Eyeballing the Simulacra
Desire and Vision in *Blade Runner*
by Cathy Cupitt

It has been suggested that one of the defining features of post-modern society is the "rearticulation of the verbal by the visual"1; that, to paraphrase Olalquiaga, there is a replacement of the symbolic with the imaginary or the simulacra. This is obviously not literally true, or I could not be 'writing' this essay, however I think that as a description of a trend it is accurate enough. Furthermore, I think that it is most apparent in representations of our desires.

In the past our desires were apparent in the narratives we told ourselves, which is why Buell could describe Thoreau's journal as "a million-word paper-trail of unfulfilled desire"2. Correspondingly, if the trend Olalquiaga points out is accurate, we could expect desire to be articulated in visual terms in post-modern, late capitalist 'texts'. There seems to be some evidence of this - we find visceral pictorial advertisements, special effects extravaganzas on the movie screen, and the ever more exotic graphics for World Wide Web sites. But what of more complex texts? If the imaginary is really replacing the symbolic, what are the narratives we 'tell' ourselves now? Or perhaps the question should be: *how* are we 'telling' these narratives? It is this issue that I wish to explore through an examination of the extent that desire - particularly images of desire, or desire of images - motivates the narrative of *Blade Runner*3, a film highly praised by many post-modern critics.

Blade Runner as an Object of Visual Desire4

Film, as a visual narrative form, plays with the voyeuristic desires of its audience. To see a movie we go to a special place - the cinema - and sit in the dark, surrounded by strangers, and our whole attention is directed towards the light show playing over the huge screen in front of us. The point of the exercise is obvious enough, as can be seen by the names given to the film stock: Panavision, Cinemascope, etc. And so, to this extent at least, every film panders to the visual expectations and desires of the audience.

This desire for the visual is much older than the current post-modern symbolic/simulatory debate. As Laura Mulvay comments, in her influential writings on film viewing, "there are circumstances in which looking itself is a source of pleasure, just as, in the reverse formation, there is pleasure in being looked at"5. This being the case, what makes *Blade Runner* any different to films of other eras? Is there a difference?

The makers of *Blade Runner* expect this desire to look on the part of viewers, and play with it in a particularly overt way. Firstly there is the expectation of an audience's delight in visual texture, with the 'retro-fitted' spectacle of the post-modern city to ogle. Secondly, the narrative itself is focussed on the quest for 'truthful' representations of

reality. Finally, there is the recurrent motif of the 'eye': from private-eye, to genetically replicated eyes, to fully artificial eyes such as cameras.

> The presence of the eye in the text of the film is a figuring of the apparatus which writes the text of the film. In this respect, the film represents itself as an instance of experiential record, observant rather than inventive or fictional, a foreign place (the future) made present in an act of mediation which depends for its effectiveness on the unbroken texture of the real in all its objectness. It is, then a compelling instance of Baudrillian simulation, a copy of a period in human history which has not yet happened.[6]

Blade Runner creates a 'real' world for us to view, and yet undermines our grasp on reality through its theme of representational uncertainty. The abundance of eyes, especially disembodied eyes, emphasises the inability for characters within the film to see the 'whole picture' in terms of ultimate truths about their lives, quests or moral dilemmas. The irony is that even after the external audience has seen the 'whole picture', the film's meaning remains ambiguous. Hence the strange nature of the film: every time I watch *Blade Runner* it seems deep and complex, and yet in hindsight I can never quite fathom what it is about. All I remember are the images.

This type of meta-narrative is not unique to post-modern films. Several of Hitchcock's films, for example, examine the relationship of what-is-seen to what-is-real - the most famous probably being *Rear Window*. I think the difference in post-modern films is in the desire which motivates this examination.

In *Rear Window* it was assumed that there was a 'reality' to discover if one looked hard enough. In *Blade Runner* this is not the case; memory, vision, and identity are all fragmented. Nothing can be relied upon as real, particularly the 'human' protagonists. Hence they search not only for an elusive reality, but for themselves through their memories and photographs. "The film's motifs of eyes and photographs are supported by the treatment of the human desire to 'see unencumbered' and the need for memories, a need which persists through the knowledge that the dominant characteristic of those memories is unreliability"[7].

This search by the protagonists is echoed by a desire on the part of the original 1980's audience, for a film without such blatant 'unreliability'. The audience's urge for a closed narrative is best illustrated by the fact that two (main) versions of *Blade Runner* exist. One is the original release, which has: a voice-over to explicate the visual narrative; and an Edenic ending, which is actually made up of out-takes from *The Shining*. The other is the Director's Cut, which has: no voice-over; and the much more ambiguous 'origami unicorn' ending. The reason that there are these two versions is that the test audiences and critics reacted negatively to a Director's-Cut-type version back in 1982. To try to save the film from commercial disaster the changes were made. But even with the changes, the narrative did not appeal to the audience of the 'Greed is Good' decade, as Elissa Marder's collection of critics' comments show:

> *Blade Runner* has nothing to give the audience … It hasn't been thought out in human terms.
>
> Scott both overdoses on atmosphere and deliberately underdevelops the emotional tension … His method alienates rather than entrances, completely undercutting his drama. When signs of humanity are so fleeting in both humans and replicants, the audience has no stake in their life or death.8

Of course the problematic 'signs' of humanity are the crux of the film, built into the very images used to forward the story. It is not accidental that it is the atmosphere created through the visuals that is rejected as emphatically as the themes.

I think it very telling that it was the aspects of *Blade Runner* that most challenged ideas of humanity that were cut or altered. In particular, the removal of the Unicorn Dream sequence also removed the most obvious suggestion that Deckard was a replicant. And the addition of Deckard's voice-over telling us "Rachel was special - no termination date," changes the impact of Gaff's final line: "Too bad she won't live. But then again, who does?". In the original release Gaff is seen as outsmarted, as opposed to philosophically correct in the Director's Cut. I think these changes effectively reduce the film's conflation of replicant and human.

In the past "when humans have tried to distinguish themselves from animals, the primary strategy has been to locate humanity in a meaning frame in which they have a capacity that transcends the merely physical"9. This strategy has been shown to be flawed, yet in the 1980's I suspect few people were comfortable in admitting what Donna Haraway puts so well, that:

> The last beachheads of uniqueness have been polluted if not turned into amusement parks - language, tool use, social behaviour, mental events, nothing really convincingly settles the separation of human and animal.10

Blade Runner could be said to be 'ahead of its time' with regards to its treatment of this theme. The film chooses not to set up a human/animal dichotomy with which to test for humanness (despite the animal related questions of the Voight-Kampf empathy test). Instead, the test is drawn between humans and technology - in the form of androids. The replicants are artefacts which look human, and can speak, think, act, use tools, and fear death. Correspondingly, there is no obvious visual way to tell human and replicant apart, unless a replicant performs a feat of super-human strength or endurance.

The ultimate test for humanness designated by the film is for empathy. The empathy of the subject is measured through minute iris contractions, using a machine which magnifies the eye hugely. The irony of the test is clear enough. "Humans can only determine their difference from the species that they have created (androids) by invoking their nostalgic empathy for the species they have presumably already destroyed

(animals)."[11] In both versions of the film, it is, therefore, strongly suggested that replicants *and humans* fail the empathy test for humanness.

I think, in part, this explains why *Blade Runner* failed to appeal to the 1980's audience, even though the narrative had been significantly changed due to their desire for certainty and a happy ending. The questioning of definitions of humanity was too integral to the visual structure of the film to be so superficially erased.

However, with the increasing acceptance of the post-modern world-view the desire of the audience changed. A series of films incorporating an urban dystopian vision, posing these same questions about humanness, started to appear; films such as *Robocop*, *The Terminator*, and *Hardware*. Having developed a taste for this vision of the future, *Blade Runner* was rediscovered, and became an artefact much loved by critics, and 'cult' audiences - particularly because of its lush vision of monolithic urban decay. As a result of *Blade Runner's* new popularity, it became economically viable to release the Director's Cut. Without the voice-over, the ambiguous visual narrative was re-invested with authority, and some of the themes suggested by the film changed.

This transience of the narrative from version to version is much more pronounced in *Blade Runner* than in most films, and although there were undoubtedly many factors effecting these changes in the film, the desire of the audience can certainly be said to have influenced it significantly - twice!

This is not the whole story of the influence of desire on narrative, however, as I have not yet examined the images of desire as they appear *within* the narrative. For once we start to look past the external forces constructing the film, and instead focus on the narrative itself, we find that the motivations of the characters are ascribed to several desires.

The Dialectics of Fear and Desire in *Blade Runner*[12]

It is the replicants' desire for life, twinned with the human desire for safe, labour-saving technology that propels the mains strands of the narrative in *Blade Runner*. These twin desires are in conflict, as the replicants are the labour-saving technology that must be made 'safe' through the expedient of limiting their life-spans.

The replicants are designed to do the hard labour involved in establishing and maintaining the off-world colonies, we are told in the introductory scrolling text that opens the film. It is not inconceivable that inorganic technology could have been invented to do these jobs, yet the society of the film chose instead to use human genetic material to create these 'slaves'. It is this aspect of the film that leads so obviously to comparisons with the story of *Frankenstein*. In both of these texts the desire to explore the limits of current technology is linked with the desire to create life, and both narratives explore this theme in a cautionary way. Dr Frankenstein is shown to be morally unequal to the role of creator he has assumed; and Tyrell is shown to be blind to the humanity of the replicants despite his motto of creating them to be "more human than human". The replicants are not just created in the human image, but are an attempt at perfection. Under these

circumstances, it is ironic that the limit that "has been introduced to the attempt to produce the perfect body -- [is] death itself."13

I think the fact that these tales are cautionary indicates that there is fear at work, along with desire; specifically techno-fear, and the fear of death. In fact, I think the narrative of *Blade Runner* is primarily motivated by a dialogue between the desire for safe technology, and techno-fear on the one hand, and the desire to create or extend life, and the fear of death on the other.

These themes are closely connected to the predominant genres of the film, which are science fiction and film noir - a combination commonly labelled Tech Noir. It has been suggested that "in film noir, the site of morality is the protagonist, the lone detective. ... In science fiction, society as a whole questions its assumptions of morality, which ... are centred on the consequences of using advanced technology"14. I think it is fruitful to consider *Blade Runner* in light of the different tendencies of these two genres, especially through an examination of the way in which the individual and the social are linked to the different narrative strands of the film.

The most prominent individual of the film is Deckard. He is the figure the audience is expected to identify with, as he is set up as the human protagonist, and 'good guy'. Even without the 'hard-boiled' voice-over, the image of him as a lone detective is strongly drawn through his wardrobe and position in the film. However, far from being an unambiguously moral figure, Deckard is a man deeply divided with regards to his attitude towards replicants. He doesn't call them "skin jobs" as his boss does, in terminology reminiscent of racism. But he is the replicants' executioner, despite the fact that we see early on that he dislikes the idea of killing them. He tells his police force ex-boss, who is attempting to re-recruit him, "I was quit when I came in here, Bryant. I'm twice as quit now".

The replicants are expected to be the 'bad guys' in conflict with Deckard. This is signalled by the opening scene in which Leon kills the Blade Runner giving him the Voight-Kampf test. We are presented with a world in which "man's own handiwork becomes his worst enemy"15. As the film progresses and the replicant body count increases, we become less sure about this definition, however. We start to see often ironic parallels between the categories of human and replicant. For example, Deckard has a job he hates, and replicants were invented to undertake just such jobs. And these replicants are 'fallen angels', as Baty suggests through his misquoting of Blake in Chew's laboratory. A few scenes later, we are reminded that humans have also 'fallen' from grace. As Zhora comes on stage to perform her snake act an announcer says: "Watch her take pleasure from the serpent that once corrupted men". Through these parallels we discover "the problematic nature of the human being and the difficult task of being human"16.

How does this interact with the ideas of fearing death, and desiring life? The replicants become much more sympathetic figures once the audience discovers that they have travelled to earth in a search for more life, and that this search is the action which has initiated the narrative of the film. They have risked everything for this. With no memories

or families to cushion the knowledge of their own imminent terminality, they are afraid of death and seek to stave it off. This fear of death is bound up with the definition of what is human. It raises questions like: are replicants just artificial constructs? Can something which isn't human fear death?

If replicants are just technological constructs, destroying them would be no more immoral than destroying a car or toaster, and creating them would require little moral responsibility for their actions. However, if they are "more human than human," killing them must surely be murder, and creating them must surely require the same moral commitment as parenting. Here, then, is the heart of the film, in the form of the questions: what is it to be human, and when is something human enough to be human? The answers are sought visually, through the motif of the eye, as I mentioned earlier in the essay.

The eye trope can be read as meaning many things, and has been by numerous critics. One of the cleverest is that it is "representing both vision as the 'eye' and identity as the 'I'"[17]. I agree with this, as I think it is used to cue the viewer to a visual quest for self-definition by the individual protagonists. For instance, Baty, Rachel and Deckard all question their genesis at certain points in the narrative. Baty by confronting his creator, Tyrell, and consequently blinding and killing him. Deckard as he examines Gaff's origami unicorn, which implies his earlier dream-vision of a unicorn was a memory implant. And Rachel with her photograph of her supposed mother. Her photograph is presented as a kind of proof of experience and memory, a narrative of the self. When it is discredited, so is her humanity.

> There is that which forms identity by being integral to it - and narrative plays a part here - and there is that which forms identity by containing it and setting it apart from otherness. In the context of the social network on earth in *Blade Runner*, a narrative going back to childhood makes a self coherent by giving it temporal extension, but has an additional significance. The fact of having had a childhood is a form of distinction with special value because of the nearness of replicant/others who have not had one.[18]

However, childhood itself cannot be satisfactorily proven in this world of memory implants. In fact, it can be said that people in this text are "constructed as identities ... by and in relation to corporate bodies. ... There is no aspect of identity, personal or textual, which has not passed through some kind of technological mediation"[19]. This being the case, there can be no such thing as innate humanness.

The final nail in the coffin of 'humanity' is, perhaps, the suggestion that Deckard is himself a replicant, and has been a convincing enough simulation of 'humanity' to have fooled himself and the audience for the duration of the film. If this is indeed so, then the test for humanness can no longer be satisfactorily resolved, if it ever could, for the people inhabiting the *Blade Runner* world. And the right to life is left in a moral limbo even more fraught than that of the real world abortion debate. In such a world, perhaps only "the Death Instinct ... would be the final marker of the quintessentially human"[20].

I think the film suggests even more than a moral confusion, however. It signals the end of 'humanness' in the real world too, as we have conceived it in the past. It postulates instead the suggestion that we are all androids - no longer human, nor yet machine. Haraway has suggested that this is not an apocalyptic finding, but that in fact "the cyborg appears in myth precisely where the boundary between human and animal is transgressed. Far from signalling a walling off of people from other living beings, cyborgs signal disturbingly and pleasurably tight coupling."[21] We return to desire - the intimate and almost sexual desire of post-modern society for our technological products, even if it costs us our 'humanness'. The opposite tenet is that explored by much science fiction, including *Frankenstein*; the tenet that "a technologically advanced society fears this dependence on machines and subsequent loss of control because it represents dehumanisation"[22]. Exploring this dichotomy is the stuff of which science fiction has always been made.

In bringing these fears and desires "to the surface, the film leaves no doubt about their source in corporate capitalism and its ideology of a free market and free enterprise"[23]. This theme is visualised most strongly through the loving and lingering shots of the decaying, high-rise cityscape. The Tyrell mega-corporation is literally the king of the heap, as its building towers monolithically over every other in the city. From its top windows you can even see a sickly orange sun on the horizon. Surely such as cityscape as this, which so persistently denies the natural, is the epitome of the dehumanising possibilities of the joining of human and technology. The street-level "pervasiveness of advertising and lack of communicative content"[24] is a potent symbol of this effect.

What is suggested by the Tyrell building's prominence is that the Corporation has "the capacity to 'humanise' technology but instead produce[s] an artificial and alienating social world, a throwaway culture that has lost all sense of time and history"[25]. It produces a world of simulation, rather than one of unifying symbols.

Tyrell embodies the moral failure of the corporation which bears his name. He lives in a 'heavenly' isolation, far above the rest of the people inhabiting the city, and far from a position where he can directly observe the consequences of his business on human lives. He even plays chess remotely, suggesting he plays with his 'living' chess pieces in a similar way. It is, after all, through presenting a chess challenge to Tyrell that Baty gains physical access to him. In all respects Tyrell is shown to be a 'god' with a bad case of self-imposed blindness. Why else would a man who has access to perfect artificial eyes wear such ludicrously thick glasses? For all that Tyrell recognises Baty as his "son," he is blind to what it is he has truly created as a consequence of his technological desires - a dystopia, in which *no human* is human enough.

In this essay I have examined the influence of desire on the narrative of *Blade Runner*; in particular, desire as it relates to images and imagery. As I have demonstrated, desire is a key motivating influence on the narrative of the film, both in the 'real world', and within the text. In the first case, the desire of the audience caused the film to be physically re-cut twice. While within the film, the twin emotions of fear and desire - for technology and life - are the dominant themes explored through the visual narrative. The predominant visual tropes affecting this narrative are the eye and the dystopian cityscape. As the film

contains little dialogue - especially in the Director's Cut - this visual narrative is of prime importance.

The dominance of the visual would certainly seem to confirm the post-modern trend towards simulation put forward by Olalquiaga. It can even be argued that the film itself, and the society it creates, are both simulacra of the Baudrillian kind. It is this, in combination with other trends observable in the film, which suggests that *Blade Runner* is a significantly different cultural construct to films of other eras. The most important of these trends are: the fragmentation of the category of 'human'; the vilification of the mega-conglomerates which are so dominant in our current real world social spaces; and perhaps most significantly of all, the questioning of the idea of an underlying, definitive 'reality', to be found if only one 'looks' hard enough.

Beyond all of this theory, *Blade Runner* is a lovingly constructed film which has aged remarkably well, especially considering its emphasis on technology. I think this is largely due to its use of themes currently active in post-modern debate, and its formation of the startlingly dynamic, dystopian, Tech Noir vision of the future.

Annotated Bibliography

Desser, D.
"*Blade Runner*, Science Fiction and Transcendence." *Literature-Film Quarterly* 13 (3) (1985), 172-179.

A mostly unconvincing reading of *Blade Runner* as Christian redemptive allegory. The film is a modern day *Paradise Lost*, complete with hellish city and paradise regained in the finale. Rachel redeems Deckard through love in an inversion of the *femme fatale* character she is made up to resemble. Baty, on the other hand, is both a Satan and a Christ figure in one.

Deutelbaum, M.
"Memory/Visual Design: The Remembered Sights of *Blade Runner*." *Literature-Film Quarterly* 17 (1) (1989), 66-72.

Discusses the care taken to develop the look of Los Angeles in the film, using the processes of extrapolation and retro-fitting. Deutalbaum argues that this ties in to the theme of 'what makes one human'. Images of the human are similarly constructed, particularly in terms of eye imagery and photographs. He compares this to the techniques used in medieval Dutch painting. Thus the film and the replicants within it belong to the tradition of representational art, which has been used in the past to explore notions of humanity. This effectively humanises the replicants.

Doll, S. and Faller, G.

"*Blade Runner* and Genre: Film Noir and Science Fiction." *Literature-Film Quarterly* 14 (2) (1986), 89-100.

Blade Runner combines science fiction (sf) and film noir without homogenising the genres. Noir is cued predominantly through the visual style of the film, while sf accounts for most of the thematic material. In particular the theme of the rapid advance of technology, and its impact on culture - a la the Frankenstein myth. When put together the two genres evoke a deep feeling of fear about technology, the current moral state of humanity, and the tension between man and nature. The mix also short-circuits our expectations, leading to a film which doesn't pronounce moral certainties. Doll and Faller suggest this new mix of genres may fill a cultural need no longer satisfied by the individual narrative forms.

Fisher, W.
"Of Living Machines and Living-Machines: *Blade Runner* and the Terminal Genre." *New Literary History* 20 (1) (1988), 187-198.

Coins the now widely used phrase 'Terminal Genre' to refer to big-budget, dystopian, high technology, science fictional, post-modern films. Suggests that the detritus of late-capitalist societies informs both the look and narrative of such films. In this world of human commodification, figures like the Replicant are needed, as objects even more constructed than we are, to define ourselves against. However, the critique of capitalism in these films is limited and ambiguous as they are still underpinned by the utopian impulses of wish-fulfilment and escapism, so that they appeal to large audiences. Finally, despite the Terminal Genre's similarities to avant-garde forms, it is fundamentally different in that it, finally, can offer no escape from the present cultural crises.

Haraway, D.
"A Cyborg Manifesto; Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century." In *In Theory: The Reading Theory Reader*. Nedlands: The English Department, UWA, 1996, 383-403.

Haraway argues that with increasing technological advancement definitions of the 'human' become less and less convincing. This can be seen as positive, in that a new cyborg mentality can develop. Cybernetacism offers the opportunity to dispense with many of the old dichotomies and hierarchies of patriarchal thought, as such ideologies cannot survive the transition from the symbolic to the simulated. Instead previously marginalised groups can find new strengths through bonds of affinity.

Marder, E.
"*Blade Runner's* Moving Still." *Camera Obscura* 27 (1991), 88-107.

The film is a "subversive depiction of a post-human condition", making the film a replicant by its own definition. Not only for its subject matter, but literally in the

way it reproduced humans on celluloid. The eye-test in the film is thus both an intra and extra textual test. Human empathy is presented as ironic, due to the categories refused empathy. The absence of mothers is seen as central to human and replicant construction within the film. Even photographic evidence of mothers is suspect, especially in light of how Rachel's mother will not stay 'still', and therefore definitive, within a photograph - for a moment we can see her move. Hence, even a mother cannot guarantee that "one was born, and not made".

Morrison, R.
"*Casablanca* Meets *Star Wars*: The Blakean Dialectics of *Blade Runner*." *Literature-Film Quarterly* 13 (1) (1990), 2-10.

Dialectical opposition is integral to the metaphysical nature of the film. *Blade Runner* is about human duplication and empathy. However, the established "antimonies" of human/Replicant are subverted, the boundaries between them confused. This is most pronounced in the non-human Baty's embodiment of Blake's "valorization of human passion and imagination integrated with reason," as is suggested by Baty's misquoting of Blake's *America: A Prophecy*. The eye motif emphasises the "dual vision and perceptual ambiguity" of the film. This disunity forces the audience to conflate the presented viewpoints if any satisfying closure is to be gained. *Casablanca* and *Star Wars* really only get a fleeting mention, but sound good in the title.

Mulvey, L.
Visual and Other Pleasures. London: Macmillan Press, 1989.

Mulvey examines the way we view cinema, and the sexual politics of cinematic representation. Men, traditionally the 'viewers' of feminised objects of desire, are themselves objects of desire writ large on the cinema screen. She also discusses the pleasures of being a watcher, and the complementary pleasures of being watched.

Olalquiaga, C.
"Reach Out and Touch Someone." In *Ecotexts: Nature/Writing/Technology*. Nedlands: Department of English, UWA, 1997, 135-144.

Discusses how technology has transformed our cultural perceptions of time and space, and displaced the symbolic with the imaginary. Fragmentation of the self is juxtaposed with the pleasures of viewing an intensity of produced images, and blindness to 'natural' sights. As a result the boundary between the public and the private is blurring. Olalquiaga postulates that evidence of these trends is in the increase in obsessive and schizophrenic disorders in Western society. She points to the irony that as this fragmentation of the human identity/body becomes more pronounced, capitalist corporations are equating technology and people in their public relations material.

Opie, B.

> "Android Textuality or, Finding a Toad in the Desert of America." In Howard McNaughton (ed.). *Remembering Representation*. Christchurch: University of Canterbury Department of English, 1993, 76-89.

> Discusses how the way we have always treated fictional people as real is a phenomena related to the way new technologies can create 'virtual realities'. Postulates that if androids can do things human can't they are not 'simulations' in the sense that they are copies, but simulations in the Baudrillardian sense that they have no real origin, thus are real in themselves. This makes defining the human problematic in an age where people tend to be defined by their associations with corporate bodies rather than generational familial relations. Opie suggests that *Do Android's Dream of Electric Sheep* concludes by "securing the human as the exemplar of the real," while *Blade Runner* reverses the novel's ending, endorsing androids as indistinguishable entities.

Ruppert, P.

> "*Blade Runner:* The Utopian Dialectics of Science Fiction Films." *Cineaste* 17 (2) (1989), 8-13.

> Ruppert discusses the trend to invent dystopias present in current science fiction films, particularly with regards to post-industrial urban areas. The happy endings that often conclude these films are a shift from dystopian to utopian fantasy. The films stimulate our fears, and then neutralise them. He speculates that much of the debate about *Blade Runner* stems from a disjunction between its vivid dystopian look, and its banal love story plot. However, the paralleling of Baty and Deckard critiques social codes, and the happy ending suggests that both humans and replicants can become 'more human than human'.

Sammon, P. M.

> *Future Noir: The Making of Blade Runner.* London: Orion Media, 1996.

> Everything you ever wanted to know about the technical aspects of producing, editing and releasing (and re-releasing) *Blade Runner*. Topics covered include transforming Dick's book into a screenplay, development, putting the director and finance deal together, visual design, casting, shooting, special effects, post-production, preview audience responses, re-cutting, the theatrical release, the public reception, and a list of all the different versions of the film. Also includes descriptions of 'bloopers', associated trivia, and a short bibliography.

Scott, R. (director).

> *Blade Runner* - original release. Warner Brothers, 1982.

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> *Blade Runner* - the Director's Cut. Warner Home Video, 1993.

Sey, J.

"The Body of the Cyborg: The Case of *Blade Runner*." In Loes Nas and Lesley Marx (eds.). *Inter Action 2: Proceedings of the Second Post-Graduate Conference held at Bain's Kloof, September 1993*. Department of English, University of Capetown, 1994, 168-179.

Science fiction began as technophilic and utopian and has moved towards the dystopic technocracy. The theme of the robot has remained constant throughout. In Blade Runner the robot figure is used to examine technologised oedipal relations, the threat of the robot towards nature, and the knowledge of death as a final indicator of 'humanness'. The Director's Cut is more sinister, as it proposes that a robot can be unaware of its own nature, hence signalling the possibility of human obsolescence.

Shapiro, M. J.
"'Manning' the Frontiers: The Politics of (Human) Nature in *Blade Runner*." In Jane Bennett and William Chaloupka (eds.). *In the Nature of Things: Language, Politics, and the Environment*. London; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993, 65-84.

This essay discusses how *Blade Runner,* like Dick's, novel focuses on the debate about the 'uniqueness' of humanity. In the novel the debate is forwarded by a contrasting of human and animal (the 'first frontier'), whereas in the film the contrast is between human and android (the 'second frontier'). This conflict is significantly signalled through visual means in the film, particularly in the eye - or 'I' - imagery. Shapiro suggests the film looks at two types of identity formation; that which works through narrative (memory), and that which works through setting-apart (discrimination). Both are seen as problematic within the film, as is the depiction of the escape to 'nature' at the end.

Staiger, J.
"Future Noir: Contemporary Representations of Visionary Cities." *East-West Film Journal* 3 (1) (1988), 20-44.

Discusses how public space has been represented and commodified in *Blade Runner.* This trend can be summed up as consisting of four elements: "post-modernism, indirect lighting, labyrinthian space, and an entropic civilization". Staiger gives an historical perspective on how this trend of representation developed. She states that it was through the joining of two strands of utopian thought: the literary, as postulated in More's *Utopia* (no-place), and proceeding through science fiction literature by dystopian writers such as Wells and Huxley; and the architectural, with twentieth-century urban planning. The visual representation of the city in the film is a dystopian critique of monopoly capitalism, featuring urban sprawl, decayed monoliths, discarded debris, and the pervasiveness of advertising. The bleak visuals are housings for ultimately corrupt economic and social institutions.

End Notes

1. Celeste Olalquiaga, "Reach Out and Touch Someone," In *Ecotexts: Nature/Writing/Technology* (Nedlands: Department of English, UWA, 1997), p. 135-144. This from p. 137.
2. Ecotexts Handout 11/216/316/97, Department of English, University of Western Australia.
3. Ridley Scott (director), *Blade Runner* - original release (Warner Brothers, 1982). Also *Blade Runner* - the Director's Cut (Warner Home Video, 1993).
4. Paul M. Sammon, *Future Noir: The Making of Blade Runner* (London: Orion Media, 1996). The technical information about *Blade Runner* that I discuss in this essay is mostly common knowledge, however I used Sammon's extraordinarily complete history of the film to check for accuracy.
5. Laura Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures* (London: Macmillan Press, 1989), p. 16.
6. Brian Opie, "Android Textuality or, Finding a Toad in the Desert of America," In Howard McNaughton (ed.), *Remembering Representation* (Christchurch: University of Canterbury Department of English, 1993), p. 76-89. This from p. 81.
7. Rachela Morrison, "*Casablanca* Meets *Star Wars*: The Blakean Dialectics of *Blade Runner*," *Literature-Film Quarterly* 13 (1) (1990), p. 2-10. This from p. 4.
8. Elissa Marder, "*Blade Runner's* Moving Still," *Camera Obscura* 27 (1991), p. 88-107. Both of these quotes are from p. 89. The first is Pauline Kael, the second Michael Scragow.
9. Michael J. Shapiro, "'Manning' the Frontiers: The Politics of (Human) Nature in *Blade Runner*," In Jane Bennett and William Chaloupka (eds.), *In the Nature of Things: Language, Politics, and the Environment* (London; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), p. 65-84. This from p. 73.
10. Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto; Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," In *In Theory: The Reading Theory Reader* (Nedlands: The English Department, UWA, 1996), p. 383-403. This from p. 384-85.
11. Marder, p. 91.
12. As I have room to discuss only one version of the film in depth in this essay, I am going to focus on the Director' Cut. I have chosen this version because it is, in my opinion, more thematically consistent.
13. James Sey, "The Body of the Cyborg: The Case of *Blade Runner*," In Loes Nas and Lesley Marx (eds.), *Inter Action 2: Proceedings of the Second Post-Graduate Conference held at Bain's Kloof, September 1993* (Department of English, University of Capetown, 1994), p. 168-179. This from p. 174.
14. Susan Doll and Greg Faller, "*Blade Runner* and Genre: Film Noir and Science Fiction," *Literature-Film Quarterly* 14 (2) (1986), p. 89-100. This from p. 95.

15. William Fisher, "Of Living Machines and Living-Machines: *Blade Runner* and the Terminal Genre," *New Literary History* 20 (1) (1988), p. 187-198. This from p. 193.
16. David Desser, "*Blade Runner*, Science Fiction and Transcendence," *Literature-Film Quarterly* 13 (3) (1985), p. 172-179. This from p. 172, quoting Telotte.
17. Shapiro, p. 75.
18. Shapiro, p. 77.
19. Opie, p. 84.
20. Sey, p. 176.
21. Haraway, p. 385.
22. Doll and Faller, p. 94.
23. Peter Ruppert, "*Blade Runner*: The Utopian Dialectics of Science Fiction Films," *Cineaste* 17 (2) (1989), p. 8-13. This from p. 10.
24. Janet Staiger, "Future Noir: Contemporary Representations of Visionary Cities," *East-West Film Journal* 3 (1) (1988), p. 20-44. This from p. 38.
25. Ruppert, p 12.