard's apartment, when Rachael sees the photographs over the piano and tries to look like the woman in the photo, she is building a female subjectivity. As Bruno puts it, Rachael succeeds in entering the human discourse because

> she assumes a sexual identity, becomes a woman, and loves a man: Deckard, the blade runner. Rachael accepts the paternal figure and follows the path to a 'normal', adult, female, sexuality: she identifies her sex by first acknowledging the power of the other, the father, a man."(5)

Rachael enters the social order, acts according to its rules, and escapes the schizophrenic temporality of the replicants by accepting the paternal figure and being submissive to Deckard. Rachael's relationship with Deckard begins to develop when she first accepts her artificial status and then tries to build a female narrative. She belongs to the same temporal coordinator as humans and, consequently, experiences the same feelings. As a final proof of her newly sexual identity, Rachael shoots Leon as he is almost killing Deckard, her lover.

Ironically, Deckard embodies a variety of selves that produce disruptions in the so-called human behavior. In some moments, Deckard's attitude towards the replicants he must kill and also his relationship with Rachael reduce him to a non-human status. That is, in the name of humanity Deckard ends up becoming less human. In these moments, when Deckard loses his human connections, he expresses the collapse of his identity. Deckard's self is fragmented and he loses the symbolic identity which grants him a human status.

Deckard's essential humanity is lost as he enters the postmodern discourse where the self ends up being an endless number of representations and fakes. The lack of a coherent self deprives the individual of his self identity as his identity is constructed out of other people's identity. Such variety of identities resulting from a blending of boundaries into one another results in nonentity. The postmodern subject is, like Deckard, a non-subject as everything, even one's inner memories, are artificially implanted. In other words, Deckard, like the replicants he searches out, can not find a real version of his self and is consequently relegated literally to a non-living state. Accordingly, Deckard and the replicants are trapped in their own reality as they can not have their real discourses.

In Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* and Scott's *Blade Runner*, humans and replicants deconstruct the stereotypes that define

natural and artificial beings. The boundaries between natural and artificial have vanished and the individual becomes an imaginary ideological being who has no referent in reality. Such individual is thus a simulacrum as he emerges between the real and the representation and is neither one nor the other. This shift in perspective comes from the postmodern politics of signs which alter the meaning people give to themselves and the world around.

Still, the difficulty in fixing boundaries between humans and replicants in Dick's novel and in Scott's film is also related to the postmodern politics of time and space. The postmodern logics of time, which inserts the reader and the viewer into a network of historical references, contains past, present, and future. In both works fragments of the past and the future are available in the present only for their surface value, like the live animals in the novel, the architectural allusions in the film and the endless futuristic spaceships which pervade both works. These fragments keep the past alive and bring the future to the present.

Such pastiche shapes the postmodern identity which asserts that nothing is original, everything is a reproduction of previous features. To illustrate this aspect, one can highlight the costumes the characters wear. Coats revive myths of the past and postindustrial fashion recycles waste in the typical logic of late capitalism. The postmodern self is, thus, the result of a mix of fragments which produces a disordered subject. Consequently, this subject has to be defined in a different way, as simulacrum rather than

as authentic self.

In Dick's novel and Scott's film, the erasure of temporal coordinators is also sensed in spatial terms as characters share a place full of geographical displacements, from buildings which quote different places and times to people who portray features from all over the world. The megalopolis presented in both works locates Deckard and the other characters in a hyperreal world that prevents them from seeing beyond their simulated lives. The spatial dislocation presented in both works is a metaphor for the lack of boundaries between natural and artificial beings. In physical terms, human features have been dislocated by a set of technological apparatuses.

This postmodern society, which can not deal with time and space, ends up being a place where, as the imaginary politics of signs circulates endlessly, one can never reach the real. What remains are only representations of the real which sustain an illusion over another. Illusion has thus become the real. Living in such an unreal world deprived of any contact with conventional reality, the postmodern individual has his identity threatened. He is forced to be contented with a false version of his own self.

At this point, I want to go back to the question that has guided my work throughout: "What does it mean to be human in the postmodern

world?" By challenging fundamental assumptions regarding the conventional notion of human being, namely an individual as opposed to a machine, this work searched to find a new definition of the term humanity taking into account Dick's novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* and Scott's film *Blade Runner*. Concepts of humanity, self, space, and time had to be redefined according to the new order of things proposed by postmodernism.

As I have mentioned before, the postmodern individual, who has his most intimate life controlled and manipulated by late capitalism, is a subject of loss. Such is the dilemma of both, replicants and humans. I would like here to concentrate on one point, that of the metaphoric reversal of a typical image advanced by science fiction.

Conventional science fiction devices create individuals that, by appearance and behavior, can be considered humans. Such artificially developed subjects consist only of surface matrixes which represent the image itself. But in the texts discussed here, what at first seems to be just representations of reality, that is, replicants, end up becoming truly human beings in that replicants are highly intelligent thinking machines who simulate real thoughts. By the same token, the human mind also works like a computer. Considering this fact, one will find the mechanization of thoughts in humans that, like replicants, will carry out logic mind operations. If both work like computers, the difference between replicant's

and human's minds will be noticed on the way they organize the information they get. If the organization of data is the same, humans would no longer be models for replicants. They end up being equal.

The relationship between human discourse and artificial discourse creates a kind of moebian structure in which one can find at the other side the reverse of oneself. As Baudrillard puts it, "all the referentials intermingle their discourses in a circular moebian compulsion."*(6)* In other words, the relationship between humans and machines creates a kind of circular movement that prevents origins from being found. Transfixed to the other side of the metaphor, the human being simultaneously occupies both places in the same way that replicants do. Both of them remain trapped in this circular discourse.

So far, the question of humanity remains unanswered. Therefore, I would like to highlight some ideas proposed by the two texts that I have analyzed. Certainly the first idea proposed by the two texts is that the definition of humanity requires constant broadening as one encounters individuals like Rachael and Roy. Such expansion has to occur in the reader's and viewer's minds as they are the ones who will come up with a definition. In this way, the definition of humanity will depend on individual observers. Obviously, one has to consider that no unified conception of humanity remains, as the postmodern context is full of contradictions.

Secondly, the postmodern individual, like Deckard, lives in a society which not only controls his life but also deprives him of important and vital decisions, features that used to distinguish replicants from humans. Deckard, for example, is forced to accept the task of killing, that is retiring, replicants. Otherwise, he would be relegated to a lower status. Replicants and humans are in the same position and can no longer have control over their lives. Everything is already decided in advance so that the individual loses any capacity to exercise his free will. In postmodern society, the individual has no real concerns and ends up leading a life that is completely predetermined.

Lastly, the postmodern emerging sense of the individual, as a result of the collapse of boundaries between the so-called natural and artificial beings, ends up in an open-ended process. Certainly, the struggle to find the individual's real identity is one step toward the human status, as in the search for the self the individual evokes a full range of human reponses. To conclude, what differs Dick's novel and Scott's film from traditional science fiction texts is that both works turn the question of humanity around as they ask: "Can such individuals be included as humans despite some of their non-human features?"

1. Notes

1 RYAN, Michael and Douglas kellner. "Technophobia." *Alien Zone: Cultural Theory and Contemporary Science Fiction Cinema.* Verso, 1990, p.64.

2 RYAN, p.64.

3 I am indebted to Thomas Burns for the suggestion that Roy is a Christ-like figure. See Thomas Burns "Blade Runner, The Terminator, Robocop: The Figure of the Cyborg Warrior." Unpublished paper, p.15. See also Michael Ryan and Douglas Kellner "Technophobia."

4 DICK, Philip K. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* Great Britain: Grafton, 1972, p.110.

5 BRUNO, Giuliana. "Ramble City: Postmodernism and *Blade Runner*." *Alien Zone: Cultural Theory and Contemporary Science Fiction Cinema.* Verso, 1990, p.190.

6 BAUDRILLARD, Jean. "Simulacra and Simulations." *Selected Writings.* Stanford University Press, 1989, p.176.

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