

## From “andys” to “toasters”: How has politics affected the view of non-humans in “Blade Runner” and “Battlestar Galactica”?

JOZEF LENČ

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The genre of science fiction in literary and audiovisual works allows for a peek behind the curtain that hides tomorrow’s world.\* It is also useful as a tool for a critical reflection of the political and social reality at the time of its creation. Politics entered this genre as early as the era of philosophical utopian works, and it also has an important place in modern science-fiction writing from the 20th and 21st centuries. Science fiction uncovers humankind’s fears while warning us about the potential threat of an apocalypse. An interesting aspect of science-fiction literature is the uncovering of possibilities on how to avoid a dystopian future, which is often depicted in the form of totalitarian regimes and natural or man-made catastrophes as well as in the way that the view of the coexistence of humans and the “non-humans” created by people has changed over time. Are we at all prepared for the situation that soon we will not be alone? Are we able to imagine cohabitation with beings that feel and have a mind of their own? What is the objective criterion of “humanity”?

Those who were able to project a future with “new people” depicted a world scarred by conflict and often inevitably doomed. It was through images of the future and the stories that took place in galaxies far away that authors presented a critique of the societal and political crises of their own times, which they deemed to be the cause of humanity’s destruction. For a better understanding of how politics influences the depiction of the relationship to “our creations” and how this relationship was affected by political changes, it is worthwhile analyzing the cult-like novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968), its film adaptations *Blade Runner* (1982) and *Blade Runner: 2049* (2017), and the TV series *Battlestar Galactica* (2004–2009) and its prequel *Caprica* (2010).

### CROSSING THE BORDERS

Humans are convinced that the world they live in is shaped upon their own ideas. They believe they are creating the world and that it serves them, because it is born out of their own initiative. Artificial intelligence (AI) is the proof of humans’ ability to “breathe life” into the non-living. It distinguishes us from those beings that work and count yet do not create. Despite the fact that we are repeatedly wrong in our

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own visions, we do not want to admit that things could be different. We do not listen to the voices of scientists and writers who call for caution, because it may come to “an unprecedented confrontation with biotechnological and informational technologies” (Harari 2019, 19). However, not even scientists are immune to factors that influence the perception of our world. There is no difference, whether we look at it through the eyes of a visionary from the second half of the 19th century who is mesmerized by the breakthroughs of the Industrial Revolution, a writer from the end of the 1960s who perceives the threat of social and political changes, or authors from the early 21st century who live in a world threatened by terrorism and whose lives are organized by algorithms. Nonetheless, in this case it is usually true that “nothing is more problematic than predicting the future. If the record of past predictions is any guide, the one thing we can know for sure is that when the future arrives, it will be different from the future we expected” (Hayles 2005, 131).

Contrary to technologies, politics is what primarily forms social relationships and causalities which later on find their way into the plot of science-fiction storylines. The utilization of science fiction to provide commentary on current events has been frequently noted. Indeed, “[a]nxieties of the time can be projected into the future or onto an alien civilization and then exaggerated in order to provide a warning. As a mirror of the hopes and fears of society, it displaces the political and social issues of its time to a different plane and reflects them back” (Maguire 2012, 332). Science fiction creates a space for confrontation with the current social situation, crosses the borders of the possible, and tries to warn about what happens if society continues walking on its current path. The importance of studying the interactions between real-life politics and the science-fiction genre has been highlighted in several studies (Tighe 1999; Grayson, Davies, and Philpot 2009; Carpenter 2016; Young and Carpenter 2018). Literature and film are becoming philosophical as well as critical instruments to evaluate politics. For instance, “[b]y the 1960s and 1970s, science fiction generated by the ‘British New Wave’ reflected dramatic changes in contemporary culture, especially political aspects of gender, conflict, and freedom of expression” (Menadue and Cheer 2017, 1). Authors of science fiction started with a given sociopolitical situation and placed it in the worst possible scenarios of the future. They outlined what they themselves feared could happen and what could fatally threaten society (Young and Carpenter 2018). While they have more often than not been mistaken in depicting the future world which they adjusted to their own time period (*Metropolis*, 1927), in other cases they have predicted it with surgical precision. In this sense, Thomas M. Disch considers a classic example to be Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* (1932), which “seems more prophetic every decade. Technology keeps getting closer to creating true test tube babies, and human cloning looms ahead” (2000, 7).

When looking at politics, science fiction most often depicts the fear of the rise of political systems that decapitate freedom and democracy. This is how they portrayed their fear of the return of Nazism (Philip K. Dick: *The Man in the High Castle*, 1962), the global spread of Communism (Yevgeny Zamyatin: *We*, 1920; George Orwell: *1984*, 1949), and the rise of autocratic religious fundamentalism (Margaret Atwood: *The Handmaid’s Tale*, 1985), which were all relevant concerns at the times

they were published (Disch 2000). In *The Handmaid's Tale* we can see that the warnings expressed by Atwood more than three decades ago may be relevant at any point in the future; its storyline shows how science fiction was dealing with a political issue of the period – the rise to power of Protestant fundamentalism connected to the Republican Party and President Ronald Reagan – while also providing a warning that such dogmas may easily return. It is because of this timeliness that science fiction is attractive for authors as well as readers.

However, there is another level of the relationship between politics and science fiction; this does not necessarily concern the depiction of utopian ideal worlds or dystopian catastrophic futures that create the primary storyline, but rather deals with fears for the survival of liberal democracy. In particular, there is a secondary fixation on politics in storylines which changes accordingly as the sociopolitical circumstances in the “real” world change. Yuval N. Harari is objectively worried that “the technological advance of the twenty-first century could reverse the humanist revolution, strip people of their reign over their lives, and give it to inhuman algorithms” (2017, 342). It is not only the fear of losing one’s freedom that we are facing. Science fiction refers to current policies and the attitudes of political elites and the public to specific aspects of life. This is also the case with Huxley’s *Brave New World*, Jack London’s *The Iron Heel* (1907), and Karel Čapek’s *R.U.R.* (1920). They all warn against the advent of the technological world (Huxley’s “Fordization”), which, while advancing humanity, also curtails its political and economic freedoms. They also point to the need to resist this world, which in the case of Čapek’s play is associated with the Russian Revolution: “Čapek’s sympathies waver between indignation on behalf of the exploited robots (which sometimes seem to have souls) and fear of the impending day of judgment that will bring middle-class privilege to an end” (Disch 2000, 8). On the other hand, in many science-fiction works there is an exaggerated belief in “the liberal tale of an individual’s struggle for freedom and privacy against the global government of corporate octopuses” (Harari 2017, 331). This is a faith which is actually the culmination of the contemporary notion of the end of history (Fukuyama 2007).

Today, mechanisms, machines, and AI are ubiquitous, affecting every aspect of our lives, be it relieving us of routine household chores or providing health care. Various applications notice our health and emotions, and search engines make contact between people who, for instance, want to meet, do business, or pray together. How should society and state policies cope with the expansion of AI that transcends national borders? Could technological progress result in the intellectual decline of humanity?

These dilemmas are tackled by science-fiction authors, who move them onto the level of existing relationships between ethnicities, races, and social groups, often discussing them within the context of political regimes that abuse technological progress to “consolidate society.” The relationship between humans and non-humans exceeds the borders of fantasy and has now become a topic of political and legal discussion concerning identity and borders of freedom, and it has become the politics that influences the science-fiction world.

## “ANDYS” AS A CRITIQUE OF RACIAL SEGREGATION IN THE UNITED STATES

The question of coexistence of humans and non-humans is the crucial storyline in Dick's novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* Set “in a post-apocalyptic 1992, the book follows bounty hunter Rick Deckard in a risky mission to ‘retire’ (destroy) six state-of-the-art Nexus-6 androids, who have fled to Earth after killing their human masters in a Martian colony” (Bhattacharya 2018, 163). The story takes place in a world destroyed by humans that is supposed to have become a place of liberation for enslaved androids. Under seemingly ambiguous circumstances for the reader, the androids rebelled in the colonies on Mars and fled to Earth, which most people are trying to leave.

The reason why the surviving people on Earth are trying to emigrate is the fact that with the possibility of colonizing Mars, they gain the right to own slaves (androids). Dick was thus referring to the formation of the United States itself, which was born of colonization as people fled the catastrophe of European wars of the seventeenth century. The creators of the “American Dream” based their future prosperity on colonization and slavery, and this legacy continues to stain American democracy. Dick returns to this in the description of an advertisement for the colonization of Mars which encourages the earthlings to leave: “Under U.N. law each emigrant automatically received possession of an android subtype of his choice, and, by 1990, the variety of subtypes passed all understanding, in the manner of American automobiles of the 1960s” along with a hint of “the android servant as carrot, the radioactive fallout as stick” (Dick [1968] 2008, 15). This is made more apparent in an interview with Mrs. Klugman, who praises life on Mars mainly because of the feeling of dignity that the ownership of an android gives her:

“Let’s hear from Mrs. Maggie Klugman,” the TV announcer suggested to John Isidore, who wanted only to know the time. “A recent immigrant to Mars, Mrs. Klugman in an interview taped live in New New York had this to say. Mrs. Klugman, how would you contrast your life back on contaminated Earth with your new life here in a world rich with every imaginable possibility?” A pause, and then a tired, dry, middle-aged, female voice said, “I think what I and my family of three noticed most was the dignity.” “The dignity, Mrs. Klugman?” the announcer asked. “Yes,” Mrs. Klugman, now of New New York, Mars, said. “It’s a hard thing to explain. Having a servant you can depend on in these troubled times... I find it reassuring” (Dick [1968] 2017, 29-30).

Dick does not just focus on criticizing earlier American history. His friend and fellow science-fiction author Brian Aldiss considered him to be one of the masters of the frustrations of the time he lived in (Zelazny, in Dick [1968] 2017, 7), which explains his authorial skepticism. In most of his novels, he showed readers the world of his fears, and as a result, he is often ranked among the forerunners of tech-noir, a cinematic genre that:

represents a purely human dimension of the science fiction film, one that casts light on the dark regions of the human heart, and though aliens, monsters, and cybernetic brains may occasionally appear, they are not the soul of the plot. The tech-noir genre hybrid is the black hole of the science fiction film, in which the effects of tainted technology cast long shadows over the resident darkness of the human condition (Meehan 2008, 2).

In the world he created, Dick's criticism of the United States was transformed into a sociopolitical and technological "hell" in which individuals or indeed all of humanity found itself. He did not analyze a priori specific political systems, or only in passing: the references to the Soviet Union and the KGB in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, for instance, were only part of a peripheral storyline. They underlined the fact that despite the technological and societal changes and nuclear catastrophe, the states and regimes he knew would still survive. It could be no different, as he was not doing a deep analysis and "political systems are only useful, to Dick, as long as they can be completely understood by those involved in the transactions they represent. And 'understanding,' in this situation, means also a concurrence, an acceptance not imposed by the system, but by the individual" (Barlow 2005, 134).

Dick was deeply affected by the events of World War II and its final outcome. The dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki scarred him so much that a global nuclear catastrophe became the backdrop to the story (Barlow 2005, 15). Nonetheless, American society in the second half of the 1960s lived with a deep internal contradiction, and real concerns about a third World War during the Cuban Crisis of 1962 seemed to be a reflection of the distant past. The hypocritical character of American democracy seen in the form of segregation was transferred by Dick into his novel. The image of a society that humiliates, discriminates against, and kills those it does not consider worthy of being part of it has been present in his depiction of America in the early 1990s. In addition to referring to androids with the pejorative "nigger", he also uses the neologism "andys" which similarly contains both humiliation and contempt. He uses equally offensive labels – "specials" and "chickenheads" – for people who are not suitable for emigration to the New World. Stupid, disfavored, and sentenced to life on a destroyed planet, the "niggers", "andys", and "chickenheads" are not considered as people in society. This begins with an introductory conversation between Rick Deckard and his wife, Iran:

"I'm not a cop." He felt irritable, now, although he hadn't dialed for it.

"You're worse," his wife said, her eyes still shut. "You're a murderer hired by the cops."

"I've never killed a human being in my life." His irritability had risen, now; had become outright hostility.

Iran said, "Just those poor andys." (Dick [1968] 2017, 17)

For Deckard, "andys" are just things (options) which he "sends to rest" so he can then get money to buy a live animal: "Rick said quietly, 'I don't want a domestic pet. I want what I originally had, a large animal. A sheep or if I can get the money a cow or a steer or what you have; a horse.' The bounty from retiring five andys would do it, he realized" (25). This animal could be an artificial one, but in his eyes this would be on a similar level as an android. The reference to American segregation is mirrored in the attitude toward "specials". John Isidore, a man who is doomed to stay on Earth because of his disability, is looked down upon by people and androids. We can find proof of this in a conversation between Pris and Roy Baty, who are perfect androids that despise "specials":

“Why don’t you move in with him?” Roy said to Pris, indicating Isidore. “He could give you a certain amount of protection.”

“A chickenhead?” Pris said. “I’m not going to live with a chickenhead.” Her nostrils flared. Irmgard said rapidly, “I think you’re foolish to be a snob at a time like this. Bounty hunters move fast; he may try to tie it up this evening. There may be a bonus in it for him if he got it done by –” (137).

The place of “specials” in society is illustrated by Isidore’s thought processes. He realizes that because of his position, he is doomed to end up as a “kipple”: “Kipple is useless objects, like junk mail or match folders after you use the last match or gum wrappers or yesterday’s homeopape. When nobody’s around, kipple reproduces itself. [...] There’s the First Law of Kipple,’ he said. ‘Kipple drives out nonkipple” (66). Dick uses another neologism, “kipple”, to describe accumulating waste that will engulf the entire planet and which will eventually include all of those who are despised by society: the “andys” and the “chickenheads”.

In the summer of 1967, demonstrations took place across the United States calling for the remaining racial laws to be repealed. During this “long, hot summer”, more than eighty protesters were killed and more than two thousand were injured. The cycle of violence seemed unstoppable. In early April 1968, Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated in Memphis; Robert F. Kennedy was assassinated two months later. In such a socially torn society, a novel was created which, in an image of the future, retold the story of excluded individuals and groups which people despised and denied rights. This was the story of people who society viewed as “kipple”.

### “ANDYS” AND THE STORY OF HUMAN IDENTITY

With the rise of the popularity of science-fiction films at the turn of the 1970s and 1980s, which was caused by George Lucas’s *Star Wars: A New Hope* (1977) and *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back* (1980), *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* received its own film adaptation, *Blade Runner* (1982), which also became a cult work of science fiction. Ridley Scott’s film captured the connection between the criminal genre of film noir – depicting a cruel, dark, and dystopian social reality – and cyberpunk, which combined the technological scenes of the future with visible social deprivation and the ubiquitous failing of social welfare and the rule of law. The decade that separated Scott’s film from the book may at first glance seem short and insufficient to make a significant contribution to the content of the story. But the United States had changed in the 1970s, which witnessed progress in African-American civil rights along with the end of the Vietnam War and the hippie movement, followed by an economic recession lasting from 1979 to 1982. These events caused shifts in the perception of American society which were transferred to the film adaptation, in which the setting and the relationships between people and androids were changed. The storyline was moved from 1992 to 2019, and from San Francisco to Los Angeles. The city, known for its materialistic lifestyle and constant sunshine, is turned into a dystopian place of unhappy despair. American cities at the turn of the decade were the model for this depiction; crime flourished due to the ubiquitous effects of the economic crisis. Scott’s Los Angeles is a dirty

city, which is sometimes illuminated by neon colors. One can feel the alienation, cynicism, and expectations of an approaching end; however, the audience does not learn much about the end and causes of this condition: “The film never specifically mentions the atomic war itself, instead leaving it to our imagination to comprehend how the festering hell-hole of technological overkill and a debased humanity on earth came about” (Williams 1988, 384).

There is also a change in the depiction of the relationship between humans and the genetically engineered non-humans. The script retained their serial designation as Nexus-6, but the pejorative name “andys” is replaced by the more correct sounding “replicants”; nonetheless, the threat they pose to humanity remains. The reasons for the need to eliminate them remain obscure. There are no more “specials” in the film. And the “chickenhead” Isidore acquires a new identity as J.F. Sebastian (William Sanderson). He does not do menial work and is a genetic designer instead. It is precisely the possibility of the genetic modification of humans and non-humans (the improvement of humans and their creations) which is portrayed as a threat to humanity, replacing the nuclear catastrophe from the original version of the story. The issues of colonialism and slavery are not addressed; however, there are mentions of them in the film, as when the android Roy Batty (Rutger Hauer) recalls the experience of living in fear and slavery (*Blade Runner* 1982). Direct segregation disappears from the story even though the “replicants” have no right to live on Earth. Roy and Pris (Daryl Hannah) are aware of their limited lifespan as androids, and they seek answers to questions about the meaning of their existence when they meet “with the Creator” Tyrel (Joe Turkel). They think and feel, but they are not humans. Rick Deckard (Harrison Ford) finds himself in the same situation after killing Batty, asking himself where he is from, where he is going, and how long he will be there. He thinks about the limited lifespan of “creations” and, indeed, of people, and is surprised when the much stronger Roy saves him:

I don't know why he saved my life. Maybe in those last moments he loved life more than he ever had before. Not just his life – anybody's life; my life. All he'd wanted were the same answers the rest of us want. Where did I come from? Where am I going? How long have I got? All I could do was sit there and watch him die (*Blade Runner* 1982).

Deckard survives, as does Rachel (Sean Young), since Deckard's colleague Gaff (Edward James Olmos) is convinced that Rachel has only a limited lifespan like other Nexus-6 models and lets her live (Eberl 1992). This decision becomes key to continuing the story in *Blade Runner: 2049* (directed by Denis Villeneuve; 2017). The thirty-year shift between the two films was reflected in the story as well as in the political references to the time of its creation. One paradox is that while the Tyrell Corporation has gone bankrupt following several uprisings of replicants (artificially created people), the Soviet Union still exists sixty years after its actual demise. Along with the main character KD6-3.7 (Ryan Gosling), the societal challenges, accumulated fears, and dilemmas of the main protagonists are changing. Dick's Deckard is a man who struggles with the emotions he harbors for ostracized “machines”, but Scott's Deckard is looking for the meaning of life and perhaps suspects that he himself is a genetically engineered “human”:

K's dilemma is that he knows full well about his status as replicant: He knows that his memories are implants designed to control his emotional responses, but nevertheless he continues to be compliant. Similarly, we are aware of the social, political, economic, and ecological problems that we face in our contemporary age and can avow this at a conscious level (Flisfeder 2019, 144).

The world that opens up to the audience is astonishingly familiar. References to the climate crisis of the latter part of the second decade of the twenty-first century have replaced the fears of a nuclear catastrophe that had dominated the story in the late 1960s. Furthermore, links to "Trump's wall" can be found in the dialogue as a wall to protect the existing world and separate humans and non-humans. In the words of Lieutenant Joshi (Robin Wright): "There is an order to things. That's what we do here. We keep order" (*Blade Runner: 2049* 2017); this is also a reference to the socially and politically required gender equality that symbolizes our present. There will simply be chaos without order and walls. If the other side discovers that they are no longer dependent on humans for their reproduction, they will complete their own liberation. Under the guise of a migration crisis, a negative view on diversity emerges. K becomes the subject of vulgar attacks ("skin job") not only from "human" colleagues at work but also other ordinary people who, despite living in poverty, enjoy the superiority they have over him because they are people, at least. Characteristically for the time in which the film was made, Villeneuve seeks an answer to the question of the limits of freedom and the essence of humanity, which does not always have only a human face. At one point, Freysa (Hiam Abbass) persuades K to sacrifice himself to save a child. She argues that dying for the right thing is the most human thing he can do. This is because "that baby meant we are more than just slaves. If a baby can come from one of us, we are our own masters". Mariette (Mackenzie Davis), another replicant, adds that it is "more human than humans" (*Blade Runner: 2049* 2017).

Each processing of the search for a place in this world of people and non-people points to the problem of this coexistence. At the same time, the audience does not find out the fundamental secret of what happens when our world becomes theirs as well. Will it be our world at all, or will it be theirs? Can our imagination even picture a world of different kinds of "humans"?

### **TOASTERS THAT REVOLTED: AND THEY HAD A PLAN!**

Robots are machines that make people's lives easier, used for hard and monotonous work, for pleasure, and ultimately for killing (preferably other people). This is a paradox, and it follows a sequence that copies the policies of automation and robotics that began in the 1990s. At first, robots were dominant in engineering, where they routinely replaced human labor; the first decade of the 21st century then saw the advent of drones, which can kill over thousands of kilometers away but which are ultimately controlled by humans. The crisis associated with the COVID-19 pandemic shows that we cannot do without robots in the social sphere; technology also has an important place in the socialization of children. The threat posed by robots and their increasingly necessary presence – indeed, our dependence on them – have become the subject of a number of literary and audiovisual works.

Such a sequence of robotization is depicted in *Battlestar Galactica* (2004–2009) and in its prequel *Caprica* (2010). In addition to suggesting how “toasters” become killers and eventually “people”, both series analyze the real social and political dilemmas of our time. *Battlestar Galactica* begins with the “cliché” that humans created robots (Cylons) to make their lives easier. Indeed, “the Cylons were created by humans to make life easier on the Twelve Colonies. They began as simple robots – toys for the amusement of the wealthy and the young – but it was not long before they became useful, and then indispensable, workers” (Carver 2006, ix). The increasingly sophisticated machines, which are used by people for slave labor, eventually revolt and refuse to serve people anymore. They want to obtain freedom by removing their cause of enslavement and thus by annihilating humans. The war waged by the “enslaved” against the “enslavers” is ended by their unexpected disappearance. Nobody hears of them for several years, and people become content to believe that the problem has “taken care of itself”. The Cylons, however, have a plan of revenge they want to fulfill, so they launch a surprise attack and almost wipe out humanity. This story of the struggle for human survival is also the story of a struggle with one’s own conscience and the formation of a human community after the apocalypse.

The position of the Cylons in *Battlestar Galactica* is different from the humanoid androids in Dick’s novel and the subsequent depictions of “replicants”; in both cases, people treat them with contempt. Although they look human, people do not want to acknowledge their “humanity”. In *Battlestar Galactica*, humans see the androids from the very beginning as merely machines that have defied their destiny and caused the destruction of humanity, and because people see them as the cause of their fate, they hate them. Despite the intimate closeness and de facto betrayal of humans by Gaius Baltar (James Callis), he does not believe that Number Six (Tricia Helfer), who takes the form of a seductive woman, is a Cylon:

“You’re a machine.” He let out a frustrated breath. “You’re a synthetic woman. A robot.” He let out another breath, which sounded like a laugh but was a cry of pain. I’ve been sleeping with a robot. A Cylon. No, that is not possible. She calmly answered, “I’ve said it three times now.” His answer was anything but calm. “Well, forgive me, I’m having the tiniest bit of trouble believing that, especially since the last time anyone saw the Cylons they looked like walking chrome toasters” (Carver 2006, 70–71).

Kieran Tranter (2007) perceives the story of *Battlestar Galactica* through the prism of an internal conflict between man and machine. This is a conflict which is an integral part of technological progress, in which humanity – although perhaps only the thoughtful part of it – fears for the future and the possibility of coexistence of man and technology. This significantly shifts the perspective of the perception of humanoid androids and their position in human society. It also qualitatively brings to a new level the notion of forming a society which, under the influence of developments, changes its attitudes toward these “talking toasters”. Tranter states that what *Battlestar Galactica* offers “is not just a parable of politics and law in the new millennium, or a drama on the faults within ‘post-feminism’, but it provides jurisprudence with resources through which to approach the technical” (2007, 46).

*Caprica* (2010) provides an interesting updated approach to political and philosophical discussions responding to the philosophical concepts of post-humanism at the beginning of the second decade of the 21st century. *Caprica* did not experience the success of *Battlestar Galactica*, but it elaborates on the possible causes that led humanity to the situation it would face. Technological progress, the endless desire to control life and not to lose loved ones, and the popular advent of artificial intelligence and avatars can all help change a person's paradigm. Steven Kapica places his own work on *Caprica* "in conversation with post-humanism and the law and proposes that Zoe Graystone's avatar exposes the problems inherent in contemporary constructions of legal personhood; furthermore, it highlights the impossibility of granting full subjectivity to a non-corporeal intelligence within the matrix of humanism" (2014, 612). *Battlestar Galactica* focuses on current issues related to the fight against terrorism as well as its reflections in and implications for liberal democracy, especially human and civil rights, the protection of democracy against political radicalism, and the gradual corrosion of democratic rules. Unlike *Battlestar Galactica*, *Caprica* focuses on how human society got into a "civil war" with the Cylons. There is a reference to how modern society is morally relativized by overlooking phenomena associated with corruption, crime, and the widening gap between generations and social groups. Instead, "*Caprica* presents a vision of the future built from current technological trends and scientific theories, and it adroitly probes contemporary anxieties sparked by the challenges technology presents to human autonomy" (613).

*Caprica*, *Battlestar Galactica*, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* and its film adaptations *Blade Runner* and *Blade Runner: 2049* all tackle a significant political and legal dilemma: the legal status of "non-humans" in society. They show a legal essence, which Kapica also notices:

Despite this trust in the elasticity of the law, when they ask, "Can current laws comfortably incorporate... new entities," I am inclined to answer no, especially when we consider the vision presented by *Caprica* – a vision that suggests we are still too dependent on humanist figurations to comfortably transition to a robust legal personhood accepting of disembodied intelligences as autonomous, acting selves (618).

Our experience of not being willing to accept otherness as part of society is transferred to science-fiction novels and films, and it forms an important line of conflict between humans and non-humans. The clear definition of sociopolitical realities, which is a reflection of contemporary politics and is present in all works, will eventually break and there will be individual changes in people's behavior, which in turn indicates the authors' belief that society (or at least part of it) is able to accept difference as part of their world. To some extent, this belief in humanity is a reflection of the social changes that are taking place in real time and in real life, which are also observed by the authors of these works.

## WHAT NEXT?

Stories about people and non-people are built upon their desire and struggle to become human. But do they really want to be human? Are these ideas not just a reflection of our own anthropocentrism? The judgment of a "talking monkey" about its

own perfection? After all, why would a being that is more perfect than a human want to be human? In the case of Dick's portrayal of Roy Baty, we can see that he does not want to become human; his only desire is to live long enough that his life would have some meaning. We also find the same desire in the Cylon imagination of John Cavil (Dean Stockwell), one of the Significant Seven series. It is he – his model – who longs to destroy all people to the very end. He mocks the efforts of other models to find a way to talk to people and their religiosity, which is a de facto reflection of the faith of the community of people who had created them. Cavil wants to stay a Cylon and thus an extraordinary being:

I don't want to be human. I want to see gamma rays, I want to hear X-rays, and I want to smell dark matter. Do you see the absurdity of what I am? I can't even express these things properly, because I have to – I have to conceptualize complex ideas in this stupid, limiting spoken language, but I know I want to reach out with something other than these prehensile paws, and feel the solar wind of a supernova flowing over me. I'm a machine, and I can know much more, I could experience so much more, but I'm trapped in this absurd body (*Battlestar Galactica* 2004–2009).

The result of the authors' view of the future in science fiction is a look into our own (often dark) inner world. They offer a critique of the bleak times that we live in and the decisions we make in life and politics. Nonetheless, what we want to know about the future still remains shrouded in mystery. At most, it is a reflection of what is human in us and what human traits we would like to pass on to those that some look forward to yet others fear. After all, “[w]hat it means to be human finally is not so much about intelligent machines as it is about how to create just societies in a transnational global world that may include in its purview both carbon and silicon citizens” (Hayles 2005, 148). Science-fiction authors cannot detach themselves from politics, since how the future state of the world will be shaped by political decisions.

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## CITED AUDIOVISUAL WORKS

- Battlestar Galactica* (created by Glen A. Larson and Ronald D. Moore. USA, Canada, 2004–2009)
- Blade Runner: Director's Cut* (directed by Ridley Scott, USA, 1982)
- Blade Runner: 2049* (directed by Denis Villeneuve, USA, UK, Canada, Hungary, Spain, Mexico, 2017)

## From “andys” to “toasters”: How has politics affected the view of non-humans in “Blade Runner” and “Battlestar Galactica”?

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Science-fiction politics. Dystopia. Non-human. Post-humanism. Corrosion of democracy. Segregation. The world of tomorrow.

This article focuses on the change in perception of humanoid androids in science fiction from Philip K. Dick’s cult novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968) and its later film adaptations, to the depictions of androids and people in the struggle for survival and immortality in the TV series *Battlestar Galactica* (2004–2009) and *Caprica* (2010). Science-fiction novels usually outline the author’s ideas about the near or distant future of the world with which they are confronted on a daily basis. They usually warn readers of a possible apocalypse or present models of an ideal future society to replace the society of today. However, science fiction is written by real people in a specific space and time who often reflect the social tensions and issues of the time they were created. The depictions of humanoid androids, their position in society, and their desire to break free from their undignified or even slavish positions are, in many cases, a reflection of real policies and the position of today’s “others” in mainstream society.

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PhDr. Jozef Lenč, PhD.  
Centre for Bioethics  
Department of Philosophy and Applied Philosophy  
Faculty of Arts  
University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava  
Nám. J. Herdu 2  
917 01 Trnava  
Slovak Republic  
jozef.lenc@ucm.sk  
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6953-9421>