

Do females dream of
a respectable
representation?



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Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* (a novel) and Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (a film) insist comparison: Ridley Scott's film is based on the story told by Philip K. Dick's novel. These works were created about ten years apart from one another and therefore had important situational differences influence their creations. Most importantly, Ridley Scott never finished reading the novel and did not allow anyone working on the film to read or refer to the novel. Given these noticeable differences, this essay will explore the difference in the portrayal of women in both works, as well as how many of the missing ideas from the novel are still present through a different representation. This essay will focus on the representation of women and how it communicates the objectification of women, the oppression of women, and the animalistic equivalence of women. The need for women, both android/replicant and human, to be artificial is a theme in both the film and novel, but it is emphasized in the film. The film lacks the presence of Luba Luft, an escaped android now working as an opera singer, because the film is in the genre of *film noir* and Luba does not fit into the *femme fatale* character archetype as the other women do; therefore, her omission stresses the importance of the *femme fatale* representation. Unlike the novel, the film constantly displays propaganda with images of Japanese women. This propaganda objectifies women and signifies the way in which women, both real and replicant, have become both technologically advanced synthetic beings and consumer products. During the time the film was made, Japan was rising in the technological field, and thus the images represent an "advanced" woman, a synthetic woman. More in the novel than in the film, the relationship between Pris and Rachael is stressed by the fact that they look similar, adding to their production line's consumer product quality. This

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idea of an artificial female is not only recommended in the film through the propaganda, but almost demanded by the society in the film, as can be interpreted by the fact that all of the female lead roles are of artificial females. The only women seen in the film who are “ real” are a senior oriental and a liquor vendor. Additionally, the film places the story in Los Angeles, as opposed to San Francisco, as it is in the novel. This adds to the idea of artificial women as Los Angeles has a reputation for an abundance of celebrities, and celebrities have a reputation of plastic surgery and other forms of visual manipulation. This gives the impression that in the Los Angeles of the future, a woman must be artificial in order to have any sort of significant identity. It is for this reason that all of the android/replicant females are designed to have aesthetically pleasing appearances. This is confirmed when both the novel’s Eldon Rosen and the film’s Eldon Tyrell of the replicant-making Rosen/Tyrell Corporation describe Pris as a “ basic pleasure model.” In the novel, a fellow bounty hunter tells Deckard “ if it’s love toward a woman or an android imitation it’s sex” (Dick 141). This quote openly suggests that to a male, a woman and a machine are the same, and should be the same. The novel and film also express the oppression of women. In the first chapter of Dick’s novel, the reader is introduced to Deckard’s wife, Iran, and made aware of her emotional instability as she uses an empathy box to control her emotions. She reinforces the stereotypical gender role of a submissive emotionally distraught housewife. Her submissive nature can be seen when she allows Rick to dial and he dials “ 594: pleased acknowledgment of husband’s superior wisdom in all matters” for her; for himself he dials “ for a creative and fresh attitude toward his job” (Dick 5). In Scott’s film, we see Deckard’s same power and

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the subservient nature of women toward Deckard. This is specifically seen in the scene between Rachael and him, where he does not hesitate to feed her the lines she must say to him and almost forces her to be involved with him.