

Abstract

The current paper considers the way Hollywood describes technology, which is regarded as the power that is harmful to the surrounding world. The theme is developed on the basis of two movies, in particular, *Blade Runner* and *The Terminator – 1*. In both movies technology is aimed to kill people and destroy the world. At the same time, the weapon and tools of the nuclear age depicted in the movies as far from being realistic, which is why it makes the audience ponder about its disastrous effect on peoples' lives. What they evoke is a kind of skeptical attitude towards the issue of technological influence on people's lives.

The Looks of Hollywood at Technology

Hollywood of the 1980s reflected a unique understanding of technology and progress, military power and the nuclear age. The movies *Terminator-1* (1984) and *Blade Runner* (1982) vividly reflect the image and unique perception of technology by film producers. The importance of those movies lies primarily in their imagined visual presentation of the future and not only in its striking projection of the possible appearance of a twenty-first-century urban environment, but also in its suggestion of the ways how our perception of surroundings might become increasingly mediated by technology in the future. Science fiction, the genre most concerned with our relationship to technology and the most recent in terms of established recognition, drew upon traditions of utopian understanding of the world. Hollywood depicts technology as military and destroying power paying no attention to positive and advantageous issues of innovations.

Blade Runner directed by Ridley Scott devotes a considerably larger percentage of its overall length to action scenes (especially battles between Deckard and the various androids) than Dick's novel does. The movie depicts technological innovation and progress achieved by human civilization in military area. Despite being artificial creatures with short life spans, the androids of the film cherish their existence and cling to life with particular tenacity (Tasker, 2002). As a result, Deckard's battles with the androids are lengthy and intense in the film, whereas in fiction the androids lack a passion for a life and are generally destroyed easily once they are located. In addition, the deaths of some of the androids are depicted in especially vivid and sometimes gruesome detail in the film, again calling attention to their status as living creatures in graphic ways. Of course, such action scenes are a staple of these kinds of films to which *Blade Runner* indirectly alludes. Indeed, the

climax of the film's action, an extended duel to the death between Deckard and the android leader Roy Batty, descends at its end into pure sentimental film cliché. As Batty dies, he saves Deckard from falling off a rooftop, and then releases a white dove into the air as he expires. Deckard's voice overlays (which narrates the entire film in a somewhat campy hard-boiled style reminiscent of *Dragnet*), then explains that in those last moments Batty may have "loved life more than he ever had before" (Lichtenfeld, 2004, p. 41). This tendency toward sentimental issues continues in the ending of the film, which is changed dramatically from the one of the novel. Having retired the renegade androids, Deckard decides to spend his life with the android Rachael whom he loves and who (it conveniently turns out) is the only android ever to be produced without a built-in termination date to limit her life span to a few years (Lichtenfeld, 2004).

The Terminator –1 directed by James Cameron depicts military power of the civilization and its disastrous effects. The Terminator, a lethal Cyborg, comes back from a post nuclear-holocaust future to attempt changes in the past in order to influence the future. Ironically, this mechanical monster has no interest in preventing nuclear Armageddon but simply wants to kill one woman in order to prevent the birth of one man who will become a destabilizing force in the post holocaust world. Also, in 1984 the first of three *Back to the Future* films posited this same time travel solution to future problems though much less violently than *The Terminator*. The director of the film proposes the most sophisticated view of this time-travel trend (Mulhall, 2001). The decade in its nostalgia and its sequel mania expressed a longing for the simplicity of the past. Of all of these time-travel films *Terminator –1* is the only one that explores ecohistory, the influence of the sins of the ecological past upon the precarious future. Its opening future sequences portray a post-nuclear

holocaust world of totalitarian repression, troglodytic life, and graphic high-tech violence. After the time-travel premise is executed, the film portrays an eighties world of innocence and incredulity in the face of the nuclear threat. The relentlessness of the terminator Cyborg is a metaphor for the relentless approach of nuclear disaster upon an unsuspecting world. There is an irony built into the Cyborg villain that declares it is our technology that will turn upon us and ultimately destroy viewers (Lichtenfeld, 2004). It is no accident that their marriage is sealed (when he gives her a wristband location tracker which he rather too insistently tells her “doesn't mean we're engaged or anything”) just before educating her in the complexities of Marine weapons technology (Mulhall, 2001, p. 72).

In both movies technology is aimed to kill people and destroy the world. These films addressed the problem of America's performance anxieties in the wake of more than a decade of what was now perceived as domestic and international failure and humiliation. What they had in common was a commitment to reviving American self-confidence through reimagining the strong white male hero. The movies depict movements, freedom fighters struggling against totalitarian imperialists with more advanced technology and weapons (Tasker, 2001). The cumbersome technology also centrally contributes to the drab atmosphere of the film which features blighted industrial landscapes, decaying urban slums, and dark, crumbling buildings. All citizens are liable to sudden and unexpected arrest at the hands of the heavily armed troops charged with keeping security, and citizens are sometimes arrested through administrative errors (Mulhall, 2001). That propaganda is a thin veneer of optimism over the true darkness of life in this society. It is emphasized by the frequent depiction in the film of roadways lined by solid walls of propagandistic billboards that block the view of the blighted landscape beyond. There is apparently

a considerable underground, and bombings have become such a common occurrence that most citizens simply ignore them. In one scene, for example, a bomb demolishes a restaurant, but most of the clientele go on calmly eating their meals of simulated food oblivious to the rubble around them. Most importantly, the authorities of this dystopian regime seem to be unable to capture the hearts and minds of their subjects, despite their best efforts to do so (Tasker, 2002).

Blade Runner and *Terminator –1* show that Hollywood views technology as a destroying power aimed to kill civilians. Moreover, the movies clearly suggest that fantasies are more than mere escapism. Granted, his fantasies are at least partially inspired by the regime's official propaganda, but at the same time they provide him with an independent point of view that allows the main character eventually to develop a critical perspective on the official world around him. Inner and outer lives are not entirely separate: much of the movement of the film involves a gradual combination of these two perspectives, resulting in a postmodern blurring of ontological boundaries that finally makes it impossible at certain points for the viewer to distinguish between "dream" and "reality" (Tasker, 2002, p. 85). Dystopias are rather typical in the future world: high technology provides material luxuries for all, but individual citizens become increasingly dependent on the technology, in that way, even losing their humanity. Culture is reduced to a combination of banal electronic procorporate propaganda and violent mass-media spectacles; and corporate rule brings certain efficiency to the society, but at the expense of a loss of individual freedom. Indeed, the clash between corporate policy and individual desire provides the principal driving force for the films (Lichtenfeld, 2004). The movies do not ultimately make clear the relation between the world of the film and present-day capitalism, presumably, the historical forebear of the corporate society of the future.

In particular, the emphasis on competition so central to our own bourgeois society has been lost almost entirely in this future world of global monopolies (Tasker, 2002). Thus, while it may be perfectly consistent for such monopolies to attempt to suppress fantasies of individual heroism, this motif ignores the fact that the bourgeois ideology that lies behind the development of giant corporations relies quite heavily on a popular belief (illusory or not) in the possibility of individual accomplishment.

In sum, Hollywood creates unrealistic description of technology as military weapons and tools of the nuclear age. The movies' depiction of the future corporate life can sometimes seem rather stereotypical. In particular, the movies include a number of rather clichéd warnings against an excessive reliance on technology. Still, the depiction of technology is so patently unbelievable that the satirical message is in danger of being undermined. In general, it is suggested in the film that technology and efficient management have brought peace and prosperity to all in this world.

References

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