

The Cyborg Consciousness: Human Reality and Virtual Reality: A Close Reading of Karel Capek's Play *R.U.R (Rossum's Universal Robots) A Fantastic Melodrama and an Epilogue*

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Abstract

Garfield Benjamin in his book *The Cyborg Subject: Reality, Consciousness, Parallax* (2016) poses an important question regarding the issue of identity. He points out an intriguing relationship between cyborg consciousness and its relation to the human subject's consciousness. He suggests that there is a rivalry relationship between the human and the cyborg. The conflicting relationship or rivalry as he describes it is a result of the "irreducible gap" between physical and digital reality. Therefore, he focuses on "parallax" or the shift in perspectives as an important process that defines both the human and the cyborg's consciousness. This research paper is a close reading of *R.U.R (Rossum's Universal Robots) A Fantastic Melodrama and an Epilogue* by Karel Capek. The paper attempts through a theoretical framework to define cyborgian consciousness and its relation to the human consciousness. It triggers questions about the nature and the construction of the cyborgian consciousness with its three stages. The paper also sheds light on the definition of the cyborgian

condition and the possibility of embracing a dystopian reality with a futuristic version of a cyborgian consciousness. Moreover, it examines the work of authors who analyze the cyborg condition and the representation of cyborgs both in popular culture and in contemporary theory. Those authors include (Benjamin Garfield 2016, Adam I Bostic 1992, Donna Haraway 2006). The theoretical framework focuses on the stages of constructing a cyborgian consciousness, the relationship between the play's main themes and the cyborgian condition as well as the power relations governing the relationship between humans and cyborgs. The research concludes that the cyborgian condition is not an either or one but is more of a complex state embracing contrasts in some cases and acknowledging diversity as well. It also finds out that the dystopic existence at the end of the play is not necessarily a negative state but could be considered as a different type of existence that has its own nature and condition.

Keywords: cyborg consciousness, hybridity, oppositional politics, resistance, subaltern, affinity, identity, chimera, mestizaje

The Cyborg Consciousness: Human Reality and Virtual Reality: A Close Reading of Karel Capek's Play *R.U.R (Rossum's Universal Robots) A Fantastic Melodrama and an Epilogue*

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Introduction

This research paper aims at defining the cyborg consciousness and its relationship to the human consciousness. Through close reading of Karel Capek's play *R.U.R (Rossum's Universal Robots) A Fantastic Melodrama and an Epilogue* (1923), the paper attempts to answer the question whether there is a new cyborg condition that would change the modernist/postmodernist idea of identity based on race, class, or gender and thus the concept of consciousness in the first place, as well as the effect of this realization on the human condition in today's world. The main concern of this paper is to attempt to analyze the question of consciousness and its effect on identity bearing in mind the new threat of artificial intelligence. Although Capek's play was written in 1923, yet the question of robots or cyborgs or any form of artificial intelligence is still a very relevant question nowadays. The paper aims to argue that it is not an either-or relationship. The cyborg condition is not one which defines consciousness in black and white. It is an ambivalent one that wavers between inclusion and exclusion. *R.U.R* is a good example to question dystopia as well and discover hope within the play's dystopic events. Dystopia as a possibility for the new cyborg condition is one of the outcomes of this paper. The argument steers the paper towards recognizing the new cyborg condition as well as appreciating the potential for a coexistence that embraces the cyborg consciousness as well as the human one.

The paper is divided into two sections: the theoretical framework focusing

mainly on Donna Haraway's *A Cyborg Manifesto* (2016) and other theorists such as Chela Sandoval and Adam I. Bostic who also discuss the relationship between the cyborg condition and the human one. The second section focusses on *analyzing R.U.R* to unravel Capek's vision of the future and its relation to human consciousness and existence in a Dystopic context. The play's analysis divides the construction of consciousness and thus identity into three main stages: the "origin story", the oppressed versus the oppressor, and finally the question of inclusion or exclusion.

Review of Literature

R.U.R has been the interest of many critics. Although the play was written in 1921, it is still relevant for today's world. The play raises many questions about the human condition, the idea of life and death, man's relationship to time and the idea of work and technological advance. Nicholas Anderson in his article "Only We Have Perished": Karel Capek's *R.U.R.* and the Catastrophe of Humankind." (2014) tackles many important issues related to the play's existential questions. Anderson points out that for him, the play is a moment of an ongoing debate about the nature of man's existence and the conflict between the spiritual aspect of humanity and its "bestial" nature. He states that he did not consider the play as a usual "science fiction" work and could see it more of an argument about the "modernist humanist" project against the post humanist condition. He thinks that Domin represents a "noble" cause as he describes it by dreaming of having the robots carry on the toiling boring everyday work so that humans could

find enough time to “perfect” their humanity. However, Domin’s dream from Anderson’s perspective proves to be a failure. Humans’ desperate attempts at finding the true essence of their humanity turn them more bestial and this is reflected in the oppressor vs oppressed relationship they experience with the robots. Robots are enslaved to do all the tedious repetitive toiling work, while humans aspire to have the luxury of more free time to become better humans (227).

The play in Anderson’s point of view is also a reflection of Nietzschean “nihilism” and Nietzsche’s idea of the “Superman”. In the play’s world, humans control the robots and thus control the whole world since the robots do all the work in the world. Domin’s talk about mass production and abundance in everything that would secure human existence such as food and clothes result in a nihilistic existence for humans since everything loses its value and becomes “flat” as Anderson says (5-6). Alquist the factory’s architect, speaks the same point of view during his dialogue with Domin: “ALQUIST: Domin, what you say sounds too much like Paradise. There was something *good* in *service* and something *great* in *humility*. There was some kind of virtue in *toil* and *weariness*. (Capek 26). Moreover, James D. Graham in his article *An Audience of the Scientific Age: “Rossum’s Universal Robots” and the Production of an Economic Conscience* (2013) also explains the plays philosophical debate about the essence of work and its relation to man’s morality. According to Graham, Alquist articulates the concern over either the “presence” or “absence” of work as a value in man’s life that defines humanity itself (8).

The concept of work and its value in human life is a major theme in R.U.R that invites critics to consider it both from a philosophical ethical point of view as well as

from an economic perspective. “The Ordeal of Labor and the Birth of Robot Fiction” by Juliane Strätz (2017) draws attention to the conflict between the robots in the R.U.R factory and the factory management. The robots’ revolution in the world becomes an organized action that reaches the isolated island of the factory to exterminate all the remaining humans on the island. The robots’ revolution is an embodiment of the conflict between the human desire to free humanity from the toils and degradation of labour and the robots’ sense of their power as well as their awareness of their role in the capitalist scheme. As Strätz explains, the robots’ existence becomes ironic when they decide to free themselves from the slavery of work and from their oppressors, the humans, only to discover that their existence is directly related to their oppressors’ demands. The robots are there to serve the capitalist mass production needs (2). This dilemma also interests Charles T. Rubin in “Machine Morality and Human Responsibility” (2011). Rubin explains the nature of Capek’s robots who according to him differ from today’s robots. As mentioned earlier, the robots in R.U.R are the product of old Rossum’s discovery of a protoplasm that resembles humans but works in a different way. They are not the products of industrial mechanism but are rather genetically engineered. In Rubin’s point of view the conflict of making robots results from the moral question of their dominance of humans’ life. The question here is the decision to make robots to free humans from the burden of the mundane, however, the decision has serious consequences. If robots are going to perform all human work and in today’s world they are “autonomous robots” or “AI” who would be responsible for many aspects of human life such as planning, traffic, medical and military fields, then humans will be completely dependent on them and there is a risk of a reversal of roles. Robots are

originally made for “servitude”, however, the advance in technology and the most recent AI technology does not make the role of robots to remain in servitude. This leads to the question: is the oppressor becoming the oppressed? It also triggers another question. It is the question of responsibility: “can any good come from making robots more responsible so that we can be less responsible?” (3).

The critics’ interpretation of the play’s important questions confirms the complexity of becoming a cyborgian in the contemporary world. It stems from the need to change the perspective of human consciousness to incorporate a cyborgian consciousness that includes both the human and the cyborg. The paper is an opportunity to read the play from a perspective that neither condemns the dystopic end of the play, nor does it applaud the shift of consciousness from human consciousness to the cyborgian one. The paper acknowledges the challenges of the shift in consciousness as a reflection of the shift in both the moral and intellectual paradigms. The reading of R.U.R through this research paper is a reading that highlights the possibility of life according to the cyborgian condition. This condition is one that acknowledges a significantly complex relationship with both inner and outer realities.

The Theoretical Framework

Donna Haraway in *A Cyborg Manifesto* (2016) defines the cyborg as “a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction” (3). She stresses the fine line between “science fiction” and “social reality” describing it as “an optical illusion” (4). She gives different examples of the “marriage” between machines and organisms and their applications in different fields such as in the medical and military fields. For Haraway consciousness is a construct; a social lived

experience best reflected in feminists’ movements. She explains that feminists have created an experience that is both constructed and imaginary which could be explained in the cyborg’s subtle relationship with reality and science fiction. She tackles the cyborg condition from an opposite perspective to all Western white patriarchal capitalist culture. The traditional view of Western culture is based on science and progress as well as subjecting nature as a resource; However, Haraway explains the cyborg condition from a perspective of a genderless world; a world that does not look for unity or wholeness, but rather embraces confusions, non- boundaries as well as independency from grand narratives of psychoanalysis and Marxism (5-6). By existence, cyborgs do not have an “origin story” as Haraway says. They rather represent the subversion of all the Western culture’s interest in unity or wholeness as explained before. They are the products of vicious capitalist and military ambitions and therefore, they do not care for design and purpose. They rather defy all the attempts at going back to origins or uniting the parts to reach the whole.

Haraway describes her “cyborg myth” in political terms. She stresses the power relations between humans and animals on one hand and humans and machines on the other hand. She explains the cyborg world from two perspectives: a perspective that seeks to find the “control grid” to dominate the universe and gives “Star Wars apocalypse” as an example of the abstract conflict it represents; and a second perspective that embraces a world with “partial identities” in which humans recognize the bond with the animal world as well as the relationship with machines that although may lead to conflicting stances, it is still a possibility (13). Haraway encourages people to consider both perspectives at the same time because as she argues “single

vision produces worse illusions than double-vision or many-headed monsters” (13).

Haraway defines consciousness whether based on gender, class, or race as an imposed experience on humans that resulted from the conflicting historical and social experience. This definition is particularly valid in Western societies dominated by patriarchal colonialist and capitalist values. Furthermore, she questions the idea of a collective “us”. In her point of view, it is a concept that has suffered separations and divisions in Western societies, but also produced the idea of “affinity not identity” as a source for unity (15). She argues that a revolutionary subject who is dedicated to change the inherited Western tradition that constructs identity and consciousness based on “domination” or “incorporation” to achieve unity, is a considerable postmodern challenge. The construction of the revolutionary subject according to cyborg feminists should avoid all kinds of domination or incorporation and seeking unity should not be an objective anymore because the new revolutionary subject should be free of the idea of wholeness or natural unity (19). Therefore, the cyborg feminists disagree with other socialist, Marxist radical and liberal feminists since they refuse the taxonomies that reduce both ontology and epistemology as well into “domination and incorporation”. In this context Haraway argues for new social relations and the role of science in those relations. She explains that the world is going to witness a global change in respect to identity, consciousness, and their relations to class, race and gender like the change accompanying the emergence of industrial capitalist societies. She names that change as the “informatic domination” that is going to turn the old established patriarchal hierarchies of domination into new “networks” (28). Thus, human beings will be like any other “component” functioning within a system that allows interaction if

appropriate “procedures” and “codes” are in play. This sums up the whole world as a question of the play of codes using a common shared language.

Adam. I. Bostic in his article “Automata: Seeing Cyborg through the Eyes of Popular Culture, Computer-Generated Imagery, and Contemporary Theory” (1998) shares Haraway’s definition of the cyborg. He too stresses the cyborgs’ hegemonic nature. He gives an example of a Microsoft advertisement that celebrates cyberspace’s freedom from constraints or dominations: “Imagine-no age, no race, no gender, no handicaps. Is it utopia? “No, it's the Internet” (qtd in Bostic). Bostic’s reference to that advertisement points out the difference of the cyborgs’ world from that of the human. The cyborg’s world in his point of view does not accept dividing distinctions or dominations. It is a world that celebrates heterogeneity and diversity. Bostic traces the history of automation from its beginning in the eighteenth century and through its progress till the twenty-first century. He observes the development of the relationship between machines and humans; a relationship that started with celebrating the machine seeing it as a tool for progress, leading to a “Utopia” as Bostic says. On the other hand, he also refers to the view of the machine as a destruction of the human world with all its values and thus a real threat to humanity. Moreover, Bostic discusses an important aspect of the relationship between the human and the machine. He explains the fine line between reality and imagination. He says that the advance in technology reduces the space between the human and the imaginary. Therefore, the human and the cyborg, or the real and the virtual share more areas and even tend to intersect with each other. Cyborgs as Bostic says become a reflection of what humans are if they consider themselves “outside themselves” and from the standpoint of the cyborg. (358). The idea of the cyborg

as sharing human aspects and even giving humans the opportunity to go out of the constraints of their human bodies and selves to “humanize” the machine, bridges the gap between the human and the machine.

The cyborg transcends its artificial inhuman aspect to become an integral part of a human subject. Thus, the whole concept of subjectivity as Bostic explains “extends” the human consciousness to understand and to include the cyborg consciousness as well. It is difficult in present day life to separate humans and machines. Machines have become persona that assume partnership with humans (359). Extending human consciousness brings up Bostic’s “Cyborgian consciousness”, a combination of human dreams and technological advancement. “Cyborgian consciousness” describes the constant human dream for completion and transcendence. Humans always dreamed of completing their inadequacies and perfecting their insufficiencies. The cyborgian dimension now makes this long-pursued dream an actual reality. The communication field is the example Bostic refers to illustrate that point. The internet, that completes the other world is a clear example of the extension of consciousness that brings up a cyborgian consciousness combining between the human dream of transcending limitations and the cyborgian consciousness of making that dream true.

“Oppositional Cyborg Politics”

Chela Sandoval in “Re-entering Cyberspace: Sciences of Resistance” (1994) extends Haraway’s cultural work on Cyborgian subjectivity to focus on the “oppositional” cyborg politics. She explains that workers who experience the toils of physical work under Capitalist white domination of the first world, are good examples of robot- like hard work and she discusses the constraints imposed on them that represent the limitations of their choices embodying the

ugly power relations they experience by the White capitalist postcolonial dominations. Those workers who according to Sandoval mostly descend from African slaves and the indigenous people of the Americas, are an example of the cyborgian “resistance politics” that define the relationships of modern-day workers with their oppressors. She refers to Donna Haraway’s work because the latter’s work on Cyborg feminism represents a breakthrough on both the academic theory in terms of cyborgian subjectivity as well as on the cultural level, as it highlights Cyborg feminism as a narrative of inclusion (76-77). For Sandoval cyborg consciousness reflects the “resistance politics” as she describes it. It is the outcome of both the advance in technology as well as survival methods to face the “oppressor”. She observes that Haraway’s narrative presents the excluded white western male with a possible narrative that would unite him with the marginalized oppressed “US. third world feminism”. Thus, survival plans stress the relations between the oppressor and the oppressed and adapt Haraway’s classification of oppressor and “subaltern” to carry out the five survival techniques the oppressed follows according to Sandoval. The five survival techniques all depend on bridging gaps in society and enabling the subaltern voice to be heard and to be included. Thus, the cyborgian consciousness of “oppositional resistance” is mainly a narrative for inclusion. The idea of the cyborg as a hybrid of the machine and the human resonates with the cyborgian consciousness that works through recognizing diversity, hybridity, and the multiple places of the self to survive the “postmodern condition”. Cyberspace is the area for the play of all those factors to create a condition of resistance of the postcolonial postmodern narratives (11 - 14).

According to Sue Short in *Cyborg Cinema and Contemporary Subjectivity* (2005), the term cyborg has been “coined by

Manfred Clynes in 1960” reflecting a conflict between two points of view. A perspective that considers technological advance and the creation of cyborgs for example as a bliss that would change humanity’s future for the better, and another perspective, that considers the advance in technology and the existence of cyborgs around humans or even humans’ dependance on technology devices as a curse that would carry humanity to its doom. (35).

This research paper uses the term robot and cyborg alternately. However, it is important to point out the difference between robots and cyborgs. Robots are machines that can perform tedious repetitive work without any boredom or exhaustion. On the other hand, cyborgs are according to Haraway’s definition a marriage between machine and organism. They are hybrids who have the machine quality of robots; while at the same time, they have living organisms in them that would give them more human qualities, such as feelings and freedom of choice.

R.U.R: Predicting the Cyborgian Condition

R.U.R. (Rossum's Universal Robots) A Fantastic Melodrama in Three Acts and an Epilogue (1923) written by Karel Capek (1890-1938) is a significant embodiment of a cyborgian vision. Written in the early Twentieth century, Capek’s play has the precedence of coining the term robot as well as presenting a vision of the future with cyborgs as the inevitable advancement of the robots’ technology of the Twentieth century. Choosing the term “robots” to refer to the indescribable invention of old Rossum, a young scientist who started making robots before the beginning of the events of the play, is significant. The term means in Czech a “worker”. The play starts with the visit of Helena Glory to R.U.R (Rossum’s Universal Robots). A factory making robots and selling them as soldiers to the whole world is situated on an unknown isolated island in the year

2000. Helena falls in love with Domin, the factory’s Director, and marries him to settle on the island. Years pass by and through a development in the robots’ making formula, the robots develop human qualities and make a revolution on the island exterminating everyone to guarantee the end of humanity. However, they decide to spare only one person who is for them is only a worker like them. This is Alquist, the factory’s Chief of construction. The main dilemma and theme of the play revolve round the theme of work, worker, and the relationship between the workers and their employers. Love and the meaning of life are also some of the important themes in the play.

Considering the theoretical framework discussed earlier in this essay, *R.U.R* is a moment that crystalizes the relationship between humans as dominators, employers, oppressors, and representatives of Patriarchal White Western Capitalist narrative of exclusion, while the robots, could be a possibility for inclusion as Helena Glory dreams of. Looking back at Haraway’s Sandoval’s and Bostic’s understanding of the “revolutionary subject”, “Cyborgian consciousness”, or “oppositional cyborg politics” suggest a “cyberspace” in which the conflicts for class, race, and gender give way for a more homogenous world view, an inclusive narrative that accepts hybridity, heterogeneity; a mestizaje and a chimera rather than a specific race. The development of Rossum’s formula to make robots with more human qualities reflects the dissatisfaction with the condition of both the robots as heartless machines and humans limited abilities as well. Therefore, the perfect solution would be an attempt at inclusion. Both robots and humans should share some qualities to produce a third condition of being that would include and accept both humans and robots instead of stressing the conflict between both and excluding one of them. Therefore, Helena

was encouraging the development of the robots' formula to achieve a world view that has a possibility for both kinds of existence to be there. This also explains the reason she destroyed Rossum's formula when she learned about the Robots' revolution. She wanted to destroy the barrier or the distinction between robots and humans believing that all are equal "For God's sake, you are people just like us, like all of Europe, like the whole world! The way you live is undignified, it's scandalous!" (Prologue.224).

R.U. R's characters reflect a deliberate choice of names that are significant and foretelling. Starting with Harry Domin the General manager of Rossum's Universal Robots, one cannot ignore Domin's name that stands for dominator and domination. He is the General manager of the factory and one of the most vehement advocates of the robots manufacturing to ensure the supremacy of humans as well as their domination of the robots for humanity's welfare and luxury. Sulla and Marius are two robots. Marius is: "A young Robot, superior to the general run of his kind. Dressed in modern clothes." (Capek 7). Marius is a Roman name for the War God Mars, and it also stands for the Roman word "male". Therefore, the name is related to strength, masculinity and foreshadows the future war between the humans and the robots at the outset of the play. It is also the name of an important Roman leader whose rivalry with another Sulla, another distinguished Roman leader, marks the end of the Roman republic. Sulla on the other hand is the name given to a robotess. She is one of the advanced robots and speaks four languages. When Domin orders Sulla to talk to Helena, the former is an informed companion and advises Helena not to use Amelia for her trip back. However, historically Sulla is the name of a Roman leader before the fall of the Roman republic,

and it is significant that a male's name is given to a female robotess making the question of gender differences an insignificant issue. This confusion of genders is one way of achieving a world view as Haraway considers without genders and without disagreements due to gender difference. In this context it does not matter if Sulla which is a female robot is given a masculine name. Marius and Sulla the historical were two rivals, and their rivalry instigated wars, destruction, and bloodshed, while Marius and Sulla in *R.U.R* are two soulless emotionless robots. The destruction of either of them does not mean anything to either of the partners or to them as separate individuals:

HELENA: Oh, you are not afraid of death then?

Sulla: I cannot tell, Miss. Glory.

HELENA: Do you know what would happen to you in there?

SULLA: Yes, I should cease to move.

HELENA: How dreadful. (Looks at Sulla)

DOMIN: Marius, tell Miss Glory what you are? (Turns to Helena)

MARIUS: (To Helena) Marius, the Robot.

DOMIN: Would you take Sulla to the dissecting room?

MARIUS: (Turns to Domin) Yes.

DOMIN: Would you be sorry for her?

MARIUS: (Pauses) I cannot tell. (Capek 17)

The above dialogue between Helena and Sulla reveals that the latter has no soul. She has no reaction towards the idea of her getting cut into pieces in the dissecting room. The same thing applies to Marius's reaction during the dialogue between him and Domin.

He knows that he is to take Sulla into the dissecting room. He shows no emotions at all knowing that Sulla would cease to move which is death for the robots; this does not stir any feelings of sorrow or sadness in Marius the robot because the robots are soulless. The robots' reaction is consistent with Haraway's claim that cyborgs are not seeking unity or wholeness because they are machines unlike organic creatures who dream of wholeness and unity.

The Construction of a Cyborg Identity in *R.U.R*

The cyborgian identity is a concept that involves different stages a cyborg must go through to construct their identity and being in general. Although Haraway believes that the cyborgs have no "origin story" and are not bound by the idea of organic unity, yet she believes that identity is a "social construct". In *R.U.R* the robots have an "origin story" that started with old Rossum, a scientist who on a deserted island on an unknown spot in the universe, started on a project of chemical experiments to make a man. However, the project takes a new turn on the hands of young Rossum an engineer and Rossum's nephew, who decides to change the project to make a robot as efficient a worker could be and with the cheapest possible budget. The shift in the project could be read as the shift from the "origin story" and search for "wholeness" or "unity" as Haraway describes which is also consistent with the whole modernist project's ideal for finding meaning towards the post-humanist concept of identity that is more aligned towards identity as a "social construct".

In *R.U.R* old Rossum starts with the desire to prove that he can make robots who would perform enormous work with perfection and efficiency that no human could have. This desire was "to prove that God is "unnecessary". Domin's dialogue in Act 1 with Helena about old Rossum's story

and the making of robots, reveal the scientist's wild dream: "... old Rossum meant it literally. He wanted to become a sort of scientific substitute for God. He was a fearful materialist, and that's why he did it all. His sole purpose was nothing more or less than to prove that God was no longer necessary" (Capek 12). However, Rossum's Prometheus ambition proves a failure compared to his nephew's new take on the same project. Unlike his uncle, young Rossum adopts a pragmatic business-oriented approach to the project. The shift in the two scientists' approach could be read as a shift from the modernist attitude towards the humanist project and science positivity towards the post humanist approach that focuses on technological development rather than fulfilling a scientific dream. It is also a shift from the "origin story" and "unity" to a determined preconceived intentional designing or "construction" of identity based on leveraging the advance in technology.

The Oppressed VS. the Oppressor: Second Sage in the Creation of the Cyborg Consciousness

As discussed earlier, the power relations in Haraway's framework, and the revolutionary subject for cyborg feminists, represent the second stage in the cyborg's journey for the constructed consciousness. In *R.U.R* the robots' relationship with Domin and the rest of the factory employers reflects the power relations between the domineering and the dominated, or in other words man and machine. The dialogue between Domin and Helena about the ideal worker is a good example of those power relations:

DOMIN: What sort of worker do you think is the best from a practical point of view?

HELENA. (*Pulling herself together*)
Oh! Perhaps the one who is most honest and hard-working.

DOMIN NO. The one that is the *cheapest*. The one whose requirements are the *smallest*. Young Rossum invented a worker with the minimum amount of requirements. He had to simplify him. He rejected everything that did not contribute directly to the progress of work. Everything that makes man more expensive (Capek 13-14)

The relationship between the cyborgs and the men in the R.U.R factory could be considered as one of the stages of the construction of consciousness before the complete dystopia. Christine Cornell in "Remembering the Ancients: Observations on Technoscience in Čapek's RUR" highlights some of the important questions the play triggers. She refers to the relationship between the robots in the play and the factory men on one hand and the workers in a capitalist "mass production" economy and their oppressors on another hand. This two-pole relationship stresses the intensity of the strife between the workers as the oppressed and the factory men as the oppressors. Cornell's view of the play as an embodiment of the relationship between the oppressed and the oppressor, is also in agreement with Sandoval's "resistance politics". Both authors consider the relationship between robots or cyborgs and their makers or employers as a reflection of the conflict established by the nature of the relationship between the "worker" and the "employer" or the "oppressed" and the "oppressor". It is also significant that the terms describing this relationship are socio-economic as well as political, which deepen the conflict on different complex levels.

Inclusion or Exclusion? Third Stage in the Construction of the Cyborgian Consciousness

The third stage in the construction of identity or consciousness in a post humanist frame is

the deletion of the idea of identity to be replaced by "affinity". In Haraway's point of view, the idea of "identity" as explained earlier, invites more distinctions, conflicts, and disagreement. Traditionally, identity is influenced by gender, race, and class. Therefore, it is preferable to consider "affinity" because it avoids the modernist ideal of "wholeness" or "unity" and replaces it by an acceptance of "partial identities". The cyborg condition makes it possible for both humans and cyborgs to share a cyberspace in which each one considers the other as a partner. Moreover, this partnership enables each party to extend its own limitations. The cyborg's hybrid nature consolidates human inadequacies. As mentioned before, cyborgs become indistinguishable from humans.

The advance in technology aims at making both humans and cyborgs "components" in the larger system. Transcending human insufficiencies and the cyborg's crystallization of what humans could be in their best version is also reflected in the play when Helena Glory is unable at the beginning of the play to recognize that Sulla was a robotess:

HELENA. (*Jumping up, crosses to SULLA*) Oh, that's absurd! Sulla isn't a Robot. Sulla is a girl like me. SULLA, this is outrageous—Why do you take part in such a hoax?

SULLA. I am a Robot.

HELENA. No, no, you are not telling the truth. (*She catches the amused expression on DOMIN'S face*) I know they have forced you to do it for an advertisement. Sulla, you are a girl like me, aren't you? (*Looks at him.*)

DOMIN. I'm sorry, Miss Glory. *Sulla is a Robot.*

HELENA. It's a lie!

DOMIN. What? (*Pushes button on desk*) Well, then I must *convince* you.

(Enter MARIUS R.C. *He stands just inside the door.*) Marius, take Sulla into the dissecting room, and tell them to open her up at once. (MARIUS *moves toward C.*)

HELENA. Where?

DOMIN. Into the dissecting room. When they've *cut her open*, you can go and have a look. (MARIUS *makes a start toward SULLA.*)

HELENA. (*Stopping MARIUS*) No! No!

DOMIN. Excuse me, you spoke of lies.

HELENA. You wouldn't have her killed?

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DOMIN. You can't kill machines. Sulla! (MARIUS *one step forward, one arm out.* SULLA *makes a move toward R. door.*)

HELENA. (*Moves a step R.*) Don't be afraid, Sulla. I won't let you go. Tell me, my dear— (*Takes her hand*) — are they always so cruel to you? You mustn't put up with it, Sulla. You mustn't.

SULLA. I am a Robot.

HELENA. That doesn't matter. Robots are just as good as we are. Sulla, you wouldn't let yourself be cut to pieces? (Capek 16-17)

The above dialogue points out the unusual relationship between the robots and the humans and proves the idea that robots/cyborgs could be seen as cyborgs being the best embodiment of man's partnership with cyborgs. It is a partnership based on man's seeing himself/herself through the cyborg's/ robot's eyes and discovering the bond with the robots. The same alternating situation takes place at the beginning of the play when Helena Glory is

introduced to the factory management staff. She thought that the people she was introduced to were robots, but they were human beings. Her inability to distinguish between robots and humans is a significant statement in the play. She mistakes Sulla for a real girl like herself, however, it turns out that Sulla is a robotess. All this changes the relationship between humans and machines. Humans are no longer the superior race who dominate the world and exhaust its resources for their well-being. Ironically the intention at the beginning of the play when old Rossum decided to make a robot was to make a man: "he took into his head to make a vertebrate or perhaps a man. This artificial living *matter* of his had a raging thirst for life. It didn't mind being sown or mixed together. That couldn't be done with natural albumen. And that's how he set about it" (Capek 11). However, young Rossum as mentioned before developed the experiments of his uncle to make a robot rather than a man who can achieve all the tasks without boredom and with the cheapest cost: "'A man is something that feels happy, plays the piano, likes going for a walk, and, in fact, wants to do a whole lot of things that are really unnecessary.'" (Capek 11) therefore, he decided to make it more of a soulless "gasoline motor" to rid it of the "unnecessary distractions" that impede man from achievement: "The product of an engineer *is* technically at a higher pitch of perfection than a product of Nature" (Capek 14).

Thus, the relationship between humans and robots is a complex one. It is a relationship that started with old Rossum's desire to challenge God's creation by making a man better than the natural man, developed into young Rossum's desire to make the utmost use of the formula left to him by his uncle and being an engineer he was interested in the industry and making good profit out of making a machine that looks like man, but has no soul, or man's other desires that

distract him from work and ended up with two groups of robots. Humanoid robots which are a higher rank of robots that Helena cannot distinguish from real humans such as Sulla and other less advanced robots who work as machines: “Rossum’s Universal Robot factory doesn’t produce a uniform brand of Robots. We have Robots of *finer* and *coarser* grades. The best will live about *twenty* years.” (Capek 14).

Conclusion

R.U.R represents a moment of a test for the human dream of perfect luxury and freedom from all the burdens of labour. However, the test in this context brings other complex issues along. The most important of all is the test of the human essence itself. The play could easily be read as a dystopia picturing the aftermath of humanity’s extinction, but Capek brings difficult questions. Considering Haraway’s *Cyborg Manifesto* is it possible to consider the robots’ revolution on the island as the emergence of the new cyborgian

consciousness? The end of the play is also problematic since it ends with two robots, a female and a male robot who are discovered by Alquist to have some human sentiments and he sets them free to be the new Adam and Eve, making it seem that humans finally succeed in making a sentient robot or in today’s world a cyborg. Does the death of all the humans on the island -except Alquist the architect who is the robots eye a worker like them and this is the reason they spare him- and the impossibility to produce more robots or to fix the existing ones after the destruction of their secret formula on the hands of Helena represent the emergence of the new consciousness? A consciousness based on the hybrid of the human and the machine represented in the two loving robots whom Alquist sets free to start a new genesis. All interpretations are possible; however, it remains clear that the ideas of identity, subjectivity, and consciousness change significantly and a new condition both for the human and the cyborg emerges.

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