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The Tyranny of Masculine Creation and the Potency of a Replicant Adam and Eve Mythology:
Postsecular Critique of Materialism in the *Blade Runner* Films

Fantasies of masculine creation—the (often) perverse desire to create life in the absence of woman—abound in science fiction literature and film. Mary Shelley in her foundational gothic-SF novel *Frankenstein* (1818) set the literary, theatrical, and cinematic stages for exploring this tragic theme of unchecked materialistic creation. Her “hideous progeny” gave rise to the play titled *Presumption: Or the Fate of Frankenstein* (1823), Hawthorne’s “Rappaccini’s Daughter” (1844), the film *Frankenstein* (1910), the film *Der Golem* (1915), Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis* (1927), and James Whale’s *Frankenstein* (1931), just to list a few. Each of these texts explores the horrific consequences of usurping natural procreative processes through the (mis)application of materialistic science. However, these SF horror narratives do not provide any cultural corrective. Is there a solution to the personal decimation and societal disintegration wrought by these applications of materialistic science?

In my paper I attempt to explore one possible answer to this question by analyzing the two *Blade Runner* films from the perspective of postsecular theory. Indeed, postsecularism is itself a diverse and contested theoretical perspective. For the purposes of this paper, I will consider postsecularism as an imaginative, creative space that invites critique of secularist faith in the scientific grand narratives of materialism and naturalism. In addition to such critique, the postsecular imagination also allows for a redemptive vision that invites visionary redemption. The postsecular imagination is free to critique the limitations of a purely materialistic perspective, and it is empowered by a transcendent vision to consider solutions within the mythic. In other words, mythopoeic narratives provide a framework through which to rewrite/re-right SF materialism and to imbue SF texts with new visions of hope grounded in mystery. Postsecularism opens up hard SF to the wondrous possibilities offered by myths of creative transcendence.

First, I will trace a reading of *Blade Runner* (1982) which argues that specific Judeo-Christian imagery and stories of rebellion, fall into sin, and redemption through gracious self-sacrifice transform the classic Frankensteinian narrative into a new Adam and Eve myth. Roy, the prodigal replicant son, accomplishes what Satan and Victor Frankenstein’s Creature could not—namely, the destruction of his creator. However, through a transcendent turn of events, what seems to be failed masculine creation transforms into divine redeemer, offering salvation through grace from the abyss of fear, slavery, and death. Roy, literally with nail-pierced hands, saves Deckard from falling to his death and offers him new life, even as Roy himself perishes. Arguing that Deckard, too, is a replicant, I propose that the end of the film strongly suggests that Roy’s self-sacrifice transforms Deckard and Rachel into replicant Adam and Eve.

Blade Runner 2049 (2017) confirms this reading, for not only does Deckard and Rachel escape to start a new life together, but they miraculously and mysteriously procreate. Artifice transcends material nature, creating a new reproductive replicant species. Together, these two films create a postsecular SF myth through which materialistic science, namely the masculinist attempt to create life in the absence of woman, is critiqued, and the promise of new life is offered through transcendence, imaginatively expressed in an ironic SF appropriation of the Adam and Eve narrative.