The Turing Test, devised by Alan Turing, the forefather of Artificial Intelligence, challenges a person to distinguish between artificial and human intelligence, between a human creation - an artifact and that which Aristotle and others have called the essence of human beings. It is a test to see if a person can discriminate between a paranoid human being and a computer programmed to be paranoid, when the only communication is written. The challenge reflects a twentieth century movement of philosophy away from a comfortable certainty that meaning can be gleaned from the experience of an individualistic self to the conviction that reality is not singular, positions are not fixed, and essentialist concepts of human nature are absent, or at least weakened. In place of an essentialist concept of human nature there exists in postmodernist thinking the idea that humans create themselves through their own narratives - their stories, their dreams, their myths, their histories, their memories.

Postmodernism, like other intellectual eras, is characterized by a set of questions, themes, or "preoccupations" as Langer calls them (Langer, 1957; McHale, 1987). The preoccupation of postmodern fiction centers on the ontological, asking questions about modes of being. Examples are: "Which world is this? What is to be done in it? Which of my selves is to do it?. . . What kinds of world are there, how are they constituted, and how do they differ?: What happens when different kinds of world are placed in confrontation, or when boundaries between worlds are violated?" (McHale, 1987: 10). Given the confusion over the differences between human and artificial, we may supplement the list with yet another ontological question: "What happens when the boundary between human and non-human is violated?"

Concerns about the "nature" of human nature have reached outside the confines of the academic world. Dramatic advances in artificial intelligence and genetic engineering have increased the lack of certainty about what is human. At a time that we are deconstructing sexual identities and finding the previous delineation of male and female unsatisfactory, the popular culture has picked up the theme of blurred boundaries between real and imaginary, human and artificial, self and other. Tied to science and yet beyond it, science fiction is a literary genre suited to examining the binary oppositions of real and imaginary, human and artificial, and self and other. The science fiction topos of Utopias or dystopias set in the future offers the possibility of commenting on the direction in which our world is moving. Similarly, the topos of creating a new form of being, an alien or an Other, offers a perspective on our(selves). According to McHale, not only have science fiction and postmodernist fiction advanced along parallel but independent tracks - both preoccupied with questions about modes of being but
postmodernist fiction has also absorbed motifs and topoi from science fiction (McHale, 1987: 65).

Literary narratives exist in cinematic texts as well as in books, and film narratives probably offer better access to the collective consciousness of our society and the ontological questions troubling us than do narratives told in print. The reasons are twofold. First, films are more accessible, more believable. "More than the latest play or novel, a film with its 'impression of reality,' its very direct hold on perception, has the power to draw crowds" (Metz, 1974: 4). It is paradoxical that film, which creates an artificial paradigm of time and space, is the medium that offers an impression of reality; however, the fact that pictures in a film move gives an impression of "presence" which increases the believability of film. Metz notes that in looking at a photo, we are aware that we are now looking at something from the past, something which "has been there". In contrast, when the movie spectator sits down in the darkened theater to watch a movie, he or she is not struck by a "has been there" feeling but rather by a "there it is" feeling (Metz, 1974: 6). A second reason films may produce greater access to the public's conscious and unconscious is that films that are part of popular cinema are made to appeal to a broad cross-section of society, as each film, being a costly enterprise, must attract a large audience if it is going to make any money. Films are group products which include the producer, the director, the actors, and even the audience. Part of producing a film involves one or more audiences previewing it. If the preview audiences do not like a particular ending or the personality of one of the characters, changes are often made before the film is released to the general public, as occurred with the 1982 science fiction film, Blade Runner. "[T]n order to survive, the film industry must cater to our desires and help us narrow the gap between expectations and experience" (Minerly, 1991: 15).

Films, like myths, are narratives that impose patterns on our daily experiences and articulate the conflicts and contradictions of our society (Lévi Strauss, 1958). As artifacts of our culture, films transport cultural evolution and shape consciousness (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988). They act as intermediaries in this changing world. On the one hand, by putting everyday practices and gestures on the big screen, films endow the acts of everyday life with the status of myth and a film's interpretation of these practices establishes explanations for the current culture. On the other hand, films also act as powerful transformers, not just translating what already exists in society but also disseminating our inner workings and motivations which might lead to change (Biro, 1982: 105). Like dreams, the creative imagination as seen in film, operates between our conscious and unconscious, acting as a regulator of tension. With the freedom to move in time and space like a dream, film can both report the mundane and explore our inner world with representations that use analogy, condensation, displacement, and symbolism (Freud, 1900; Monaco, 1975).

In this paper I will analyze Ridley Scott's Blade Runner, a science fiction film released first in 1982 and then in revised form a decade later as Blade Runner: The Director's Cut. The analysis will first explore the film thought which the setting evokes and two themes the film consciously explores: what constitutes human identity and what kind of future can we expect from our current commercial, post-industrial mode of existence. To extract
the myths which underlie the narrative I will use Minnerly's technique of looking for the meaning in the tension between the film's story the sequence of events which makes up the narrative - and the plot - the way in which the film presents the events to the viewer. The unconscious wishes or fears existing in society's collective consciousness are too troubling to emerge directly, given the complex censorship through which a film must pass before it is released to the public. Much as in a dream, the wishes lie in interstitial spaces, in this case between the logic established by the narrative and in the way the film presents, explains, or fails to explain the events to the viewer. "It is in these breaks and inconsistencies that we can find the motives that move the plot and that reveal the myths underlying the narratives" (Minnerly, 1991: 15-16).

Blade Runner is set in the Los Angeles of 2019, a grim dystopia, representing a postapocalyptic view of a world ruined by technological advances and corporate greed. A reviewer of the 1992 film suggests, however, that the world may be catching up to his vision:

In the wake of full-blown '80s urban scourges like crack, AIDS, homelessness, and rotting infrastructures, Scott's apocalyptic vision of a 21st-century Los Angeles sinking in grime, vandalism, and decay no longer plays like remote, impossibly fatalistic sci-fi; today, it's practically cinema vérité (Daly, 1993: 60).

The Los Angeles of the film is a hazy, smoky, eternally dark place where it rains perpetually. Flames burst spontaneously in the polluted atmosphere above the city, as though burning off waste gas. We are given to understand that almost all animal life is extinct. Human residents are few, despite the crowding in certain areas. Whole buildings stand vacant. Most of Earth's residents have left the planet to live in the colonies of outer space - most, that is, of those who have intelligence scores high enough to permit them to leave. A few of the very important people remaining in Los Angeles lead comfortable lives, but the vast majority of its residents seem to live a miserable existence, often on the streets, hustling for a living in the poisonous atmosphere of the city. Life in the outer colonies is also hard, but the difficult and dangerous work necessary to colonize outer space is being done by genetically engineered biological beings called "replicants". Replicants are created to have strength and agility superior to human beings and intelligence at least equal to humans. Some are possessed of "implants" or memories of their non-existent childhoods and even given photographs of "their" childhoods. What the replicants lack is emotions, but their maker, a genius tycoon named Tyrell, understands that given adequate time, they have the capacity to develop them. It is clear to him that once they do, they will have superiority over humans: hence their programmed life-span of four years.

The tale involves a number of replicants fighting and killing their way back to Earth, to L.A. where Tyrell lives, in order to confront their maker with the demand of an expanded life time. The authorities, aware of the threat posed by the mutinous replicants, hire skilled replicant destroyers called blade runners¹ to first identify and then destroy or "retire" the replicants. A retired blade runner named Deckard, who no longer has the stomach for the work, is blackmailed into coming back to work for the police force after
another blade runner is nearly killed by a replicant. As the story evolves in this rather traditional hero-hunts-bad-guys kind of movie, the boundaries between human and artificial become increasingly blurred.

A large city setting, such as exists in Blade Runner, suggests "proliferating information, the scene of constant happenings, becomings, and evanescence - all of which make a sense of anticipation inevitable" (Biro 1982: 64-65). In the L.A. of 2019 advertising images and messages bombard the city, people scurry around the commercial area, some darting in and out of shops. The city streets offer constant surprises. Groups of spike-haired punks walk down the streets, cyclists skirt small burning piles of garbage, and once Deckard has to get out of the way of two ostriches being herded through the streets. But the setting also suggests (Bruno, 1987: 65):

the psychopathology of the everyday postindustrial condition .... Things cease to function and life is over even if it has not ended. The postindustrial city is a city in ruins.

Deserted residential areas are filled with garbage and trash. Semi-abandoned buildings drip with water that has seeped or rained in; they appear uninhabitable. Unable to maintain its infrastructure, the city is an empty shell of what it once was. It is a postindustrial country's nightmare of a spoiled environment. Socially, the city is no better off, urban society appears shattered and fragmented. A striking visual image of fragmentation occurs when Deckard shoots a fleeing, female replicant in the back. She plunges forward, shattering pane after pane of glass and then lies there inert - now officially "retired". At street level "the chaos of signs, of competing significations and messages, suggests a condition of fragmentation and uncertainty..." (Harvey, 1989: 311). One doesn't know if the beings walking the streets are human or replicant, nor if the animals one sees are real or artificial. Is the exotic dancer entertaining customers at the bar a real woman? Is her snake real?

The society is so divided that people of different social classes speak different languages, English for the better-off people but "cityspeak", a mixture of German, Japanese, Spanish, and English for the so-called "little people", the miserable masses who hustle for a living on the street. Even within a social class, people are isolated; friendship does not exist. When J.F. Sebastian, a genetic engineer who works for Tyrell, is asked if he gets lonely living in a deserted building, his reply gives new meaning to the expression "making friends": "Hm, not really. I make friends. They're toys; my friends are toys. I make them. I'm a genetic designer." Another telling indicator of the harshness of the society is the fact that this is almost entirely an adult world. Children exist only as photographs or as roaming bands who clamber all over Deckard's car and succeed in stealing some non-essential part. But the latter seem more like premature adults than children, reminiscent of the bands of children among the Ik of Africa who are turned out of their homes at age three. Left to fend for themselves with bands of age-mates, they prey on any who are weaker than they (Turnbull, 1972). In contrast to the chaotic life and misery of the masses, Tyrell lives in splendor. His office and home are high above the city in a pyramid-like building. His quarters can be approached by helicopter or by an elevator - an elevator which he controls. The office space is elegant and the residence
almost papal, lighted by hundreds of candles. It is he who gives voice to the philosophy of the Tyrell Corporation which seems to represent the theme of the city: "Commerce is our goal here at Tyrell", he tells Deckard and, indeed, the corporation lives up to its motto. If the people in the outer colonies need slave labor, the Tyrell Corporation is happy to oblige. It designs the Nexus 6, the technical name for the replicants, each created for a function, so that some are killers and some (females) are "pleasure models". Rather than outlive their usefulness, they are designed to the before they can become troublesome. People are treated much the same way, used and then discarded. A rigid social hierarchy exists: a few heads of corporation, such as Tyrell, at the top; police, shopkeepers, and other functionaries a distant second in importance; the masses of "little people" near the bottom; and at rock bottom are the replicants, simulated humans.

The replicants are keenly aware of their slavery to a genetic program. Throughout the film they ask about their incept dates: "How old am I?" or "How long do I have to live?" These aliens are not the nuts and bolts kind, but the blood and guts kind - "skin jobs" as the police call them. As the film evolves, it becomes clear that most of the humans living in L.A. do not have much more freedom than the replicants. Deckard, for instance, is arrested and brought to his former boss who explains that he had to do this because Deckard would not have come if he had just called him, and when Deckard refuses the job of "retiring" the renegade replicants, he's told that either he takes the assignment or he will be relegated to the status of "little people". "No choice, huh?" Deckard says to his boss and his boss agrees, "No choice, pal." Yet the police chief himself is a functionary doing the bidding of others and afraid that the powers-that-be will find out about the mutiny - hence his desperate search for a blade runner who can do the job.

Only Tyrell appears to be in control. He represents the epitome of a society that uses and then trashes what it uses. This attitude reveals itself in his relation with Rachel, an experimental replicant working at the Tyrell Corporation who alone among the replicants does not have an expiration date and who also does not know she is a replicant. She is programmed with the memories of Tyrell's niece, making her "family" in a way. Tyrell has Deckard interview her to determine if she is a replicant - this after he tells Deckard that she is not. By the end of the test Deckard correctly concludes that she is a replicant but does not know it. The test, however, makes Rachel uneasy and she follows Deckard home to prove to him that she is human by showing him childhood photographs of "herself together with "her mother" when she was a "child". Not wanting to deal with her feelings, Deckard tells her to talk to Tyrell, something she obviously also thought to do because she replies, "He wouldn't see me!" Later, the police chief adds her to the list of replicants to be "retired" because she's run away from the Tyrell Corporation and now that she knows she's not a human, she will be too troublesome to keep around.

The lives of the aliens also express postmodernist themes. Their lives represent the compression of time and space which exists in our own world. The replicants live accelerated lives and they move with fluidity across space so that their persona "matches in many respects the time and space of instantaneous global communications" (Harvey, 1989: 309). They illustrate to the nth degree tailor-made work schedules, production systems, and employment arrangements designed to serve the needs of large
corporations. Each is especially created for the job he or she is to undertake and each exists only so long as he or she is useful. Considering the capital investment these incredibly complex genetically engineered beings represent, programming them to the in four years is the ultimate in a throwaway world, a world in which waste and decay are an essential part of the production process. Finally, their lives are testimony to the possibility of constructing and manipulating history. They are programmed with memories and their histories are constructed from photographs. The image becomes proof of reality; history has been reduced to the evidence of the photograph.

What does the film tell us about what it means to be human? First of all, the film constructs a continuum from artificial to real. This is true in the animal world as well as the human. There are fake animals, e.g. an owl and a snake, that appear so much like the real thing that Deckard is forced to inquire as to their status. And in the human world the continuum goes from toys, looking like midget humans but which only have a programmed speech pattern, to the Tyrell-designed, highly sophisticated Nexus 6 models, to Nexus 6 models with memory implants which enhance their means of dealing with emotions, and finally, to Rachel, the experimental Nexus 6 model who not only has memory implants but who also has an indeterminate termination date. Among the humans the genetic designer who works for Tyrell, J.F. Sebastian, suffers from "accelerated decrepitude" so that at the age of 25 he looks closer to 50. Replicants Pris and Roy recognize J.F. as a fellow sufferer. The difference between them is only one of magnitude.

The test which the police use for discriminating between human and replicant, the Voigt-Kampff replicant detection test, measures the blush response, fluctuations of pupil size, and involuntary dilation of the iris. The test is supposed to measure empathy. It revolves around a series of questions of which the key ones are about animal use or exploitation, e.g.: "You are given a purse made of cowhide. How do you react?" These questions are expected to elicit revulsion from humans, but not replicants, because humans recognize how scarce and precious animals are and they, unlike replicants, are capable of experiencing emotions.

At one point while Deckard is administering the test to Rachel, she asks him if he has taken the test himself, with the clear implication that he might not pass it. In the 1992 version of the film, the director's cut, it becomes clear that Deckard, too, is a replicant, but that does not substantially affect the answer to what it means to be human. If the difference between replicant and human is the ability to have empathy, the film indicates that humans lack it. In the first version which includes Deckard's voice-over comments, he says blade runners are not supposed to have feelings. The blade runner who was almost killed by replicant Leon while administering the Voigt-Kampff Test was singularly unempathic with Leon's obvious discomfort while they were preparing for the testing session. Deckard's police boss, the one who showed no mercy for Deckard's revulsion at killing "skin jobs", has a desk lampshade with panels depicting big-game kills. And Tyrell himself has no empathy for the pain Rachel feels at discovering that she may be a replicant. There are but few instances in the film in which humans exhibit empathy: only J.F. Sebastian who offers Pris food and a place to stay when he thinks she
is homeless seems to possess empathy, but he also is no ordinary human. More enigmatic is the case of Gaff, a member of the police force who acts as Deckard's driver and whose signature is the origami figures he makes at almost every stop. Given the opportunity to kill Rachel, Gaff shows some mercy and lets her live; but this is in the context of "knowing" that her fouryear life span is almost over. However, he does say to Deckard, "Too bad she has to die."

The film makes it clear that Rachel's memories are constructed by others since Deckard can recite them word for word. When she asks him if he's seen her file, he finesse the question by saying that the files are classified. But it also becomes clear that the memories have helped to construct who she is. She sits down at his piano to see if she can play and she does - beautifully. She says she doesn't know if the memory of playing is hers or that of Tyrell's niece. She also arranges her hair to mimic the hairstyles evident in Deckard's photos which sit on the piano. It suggests that as she creates a new past for herself, she will be recreating herself, as our memories and our pasts help define who we are. Later, while Deckard thinks about her as he sits at the piano, we are suddenly privy to a brief fantasy he has of a white unicorn racing through the forest. Near the end of the film when Deckard returns to his apartment to retrieve Rachel for their escape, he finds an origami unicorn, suggesting that Gaff knows Deckard's memories and fantasies: he knows that Deckard, too, is a replicant. Yet Gaff spares both Rachel and Deckard. Of course, the fact that the police chief called in Deckard as a fellow human to "retire" replicants leaves open the possibility that either he doesn't know Deckard's status or that he, too, is a replicant. And maybe Gaff, and maybe the entire infrastructure of the city? Who knows where it ends? And if we, the viewers, are supposed to be in on the secret of what makes us human, it becomes clear that there is no way for us to know what is artificial and what is real. We are not only created by our memories and fantasies but we have made our creations so much in our own image that the two are now indistinguishable. Bruno sees this as postmodernism's tendency to "celebrate the dominance of representation and the effacement of the referent" (Bruno, 1987: 67). This exchange of the relation between the real and its reproduction produces a new view of what is real. Quoting Baudrillard's Simulations, Bruno identifies the real not as "what can be reproduced, but that which is always already reproduced... the hyperreal ... which is entirely in simulation" (Baudrillard, Simulations, 1983: 146 quoted in Bruno, 1987: 67).

The replicants themselves understand feelings and what it means to suffer, but, on the whole, they also do not show much empathy or kindness. Two male replicants, Leon and Roy, in separate fights with Deckard ask him when he is in a life-threatening situation, how he likes living in fear - as they must live. Roy, who is the replicant leader, tells Deckard, "That's what it's like to be a slave." The issue of empathy arises very pointedly after Deckard has killed several renegade replicants, including Roy's replicant love, Pris, leaving Roy the only renegade replicant left on Earth. Roy anoints his mouth with some of Pris' blood and is now ready to avenge her death. In a chilling chase around the Bradbury Building, Roy comes close to killing Deckard. But when Deckard is hanging by his fingertips from the roof, Roy chooses to save his life rather than take it - and this at a time when he, Roy, knows that his own life is about to end, his termination date having come due. Perplexed, Deckard guesses out loud in the 1982 version of the film that Roy
may have loved life more than ever before - not just his own life but anybody's - "my life", he says. Thus Roy chooses to empathize with Deckard's wish to live rather than to seek the revenge he initially planned and could so easily have accomplished. He even tries to help Deckard understand why it is a shame that he himself has only a four-year life span. Deckard concludes that all Roy wanted is answers to questions that the rest of us, namely humans, want: "Where do I come from? Where am I going? How long have I got?" These ideas disappear from the 1992 director's cut, but the more pertinent part is that Roy, a replicant, saves the life of one he considers a human, and at that, one who has killed his friends and lover and would have killed him, too, had he been given a chance. Therefore, of the two - the human and the Other - it is the Other who shows greater depth of feeling and "teaches" the human about human values. If they are both replicants, one aware of the fact and the other not, the message seems to be that we cannot know what it means to be human because we, the viewers, cannot recognize the difference. If anything, the ones clearly labeled as alien show more of an important human characteristic, empathy, than can be found in the human society who created them. It seems that humans and their creations are living in a system in which the ties that bind are contractual, commercial ties. Bonds between living beings are more likely to reveal bondage than bonding.

What does Blade Runner say about the second theme the film deals with, namely, what future our current way of life is leading to? The overwhelming message of the film is that a society motivated by corporate greed is an abject failure. Also, "[a] postapocalyptic setting serves to underscore the dangers of present patriarchal science" (Roberts, 1993: 11). There is no question that the L.A. of 2019 is a grim dystopia. But is the film attributing this state of affairs to the patriarchal nature of our current social order and to patriarchal science? Yes and no. It certainly establishes the dystopia as quintessentially patriarchal. For one thing, it is almost entirely a male world. Tyrell is male, the police force is male, the genetic designers are male. The only women who speak are nameless women, shop owners, or pretty women in bars (pleasure models?). There are three female replicants who speak, but they are not human. Unlike the book on which it is based, Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? (Dick, 1968), in which Deckard is married to a woman with a voice of her own, in the film being a human subject is synonymous with being male. Not only is the film peopled by males, but the prevailing ideology is also patriarchal. It is a world characterized by hierarchy and control, by a reliance on technology and a tendency to look to technology for solutions. But if the film is criticizing a patriarchal society, what does it put in its stead? The love story between Deckard and Rachel, whether it is between a human and a replicant or between two replicants, adheres completely to the patriarchal mode. In a scene calculated to dampen the crotches of those that enjoy submitting to a strong man, Deckard prevents an upset Rachel from leaving his apartment by slamming the door and barring her way. He then slams her into some Venetian blinds and demands that she repeat after him, "Kiss me" and "I want you." After more-or-less mechanically repeating these statements, she creates her own sentence and develops her own desire: "I want you to touch me." At the end of the film, he leans over her as she lies on the floor sleeping and asks her if she trusts him, if she loves him. When she answers in the affirmative, he leads her out of the danger. Rachel, whose name means "ewe" in Hebrew (Stewart, 1979: 217), is a docile, and
perhaps loving, creature who follows her master. The narrative may suggest that slaves escape their masters and their fates, but if they do, one suspects the new life they establish will be as patriarchal as the one they left. Thus on its face, Blade Runner is not a narrative which holds patriarchy up to critical scrutiny.

Since the story of Blade Runner involves the creation of human simulacra - and their destruction, it deals with the theme of reproduction or creation as well as the question of death and destruction. It is in the realm of creation and destruction where the myths underlying this narrative exist. Blade Runner's fascination with creation is typical of science fiction (Roberts, 1993: 10) and like other science fiction narratives, it avoids real female mothers when exploring a function often associated with the female. Roberts speculates that the avoidance of female mothers represents anxiety over woman's power as creator of life and as a mother (Roberts, 1993, 9-10). In Blade Runner the chief and subsidiary creators of the replicants are all male, but the explosive function is female. What prompts the replicant Leon to blast his blade runner questioner into kingdom come is a request to associate to his mother. Leon replies, "My mother - I'll tell you about my mother!" as he shoots the inquisitor with a gun he's magically acquired from under the table. In another instance, Roy, the replicant leader, meets Tyrell, his maker, face to face. When he does, he confronts Tyrell with genetic possibilities he has devised to extend his own life and that of the other replicants. In each case, Tyrell explains what would make the manipulation impossible. Besides, Tyrell argues, the light that burns twice as fast burns half as long - in other words, Roy should content himself with his intensely-lived, short life. When it becomes clear that nothing can be done to extend his life and the life of his compatriots, Roy kisses his maker like a man kisses a woman holding his face and kissing him full on the mouth - and then he crushes Tyrell's skull. It is a kiss of death, the son killing the father who has disappointed him. In the 1982 version Roy also digs his thumbs into Tyrell's eyes and puts them out. Bruno argues that putting out the eyes of his "father" is a reversal of the Oedipus myth and an indication that he does not live within the symbolic order (Bruno, 1987). He interprets Roy's demise and Rachel's salvation as evidence that one can survive only if one joins the symbolic order. Rachel, who submitted to a man, Deckard, "accepts the paternal figure and follows the path to a 'normal' adult, female, sexuality: she identifies her sex by first acknowledging the power of the other, the father, a man" (Bruno, 1987: 71). In contrast, Roy "refuses the symbolic castration which is necessary to enter the symbolic order; he refuses, that is, to be smaller, less powerful than the father" (Bruno, 1987: 71). Apart from the fact that Bruno's interpretation about Rachel would not work as well in the second version of the film, his interpretation ignores two aspects of Roy's behavior at the end of the film, one of which suggests that Roy accepts a limit to his power and the other that he is appealing to a law, to an order, unlike any he himself has experienced. The first aspect of his behavior is seen in the restraint he shows when saving Deckard instead of killing him in that final chase around the Bradbury Building. At that time he is no longer the howling primitive he was just minutes before, but he seems to be under the influence of a higher power. He saves Deckard and then "teaches" him about life and death. The second aspect of his behavior is his mysterious release of a white dove as his own time runs out and he dies.
Death haunts the film from the beginning. At the very beginning of the film we learn of the people murdered by the renegade replicants and the expected death or "retirement" of the those replicants. Gradually we become aware of the prior death of most of Earth's animals. We see three replicants killed, we watch Tyrell's "execution", we hear of J.F. Sebastian's murder, and Gaff anticipates Rachel's death. Finally, we watch Roy die the death he was genetically programmed to experience, but in this case we also see Roy's spirit freed and reborn. At one point during Deckard's and Roy's chase through the upper reaches of the Bradbury Building, they stir up a covey of pigeons. Almost magically - and off screen - Roy comes into possession of a white dove which he holds in his hand as he saves Deckard's life and as he expresses the loss his death will mean. With death, he loosens his grip on the dove, his hand opens, and it flies off - free and alive. It is his resurrection, and maybe the resurrection of other doomed and enslaved creatures.

This beautiful but improbable incident defies the logic of the film. How likely is it in a land with virtually no animal life that a covey of birds exists in a deserted high rise building? I would venture that it is highly unlikely that they could, first of all, survive in that polluted environment and, second, that they could escape capture in a society where animals are so highly prized. This incident was not the only logical inconsistency in the film. In the original film Ridley Scott was pressured into adding a different ending from the one he wanted. In that first ending Deckard has decided to join Rachel and protect her from other blade runners who will try to "retire" her. Together they fly "north" into an atmosphere and landscape that represents unspoiled nature. This ending defies the logic of the film. A poisonous atmosphere will not limit itself to Los Angeles. Nor, if this natural wonderland existed, would most animals be extinct. It is clearly a fairy tale ending tacked on to make the film more palatable. In the director's cut, the ending is left ambiguous as Deckard and Rachel get on an elevator together and the final shot of them and of the film, is of the elevator door closing. However, the also improbable incident with the dove was left in the film.

What can account for its presence? I believe that the incident fulfills two wishes. The first wish is for a resurrection after death. In the Western world the dove represents the "life spirit, the soul, the passing from one state or world to another . . ." (Cooper, 1978: 54). Thus when Roy releases the dove, he is releasing his own spirit to be reborn. What he releases is "[a]n emblem of purity, aspiration, and gentleness, or the active principle animating the higher nature which descends into the lower nature in order to rise therefrom" (Gaskell, 1960: 229). The dove therefore also represents a wish that a postapocalyptic society motivated by corporate greed be ruled by the Word, the Law, the Name of the Father. But it is a law which celebrates the feminine in our natures. The dove also depicts femininity and maternity; it is life giving rather than death dealing. In Christian theology, the dove symbolizes the feminine aspect of the Divine Trinity, the Holy Spirit. It is only possible to see and know the holy spirit "as the personal is lost sight of, or transcended, and the Truth and the Life are realized" (Gaskell, 1960: 366). Indeed, that is exactly what Roy did in saving Deckard. The Holy Spirit speaks through others and gives them the truth. It provides an anchor in an uncertain world. As Jesus offers words of comfort to his disciples, he says (John, 14, 24-26):
[The word you have heard is not mine, but the Father's who sent me. These things I have spoken to you while yet dwelling with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your mind whatever I have said to you.

And at the last supper (Acts, 2, 2-4):

there came a sound from heaven, as of a violent wind blowing... [a]nd there appeared to them parted tongues of fire, which settled upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in foreign tongues, even as the Holy Spirit prompted them to speak.

Thus Roy releases the Holy Spirit into the world.

Like the postmodernist fiction it is, Blade Runner not only examines different kinds of death - replicant "retirement" versus human death - but the resurrection of life and of a world governed by law, at some future time and place. In this respect, the Other, the alien offers hope for a new beginning, a world guided more by a feminine and maternal spirit, and one in which the Word will exist. McHale, analyzing the postmodernist elements in Joyce's writing sees it in Anna Livia Plurabelle whose consciousness "is more like a collective consciousness ... or even the collective unconscious located in language itself" (McHale, 1987: 234). She is both a Dublin housewife and the personification of the River Liffey and she slips back and forth between worlds, dying each time her mode of existence ends. However, when it seems she has reached her final demise, her discourse is resurrected. "Anna Livia breaks off in mid-sentence, tumbling into the silence of blank page; but of course this sentence is resumed elsewhere - on the first page of Finnegans Wake.... Postmodernist writing in Finnegans Wake models not only the ontological limit of death, but also the dream of a return" (McHale, 1987: 235). Likewise Blade Runner, whichever cut.

[Footnote]
NOTE
1 The term "blade runner" which became the title of the film originated with a script writer. When Scott learned that the phrase came from a William Burroughs book, he arranged for permission to use it and the title stuck because, according to Scott, "it was fun" (Kennedy: 66). The words have no meaning in the text.

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