

Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? Borders in the Anthropocene

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Abstract

This article performs a close reading of the Philip K. Dick novel, Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? While developing the argument for an 'ironic' usage of the concept of the Anthropocene. This ironised conception is one that intends to countenance both the Anthropocene's strength as a designation of human impact on the non-human and the important, valid critiques responding to the Anthropocene. Philip K Dick's work, in particular Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? is a superb illustration of such an ironic dynamic because of the dual narrative structure present. For example, Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? raises questions about human identity that, while metaphysical, have great significance materially for the characters in the novel, and can be understood as a form of structural discrimination. To demonstrate this ironic duality that should be brought to the Anthropocene, the article draws on Nick Land's essay Kant, Capital, and the Prohibition of Incest: A Polemical Introduction to the Configuration of Philosophy and Modernity.

Keywords: Anthropocene; capitalism; migration; Nick Land; climate change; science-fiction.

Man is the pie that bakes and eats itself, and the recipe is separation.

Alasdair Gray, Lanark

Introduction: Why Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?

When thinking of Philip K Dick in relation to climate change, the obvious place to start is his novel *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*. Temperatures of 180°C in formerly temperate zones such as New York make emigration from Earth necessary, while the high capitalist society (ever present in Dick's works) seeks to profit from the immiserating circumstances in which the colonists find themselves via the Perky P Layouts (miniature recreations of 20th century life) and the communal hallucinogenic CAN-D. The anguish of living apart from a dying Earth is a central component of the narrative in *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*. However, while global warming underpins the novel, and although one can discover motifs of ecological disaster in almost any major Dick story (e.g., references to synthetic leather and fake food), *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (hereafter referred to as *DADES?*) is the novel most thoroughly saturated by questions pertaining to the Anthropocene and late capitalist society, and, more specifically, the question of borders.

DADES? presents anxieties about the human as a citizen against a scenario of economic scarcity, migration, and enhanced borders. In the novel, Earth is not devastated by climate change but by a nuclear war known as World War Terminus. The first and most visible consequence of this devastation is the death of almost all animal life. The second is the fallout that is always at work degrading the human faculties of the remaining human inhabitants, most importantly mental and reproductive. Combined, these comprise the stick part of the deal motivating the human population to leave earth for off-world colonies in hope of a better future. Earth is heavily depopulated and clung onto by those who cannot bring themselves—or are not allowed—to leave.

Like many of Dick's other novels, it is characterized by a 'deep ontological doubt [and] profound questioning of every reality claim' (Miller, 2017: 18). Another Dick hallmark *DADES* exhibits is its 'double marking' or the complex relationship of 'two narrative levels, so that each of the elements in a Dick novel has two antithetical uses which can be exercised simultaneously, the one corresponding to a socio-political, the other to an ontological-metaphysical reading of the novel' (Ibid: 23). In other words, the explorations of what it means to be a living creature in *Do Androids* are not separate from their social or political implications. What distinguishes *Do Androids* from other novels in Dick's oeuvre is the anxiety the novel's interior world has about separating the two.

An Ironic Anthropocene

The epigraph chosen for this article reflects the multi-faceted nature of the diagnosis implied in the Anthropocene, of division. A powerful criticism of the employment of the term Anthropocene is that it is far too broad and all-encompassing in its implications to properly delineate a historical period in which humans have played a significant role in shaping the earth's geological structure. It is also potentially problematic in that it arguably obscures the specific historical, political, social, and economic forces behind the actual changes. In their persuasive chapter, titled 'Who is the *Anthropos*?' from their book *The Shock of the Anthropocene*, Bonneuil and Fressoz cite the example of the Yanomami Indians, 'who hunt, fish, and garden in the Amazonian forest, working three hours a day with no fossil fuel' to ask the question: 'should [they] feel responsible for the climate change of the Anthropocene?' (Bonneuil & Fressoz, 2014: 70). In 'On the poverty of our nomenclature', Eileen Crist argues that:

As a cohesive discourse, [the Anthropocene] blocks alternative forms of human life on Earth from vying for attention. By upholding history's forward thrust, it also submits to its totalizing (and, in that sense, spurious) ideology of delivering "continuous improvement"... By affirming the centrality of man—as both causal force and subject of concern—the Anthropocene shrinks the discursive space for challenging the domination of the biosphere, offering instead a techno-scientific pitch for its rationalization and a pragmatic plea for resigning ourselves to its actuality. (Crist, E. 2016: 25)

Simultaneously, given the scale and complexity of the trends we are confronted with when attempting to comprehend the trends latent in a term such as the Anthropocene, and given the problem of determining exactly which force is responsible for the current ecological crisis - in the words of Donna Haraway, '[all] the thousand names are too big and too small; all the stories are too big and too small' (Haraway, 2015: 160) - this article will employ an ironic use of the term Anthropocene, as unstable as it is in its unfolding. This is also intended to reflect the unstable categories in *DADES* and what Quentin Samuel Miller describes as 'a complex and porous narrative about shifting environmental paradigms' (Miller, 2017: 4). This narrative duality, or doubling of the metaphysical and the material, is a dynamic I wish to bring to bear on the Anthropocene discourse. The very fact that the term or discourse of the Anthropocene is contentious and viewed as an ideological palimpsest by some critics can be employed as a useful shorthand for indicating both the conventional, original usage and the significant critical response.

To help guide me through this doubling I will refer to Nick Land. Land drew on *Blade Runner*, the film adaptation of *DADES?* for some of his most notable work in *Machinic Desire* and *Meltdown*. However, I will draw from Land's first short essay *Kant, Capital, and the Prohibition of Incest: A Polemical Introduction to the Configuration of Philosophy and Modernity*, in order to illustrate the doubled, ironic Anthropocene in Dick's novel. The reason for this decision comes from the startling correspondence between this essay's formulation of a metaphysics of capitalist modernity via its reading of racist technologies, and the political economy in *DADES?*. A further reason is that *Kant, Capital, and the Prohibition of Incest* makes its argument on philosophical and political levels, a duality appropriate for reading a Philip K. Dick novel.

Inhibited Synthesis of the Anthropocene

Land's thesis in *Kant, Capital, and the Prohibition of Incest* stems from the premise that the Bantustans of Apartheid South Africa are a microcosm of capitalism's fundamental structure. As Bantustans served to keep the black population at arm's length from the wealthy white population, they established a political distance between both whilst maintaining geographical proximity for black economic exploitation. Land argues that the same relationship exists between the global metropolises and the colonial periphery. Colonised peoples yield their resources and labour to capital but are excluded from the nations acquiring this wealth. Land argues for this relationship by explicating the relationship between Kant's conception of synthetic a priori and the theory of trade conceived by Claude Levi-Strauss.

Kant's theory of synthetic a priori knowledge is for Land the philosophical reflection of capital's accumulation of wealth, the signature of 'an enlightenment society' that 'wants both to learn and legislate for all time' (**Land, 2011: 63**). This is because synthetic a priori is a form of knowledge that 'is both given in advance by ourselves [a priori], and yet adds to what we know [synthetic]' (**Ibid: 64**). This conceptual framework is inherently inhibitive for Land, because it is a theory of knowledge that attempts to explain difference in advance, and therefore to capture that difference through anticipation.

This reading of Kant is then applied to Levi-Strauss' account of 'rich food', food 'given to another to consume, and received from another', which is food that derives its quality of richness not from its relation to class, but 'upon a differentiation between tribes' (**Ibid: 68**). The rich food is an external object given to another tribe; it comes from outside (**Ibid: 68**). The rich food exchanged, 'the primordial element of trade' (**Ibid: 69**) alongside women for marriage, develops a new bond of kinship, one of alliance instead of filiation (**Ibid: 68**).

Land concludes that Kant's conception of synthetic a priori knowledge is the philosophical culmination and base for the commodity. By producing a synthetic a priori model for experience, what is novel in the other finds itself contained. Ensclosed as such, what is exterior to a conceptual system is anticipated, processed by that anticipation, and thus primed for commodification; the rich food can be taken without the risk of marriage.

This, per capitalism's function, includes people with their labour, and gives formal structure to the conception of a 'Bantustan' relationship between the metropolis and the periphery. A person's labour as a commodity is taken in the 'trade' – economic proximity - but the accompanying marriage, or cultural exchange, is kept at a political distance. In this tensile relationship which Land terms 'inhibited synthesis [...] which can be awkwardly described as patriarchal neo-colonial capital accumulation' (Land, 2011: 63), capitalist modernity is caught in an intractable contradiction, wherein its need for profit fuels an infinite requirement for the other, which it is politically unable to imbibe. What generates the contradiction in inhibited synthesis is what Land calls 'exogamic dissipation' – extending Strauss' inter-tribal exchange via marriage to the cultural exchange - or the dissolution of patriarchal cultural and ethnic identities through the continuous engagement people must have with those outside their traditional ties of kinship, such as those inculcated by a nationality. A limited example of this occurred with the emergence of the urban proletariat in the wake of the industrial revolution, when those who were forced into the cities for work encountered each other, became conscious of their commonality and began to agitate for their own interests. Land proposes something larger and more radical, a *global* explosion in the potentiality of exogamic 'marriages' alongside the 'trade' as conceptualized by Levi-Strauss. Such a global dissipation of identities and traditional bonds of kinship would also dissolve capitalism. This global dissipation of the old patriarchal and provincial structures would generate a universal, fraternal, and horizontal kinship that could not tolerate exploitation. On this basis, capitalist modernity exhibits proto-fascist traits, Land argues, because it is constantly flirting with its own extinction. Capitalist modernity enacts policies and builds infrastructures, such as the Bantustan, in order to keep 'kinship and trade... systematically isolated from each other.' (Ibid: 62).

Borders in the Anthropocene

Neocolonialist capitalism has consistently employed brutal immigration policies and racist practices both within and outside of western countries in order to perpetuate the synthetic inhibition, but it has done so with zones permitting the free movement of labour - the most prominent and formal of these being the European Union's Schengen Area, bounded by

‘Fortress Europe’, a concept used to describe the complex of securitised immigration policies towards those who seek to cross the European Union’s external borders, especially its southern one (Pinos, 2009: 3). This system has been described as ‘a means to filter out and exclude the discomforting other... that is to say, the outsiders who challenge the EU’s *borders of comfort*’ (italicised for emphasis, *ibid*: 4).

Additionally, the nationalist renaissance across Europe and North America, especially with its emphasis on border control, presents an intensification of the inhibitive process, as those countries attempt to reverse the forces that are eroding the privileges of their bourgeois classes at both the geopolitical and socioeconomic levels. In his 2016 review of Martin Heidegger’s black notebooks, Malcolm Bull introduces Branko Milanović’s concept of citizenship rent—‘the increased income you get from doing the same job in one country rather than the other’—in order to make the following comments:

At a time when the long-heralded decline of the West is finally becoming an objective reality, the ‘lower middle class of the rich world’ stands in an ambiguous position. Geography still counts for almost everything... But if these trends continue, citizenship rents will decline further, and citizenship itself will be devalued as an asset... What makes the current moment unique is that the ontological decline of the West has fallen into step with the decline in income differentials, and attachment to place isn’t just a matter of becoming indigenous and making yourself at home in the world, but of stubborn attachment to a particular position in the global economic order (Bull, 2016).ⁱ

Bull gives an account for a neocolonial order that is attempting to reassert itself through a reaffirmation of xenophobic identity in order to maintain economic pre-eminence. Without recourse to reorganizing the world’s resources for a more equitable distribution of wealth, capitalism and populations turn to a state of vicious retreat behind border walls. The forces behind the inhibition of synthesis reassert themselves through strengthened technologies of racism.

What makes for a bleaker future is that there is every indication that the climatic and ecological deprivations associated with the Anthropocene will exacerbate this fundamental situation. As many parts of the world follow a trajectory towards the uninhabitable, as farming yields decline, and as land and nations shrink or even disappear, the far right nationalist rhetoric of blood and soil becomes very literal, ‘because climate change isn’t just about things getting hotter and wetter: under our current economic and political model, it’s about things getting meaner and uglier’ (Klein, 2016). At the time of writing this article, the UN does not legally recognise climate change as a qualifying criterion for refugee status, and there is therefore

‘no formal, legal protection for these affected people.’ (Beeler, 2018). The arguments specifically put forward against offering legal protection include the fears of aggravating pre-existing chauvinist sentiments, ‘[making] things worse for the very people the refugee convention aims to protect.’ (Ibid).

This reluctance to afford the climate migrant refugee status contains a tacit acknowledgement by the system of nation-states manifested in the UN of the political potential of mass migration, especially when considering the numbers of people who will be dislodged by the climate crisis; a billion per degree of temperature increase (Seaton, 2020: 48). The disruption those fleeing pose to the infrastructure of synthetic inhibition – of borders, formal nationalities, and the accompanying security systems – has the potential to overwhelm it, rending apart the international infrastructure of borders capital still depends upon, effectively dissolving them, by making encounters between peoples and their others unavoidable. Fleeing the Bantustan destroys it.

This synthesis must be resisted at any cost for capitalist modernity to survive. Anti-immigrant policies and the refusal to coordinate a comprehensive rescue policy between European countries, for example, has meant that the chance of death for a person crossing the Mediterranean between January and July 2018 was 1 in 18 (Crisp, 2018). A list compiled by UNITED recorded the death toll of people trying to cross the Mediterranean and enter Europe between the 1st January 1993 and the 5th May 2018 at 34,361 (UNITED, 2018). Simultaneously, such a large and systematic human cost requires a hierarchy of racial worth. A hierarchy that, I argue, inhabits *DADES?*

Reading Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?

When looking to understand the ideology within *DADES?*, the passage most useful to gain an insight into its world’s political economy is the brief, explosive portion of an advertisement the character J. R. Isidore listens to as he shaves:

The TV set shouted, ‘- duplicates the halcyon days of the pre-Civil War Southern states! Either as body servants or tireless field hands, the custom tailored humanoid robot – designed specifically for YOUR UNIQUE NEEDS, FOR YOU AND YOU ALONE – given to you on your arrival absolutely free, equipped fully, as specified by you before your departure from Earth; this loyal, trouble-free companion in the greatest, boldest adventure contrived by man in history will provide-’ it continued on and on. (Dick, 1997: 18)

This, Isidore informs the reader, is part of a propaganda push from the Washington-run space colonisation program, the chief economic drive in World War Terminus' nuclear wake. It is the promise of an organic android to fulfil 'YOUR UNIQUE NEEDS', the *you* being a human, a citizen of earth meeting the novel's UN's criteria for humanity; *your unique needs*, which encompasses not just physical needs but emotional and symbolic. A few lines down the government propaganda features an interview with a recent immigrant to Mars, and she is asked, "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?" (Dick, 1997: 18), Klugman answers:

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, 1997: 18-19)

Mrs Krugman's soft, short sentences (Krugman has three sentences compared to the direct advertisement's two), her hesitation, and the vagueness in her answer, of reassurance, complements the first part of the hysterical, shouted propaganda. Whereas the official pronouncement is explicit in its hyperbolic description of the android's utility, Mrs Krugman's vagueness makes a sentimental appeal and gestures to the fantastical dimension of owning sentient labour. The kernel of the propaganda and advertising for the driver of the 'greatest, boldest adventure contrived by man'—the android—includes a self-comparison to the chattel slavery of nineteenth century America.

What raises the passage from a crude comparison between sentient mechanical labour and slavery, however, is Dick's apparently heavy-handed allusions to the latter, which on first reading can be dismissed as crude commentary. The propaganda is at pains to make an explicit comparison between the organic androids and slaves of the Antebellum South. Because the comparison is diegetic, an extra dimension comes into play. The android's physical labour is not the sole source of the android's appeal as a commodity. The experience of slave-owning itself is commoditised and standardised, sold as an essential aspect of human individuality. The white supremacist pastoral of the Antebellum ('pre-war') cathects the memory of a pre-war earth. The individual is re-centered ('YOU') as the focal point of economic expansion and activity in the wake of the destruction caused by the capitalist civilization that generated the same project of hyper-individuality. This recentering is a buttressing of a specific identity, of an anthropocentric identity, that merges totally with a bourgeois identity. Dick's material grounding of *DADES* in relation to a

specific period of American history enables an interpretation of the novel in the context of the Anthropocene and a distinctly self-conscious Eurocentric anthropocentrism. This anthropocentrism derives from a desire to preserve and strictly regulate a human identity in order to maintain social cohesion for a new economic project that intends to recapture that Eurocentrism.

There are two discrete geographical zones in *Do Androids Dream*: Earth and the colonies, each of distinct significance. Despite Earth's devastation, and despite the economic momentum being with the colonies, organic androids are restricted by law from leaving the colonies. Because androids are built exclusively for their labour power—even Rachael Rosen is a salesperson for her 'uncle', Eldon Rosen—any extra-instrumentality can pose a risk to the anthropocentric economic order. For this reason, illegal immigration—both geographical and ontological—requires lethal policing.

Bounty hunters are disavowed agents of Earth-based law enforcement, employed on a low salary and a commission-based 'retirement' bonus. Earth's remaining civilian population is unaware of the extent to which androids are pursued and murdered on earth, because, says Pris Stratton, '[y]ou people aren't supposed to know' (Dick, 1997: 113):

'I think,' Isidore said, 'you're mistaken.' Never in his life had he heard of such a thing. Buster Friendly, for instance, had never mentioned it. 't's not in accord with present-day Mercerian ethics,' he pointed out. (Dick, 1997: 113)

Isidore lives in a civilization formally recognising, after World War Terminus, all conventional terrestrial life as sacred. However, this does not constitute a bulwark against destructive economic or capitalist tendencies. As he does with the Anthropocene, *avant la letter*, Philip K. Dick depicts an Eremocene, the age of human loneliness in a time of mass extinction, coined by E.O. Wilson (Wilson, E. O., 2013), in *DADES*. It does not present the spectre of ecological loneliness as a catalyst for the discontinuation of capitalism or domination, but as a vehicle for a penetrating, fetishising commodification. Its apogee is the monthly Sidney's Catalogue, pricing every animal according to its scarcity, and the integration of this pricing into social relations. Deckard is motivated in his work by the hope of owning a 'living' organic animal, like his peers. In the Freudian sense of the word fetish, animal life becomes a substitute mediating the affirmation of anthropocentrism and bourgeois, patriarchal values. Abortion is an offence punishable by death, and there exists a class of people officially known as 'special', within which there are subcategories of intellectual disability pejoratively referred to as 'chickenheads' and 'antheads', (Isidore himself is a chickenhead). Those who are 'special' are the most affected by the environmental effects of radiation, and forbidden to leave,

much like those who are most affected by the policies of capitalist imperialist countries are those who face the largest obstacles to their escape. Subjected to the hierarchy of human identity, they are unsuitable for the novel's UN colonization project.

While the crumbs of surviving nature are transformed into fetishised objects, Dick imagines the remains of abandoned human habitations assuming nature's role as the source of the negative and uncanny. Isidore senses this energy, named Kipple, keenly throughout the novel:

From the useless pole lamp in the living room it oozed out, meshing with the empty and wordless descent of itself from the fly-specked ceiling. It managed in fact to emerge from every object within his range of vision, as if it – the silence – meant to supplant all things tangible. (Dick, 1997: 20)

Kipple is the name for the cumulative, entropic presence of consumer goods abandoned after the mass migration from Earth, presenting an oppressive weight and stripped of their utility, unmoored by human depopulation. It complements the destabilization of anthropocentrism brought about by the increasingly sophisticated androids, in a manner eluding the techniques of android policing. It is telling that this most acute description of Kipple's effect comes from Isidore immediately after he turns off the TV screaming the advertisement for androids. Kipple is, in fact, the reason Isidore turns on the TV in the first place. The collective experience of Mercerism seems to have come from a move to counter that destabilization, although the Mercerian hoax is of unknown origin (*Ibid*: 158):

*'I didn't think it was true,' he said full of relief.
'Why didn't you?' She swivelled to stare intently at him...
'B-b-because things like that don't happen. The g-g-government never kills anyone, for any crime. And Mercerism –'
'But you see,' Pris said, 'if you're not human, then it's all different.'*
(Dick, 1997: 122)

Mercerian ethics, by which empathy becomes an official institution and bulwark of the human species, correspond with corporate and UN intentions to perpetuate the political economy of slavery by operating across both socio-political and metaphysical-ontological narratives. Mercer's appearance outside of the empathy boxes to Deckard late in the novel do seem to contradict Buster Friendly's debunking. However, the appearance presents itself as an ideological validation of his bounty hunting job and social role:

'Am I outside Mercerism, now?' Rick said. 'As the chickenhead said? Because of what I'm going to do in the next few minutes?' Mercer said, 'Mr Isidore spoke for himself, not for me. What you are doing has to be done.' (Dick, 1997: 166)

Mercer offers no explanation for why the retirements must take place beyond tautology, but if Mercer's conversation with Isidore is any indication, Mercer's position is fatalistic and permissive. The only positive action Mercer takes in his appearance to Deckard is to warn him of Pris (Dick, 1997: 166). It is here that Mercerian ethics and the accompanying empathy industry aligns most explicitly with their counterpart, the Voigt-Kampff test, as technologies of racism. Further, Mercer's empathy box experience is not only the prime example of doubling in the novel, but also comes closest to the double rendition of Kantian subjectivity Land describes. The Mercerian phenomenon as illustrated above allows for an experience of alterity that is circumscribed through ritual and its predetermined end. However, when Deckard and Isidore encounter the androids personally, they must confront the ambiguity of the other themselves.

Deckard as Race Scientist

Regardless of his personal doubts as to the business of retiring androids, Deckard in his professional capacity is only troubled, not compromised, when it concerns his sexual interest (Rachael Rosen) and his aesthetic tastes (Luba Luft's singing), not because he considers androids beings who warrant care. Like bourgeois ideation concerning immigrants, Deckard's valuation of androids is predicated on their use-value or their capacity to disrupt. Nevertheless, Deckard is disturbed by his encounters with the other. His relationships with the androids, especially with Rachael, chime with Land's assessment of modernity's appropriative movements: 'a profound but uneasy relation to an outside that both attracts and repels it.' (Land, 2011: 64)

Consider Deckard's perspective on android retirement. As violent and graphic as the following passages are, and despite the deliberately inconsistent deployment of pronouns, they contain no details about each android's viscera or tissue:

...the .38 magnum slug struck the android in the head and its brain box burst. The Nexus-6 unit which operated it blew into pieces, a raging, mad wind which carried throughout the car. (Dick, 1997: 73)

The laser beam, aimed with skill... bifurcated Inspector Garland's head. He slumped forward... the corpse teetered on its chair and then, like a sack of eggs, it slid to one side and crashed to the floor. (Ibid: 96)

The beam missed its mark but, as Resch lowered it, burrowed a narrow hole, silently, into her stomach. She began to scream.... Like the picture, Rick thought to himself, and, with his own laser tube, killed her. Luba Luft's body fell forward, face down, in a heap. It did not even tremble. (Ibid: 103)

He fired at her as, imploringly, she dashed toward him. The android burst and parts of it flew... 'I'm sorry, Mrs Baty,' Rick said, and shot her. (Ibid, 168)

He shot Roy Baty; the big man's corpse lashed about, toppled like an over-stacked collection of separate, brittle entities. (Ibid: 168)

Aside from the mentions of reflex circuits and brain 'boxes', Deckard fails to describe the entrails, and the reader only receives Isidore's perspective of the corpses second-hand, through Deckard. This is strange; although the android's physiognomy differs from a human's, it is not simply the case that androids are composed of materials corresponding to real-life robotics. The alternative to the Voigt-Kampf test is the Boneli test, consisting of 'a bone marrow analysis' by which a person's humanity 'can be organically determined,' (Ibid: 43) suggesting that the android's tissue is near identical to a human's. This is before the other utility of an android – sex – is considered. Phil Resch and Deckard both have sex with androids, and Resch reports the commonplace practice of illegal android mistresses on the colonies, telling Deckard '[sure] it's illegal, but people do it anyhow.' (Ibid: 110). Androids are, for the most part, physiologically human. Deckard's perception and self-narrativising of his social function as a bounty hunter reflects his troubled disavowal.

Nevertheless, the androids do differ from humans. For Isidore, the androids Pris, Irmgard, and Roy seem 'strange... As if a peculiar and malign *abstractness* pervaded their mental processes' (Ibid: 119). However, the novel leaves open the question of whether this malignity is innate to the androids or relational. The Voigt-Kampf test demonstrates uncanny accuracy in distinguishing androids from humans by measuring empathy. By measuring physical responses to questions, othering becomes a technological practice, even when the questions themselves are explicitly absurd and steeped in the civilization's social mores. Humans are sufficiently standardized in their fetishization of pre-android life that the Voigt-Kampf test can be applied to anyone with the same decisive result. Garland's observation to Rick, that:

It's a chance anyway, breaking free and coming here to Earth, where we're not even considered animals. Where every worm and wood louse is considered more desirable than us put together. (Dick, 1997: 94)

...does not go far enough; animal life as a commodity literally constitutes the metric that determines whether extra-instrumental androids are executed. Empathy is just 'a way of proving something that humans can do... based on the human's word.' (Ibid: 158)

Fetishised as such, empathy becomes a form of scientific racism repurposed to deny the androids sovereignty as citizens and denies their right to free movement. The androids have no option but violence to escape their slavery:

'He doesn't understand yet,' Pris said in a sharp, brittle stentorian voice, 'how we got off Mars. What we did there.'
'What we couldn't help doing,' Roy Baty grunted. (Ibid: 124)

The political economy of Dick's world bears striking similarities to the current climate-accelerated political economy of ours. In addition to the simple fact that the androids, like migrants, are valued significantly less than charismatic megafauna, the android, when escaping their enslavement and entering Earth, much like a person escaping to a country of the global North, dissolves their clear identity as an unperson. They are visible as a sapient, feeling being. They enter the liminal space, on the lip of Land's synthesis. Insofar as they impersonate a recognizable role (Garland or Luft for example), the android assumes citizenship of Earth, plausible to their fellow person. This, to recapitulate, is why I argue that people migrating to the global North are resisted most violently *at the point* of crossing the border. Equally, Land himself argued in his conclusion to *Kant, Capital, and the Prohibition of Incest* that '[a] revolutionary war can only be fought in hell,' as '[the] state apparatus of an advanced industrial society can certainly not be defeated without a willingness to escalate the cycle of violence without limit,' (Land, 2011: 79) for this very reason. Land envisages the ascension of feminine (i.e. non-patriarchal) amazons to overthrow the capitalist reality and destroy the inhibition. The android neatly assumes this role, as its figure presents the 'uncontrollable eruption of feminine (i.e. migrant) alterity into the father's heartland' (Ibid: 62).

Conclusion

As is true in many of Philip K. Dick's stories, what happens to how the characters think about the world in *DADES* (as opposed to the changes in the world itself) assumes more importance to the narrative. Despite the arrival of android amazons, no revolution arrives at the end of the novel; an exhausted Deckard returns to his wife after a long day of work. Isidore shrinks miserably away under the shadow of Kipple. Isidore's lack of understanding and his distress as he watches the androids torture the spider spring from his strict adherence to Mercerian and UN orthodoxy,

allows him to appreciate the androids as people a priori. Because he honestly believes the anthropocentric dogma, he can move beyond its ideological entrapment, into a new modernity. The androids would kill the spider, and Deckard would disdain it because of its low status in the animal hierarchy. Isidore wishes to care for it and keep it. The Anthropocene as a term and discursive project, instead of being discarded, should be retained also, with the intention that its universalizing project develops a new ecological and human kinship, a new synthesis. The nurturing societies are tasked with ensuring the Anthropocene's continuation, whether they move to a post-capitalist future or not.

Robert is a graduate of the University of Warwick, the University of Leeds, and the University of Westminster. When not writing he divides time between his full-time job in the NHS and his other full-time job with his cat. A version of this paper was presented at the 2019 Utopian Studies Society Conference in Prato.



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Endnotes

ⁱ <https://www.lrb.co.uk/v38/n20/malcolm-bull/great-again>