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In the Universe of Cassandra: The Ancient *Topos* of Clairvoyance in the Futuristic World of *Minority Report* (2002)

ABSTRACT

The figure of Cassandra is well-known from numerous representations in ancient and modern literature as an archetype of a woman who has the power to see the future, but whose visions are not believed. In ancient Greek literature, Cassandra was an important character serving as a prophet of an approaching catastrophe. In her modern adaptations, this figure became a metaphor in psychoanalytical research on human moral behaviour (Melanie Klein and the Cassandra complex) developed in feminist writing. Cassandra has also been of interest to filmmakers, with perhaps the best adaptation of the subject of Cassandra's clairvoyance being Steven Spielberg's film *Minority Report*. Loosely based on Philip K. Dick's 1956 short story *The Minority Report*, the plot presents a version of the Cassandra myth, in which a woman together with male twins operate as a group mind to predict future crimes. Their visions are used by the state to prevent the crimes and imprison the would-be criminals. This article offers a thorough analysis of all the ancient and modern features of the metaphor of Cassandra employed in this movie within the overarching framework of the central theme of free will vs. determinism. According to this approach, the central theme is examined with reference to ancient Aristotelian and Stoic moral philosophy, the modern feminist psychoanalysis of Melanie Klein, and the political philosophy and legal issues in the post-9/11 world.

Keywords: Cassandra, free will, determinism, *Minority Report*.

INTRODUCTION

The specific way in which familiar literary intertexts are recycled is classical reception, defining the creative adaptation of various motifs from classical Greco-Roman antiquity. As Lorna Hardwick and Stephen Harrison, leading scholars of Classical Reception Studies, have observed, the main focus in the investigation of classical reception is put on "cultural traffic": "This traffic is not just between ancient and modern. It includes movement via mediating contexts and then within receiving cultures" (XXIII). Therefore, the scholarly approach defined within Classical Reception Studies has to assume a plethora of interwoven motifs and the various forms and contexts of their expression. Contemporary culture promoting audio-visual media brings an additional challenge in this area when the process of intermedia reception occurs. What was previously familiar from a written text is now transformed into sound and vision, and this change in the form of expression has a fundamental impact on the process of creating meanings. Furthermore, audio-visual media are quite often products created for entertainment only (or mainly) and this purpose determines the way classical reception is proposed. Now, it cannot be a sophisticated intertextual adaptation of an ancient text(s), but a simplified version of selected themes and ideas that work for the common recipient. Obviously, such productions employ and create (pop-)cultural shortcuts—themes and ideas out of their original contexts and interwoven with others—in order to give a fast and simple meaning.

Modern science fiction, with its various forms of expression, has become a particular field in classical reception. Brett M. Rogers and Benjamin E. Stevens describe this phenomenon as follows:

> As a locus of classical receptions, modern SF has engaged in historically and formally complex negotiations, not to say contestations, between pre-modern ways of knowing and being human, on one hand, and on the other hand, then-emergent and now-ascendant technoscientific thinking and practice. (5)

Considering modern SF as "a crucial and popular mode, even *the* mainstream mode, of thinking about life in a modern, technoscientific world" (6–7, italics in the original), Rogers and Stevens argue that the study of the relationships between SF and Classics can be a space of epistemological and ethical musing (9), since it provides a comprehensive view of how technology changes our knowledge and perception of the world and how this knowledge directs our moral behaviour. Both scholars agree that the way SF employs classical tropes is of a highly transformative nature:

> In this way "the classics" are being made into vivid signifiers *neither* of the ancient past, *nor* even of professional knowledge of antiquity, *but* of a present moment: an advanced post-modern moment marked by a recomposition of past cultural products that is omnivorous and, from a scholarly perspective, generally uncritical. (10, italics in the original)

Keeping in mind the above observations, we should consider SF as a fully-fledged imaginative medium for pondering the epistemological and ethical issues of the technoscientific world we currently live in. Nonetheless, we should also be aware of the postmodern way in which SF recycles the past in order to give answers about, or just to muse upon, the present and the future. There is always a process of voracious absorption of motifs, tropes, themes or ideas in creating a newly imagined story. Essentially, the modern creation of SF appears to be the same activity as the creation of ancient mythologies—in both cases humans try to imagine their potential metamorphoses into other entities, either hybrids of humans and animals or humans and machines/technologies. Consequently, these metamorphoses raise the issue of their epistemological and ethical consequences, in mythologies mostly developed in relation to god(s), while in SF in relation to technology. Therefore, either in ancient mythologies or in modern SF, the apotropaic function is fulfilled and occurs by employing tools of imagination, with much less use of critical thinking.

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To epitomize the process of classical reception in modern SF in the context explained above, this article focuses upon the film *Minority Report* (2002), directed by Steven Spielberg. This picture is usually categorized as a neo-noir movie, or even more precisely as a tech-noir or future neo-noir. From a conceptual perspective, the neo-noir genre is the postmodern continuum of the classical film noir with its themes of moral ambivalence followed by an inversion of traditional values, its motives of crime and violence and its feeling of alienation and pessimism (Conard 1). However, in neo-noir movies there is an essential change in the existential status of the main character:

> [T]he classic noir detective is a hardened stoic—not a flat character (mind you), but hardly "conflicted" in Shakespeare's sense. With neo-noir, however, that is precisely the point. The character is "divided" against himself, although not so much emotionally, as in Shakespeare, as epistemologically: divided in time as two selves, and one is looking for the other. (Abrams 7)

Furthermore, such a constructed character's identity is confronted with the chaotic time loop in which "one self is always ahead, and the other is always behind" (Abrams 10). The personality of a character featured

in this kind of a temporal palimpsest in the subgenre of tech-noir movie is additionally cornered by technology that becomes "a destructive and dystopian force that threatens every aspect of our reality" (Auger 21) and as such it can be seen as a god-like/devil-like force from previous, more theologically oriented noir movies. All the traits of the tech-noir movies such as moral ambivalence, alienation, split personality and the divine power of technology can be found in Spielberg's *Minority Report*. From this perspective it seems obvious that the movie deals with epistemological and ethical issues at a profound level, and the article will try to investigate how various ancient (Greco-Roman) philosophical ideas and literary motifs are absorbed and transformed in the SF *universum* of the movie. The main tropes, as suggested by the plot, lead us to the *topos* of Cassandra's clairvoyance with its various derivations in psychology and philosophy. Furthermore, the fictive world of *Minority Report* becomes an appalling prevision of the political narratives in the real post-9/11 world. This issue, in its association with the main philosophical concept of the film, which derived from the metaphorical *topos* of Cassandra and clairvoyance (i.e. free will vs. determinism), will also be carefully examined in the article.

THE *TOPOS* OF CASSANDRA AND CLAIRVOYANCE: MYTH, PSYCHOLOGY AND FEMINISM

The figure of Cassandra in culture is perceived as an imaginative representation of the gift of precognition attributed to some humans, a foreknowledge of future events, which can be discussed both in its paranormal background of clairvoyance and in the psychological framework of the so-called Cassandra complex. The clairvoyance of Cassandra is a mythical feature that was thrillingly visualized by the ancient Greek playwright Aeschylus in his drama *Agamemnon*. A daughter of Priam, king of Troy, Cassandra, after the fall of Troy, was taken by the Greek king Agamemnon to Greece as a concubine, or a sex slave, to be precise. In Agamemnon's palace at Mycenae she provides a frightening prophecy of a future sequence of murders, fully cognizant that nobody will believe her: the tragic mark of the figure of Cassandra is that nobody accepts her predictions as true and consequently she is treated as mad. This worthless gift was a curse from the god Apollo as punishment for refusing his sexual advances. Never to be believed, she is doomed to suffer a life of ridicule.

> Look, Apollo himself is stripping me of my prophetic garb—he that saw me mocked to bitter scorn, even in this bravery, by friends turned foes, with one accord, in vain—but, like some vagrant mountebank, called "beggar," "wretch," "starveling." (Aeschylus v. 1268–74)

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This poetic image has thus become a metaphor for the state of mind in which a person's conjecture about the future, based either on a logical deduction or simply an emotional prefiguration, is met by a strong process of denial, and so an impulse for aggressive disregard for such predictions is born. Modern psychology adapted the Cassandra metaphor to describe the so-called Cassandra complex. Melanie Klein developed the image into a theory of human moral conscience considered within the psychoanalytical framework of super-ego: "Cassandra as a super-ego, predicts ill to come and warns that punishment will follow and grief arise" (Klein 293). However, such predictions are usually rejected as too painful to be accepted:

> Denial is a potent defence against the persecutory anxiety and guilt which result from destructive impulses never being completely controlled. Denial, which is always bound up with persecutory anxiety, may stifle feelings of love and guilt, undermine sympathy and consideration both with the internal and external objects, and disturb the capacity for judgement and the sense of reality. As we know, denial is a ubiquitous mechanism and is also very much used for justification of destructiveness. (Klein 292)

Klein's theory of super-ego, explained by the metaphor of Cassandra, was next absorbed by the feminist movement to describe the phenomenon of silencing female voices in the public sphere. The phenomenon called *mansplaining* describes a situation "when a man talks condescendingly to someone (especially a woman) about something he has incomplete knowledge of, with the mistaken assumption that he knows more about it than the person he's talking to does" ("Mansplaining"). In 1973, Rebecca Solnit, in her essay *Cassandra Among the Creeps*, employed the ancient figure of the Trojan princess to bring the phenomenon into sharper focus:

> I have been thinking of Cassandra as we sail through the choppy waters of the gender wars, because credibility is such a foundational power in those wars and because women are so often accused of being categorically lacking in this department.
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> Not uncommonly, when a woman says something that impugns a man, particularly a powerful one, . . . or an institution, especially if it has to do with sex, the response will question not just the facts of her assertion but her capacity to speak and her right to do so. Generations of women have been told they are delusional, confused, manipulative, malicious, conspiratorial, congenitally dishonest, often all at once. (4)

This gender-focused discussion about the phenomenon of Cassandra's gift of foreknowledge,[1] or of female intelligence and intuition in general, seems to correspond with the whole ancient image of prophetesses. They were habitually visualized as "frenzied women from whose lips the god speaks" (Burkert 116), who become priestesses of Apollo or other gods and who remain virgins so as to avoid any sexual involvement with men that could distract them from their devotion to god.[2] Thus, their clairvoyance was always strictly supervised by a male god and, if a sexual relationship with the god was not agreed, they were doomed to be unheeded. This imaginative picture of a female seer appears to be an obvious reflection of the widespread belief in ancient Greek society concerning the lack of authority of women's words (cf. Aristotle, *Politics* 1260a 9–14).

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THE *TOPOS* OF CASSANDRA AND CLAIRVOYANCE: THE PHILOSOPHICAL DEBATE ON FREE WILL VS. DETERMINISM

The notion of clairvoyance itself, embedded in a human medium, is applicable to the great debate about decision-making process in human life along with the overarching idea of human will. Aristotle in his *Nicomachean Ethics* meticulously discussed the contribution of human will in the decision-making process in order to prove that the only factor decisively affecting human life is the human being herself, more precisely—a person is responsible for shaping her character by her behaviour (Aristotle, *NE* 1110b–1111a). The phenomenon that can be called self-determination and that emphasizes the leading role of human free will, was challenged, however, by the notion of determinism established mainly by the Stoics. This ancient philosophical school introduced and improved a theory of causal determinism that was commonly understood as Fate:

> Now by Fate I mean . . . an orderly succession of causes wherein cause is linked to cause and each cause of itself produces an effect. That is an immortal truth having its source in all eternity. Therefore nothing has happened which was not bound to happen, and, likewise, nothing is going to happen which will not find in nature every efficient cause of its happening. (Cicero, *De Divinatione* 1.125)

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[1] The feminist involvement of the figure of Cassandra has its artistic expression in the German playwright Christa Wolf's drama-like poem *Cassandra*, published in 1983. Wolf emphasizes that a feminine reading of ancient myths might allow us to identify "hitherto unrecognized possibilities" (Wolf 270).

[2] Burkert underlines that this kind of feminine figure appeared not only in Greco-Roman antiquity (116–17).

Nonetheless, the discussion of will vs. determinism was not, and is still not, based on such a simple opposite. From Plato and Aristotle, through the Stoics and Epicureans, early Christian philosophers such as Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, modern philosophers like Descartes, Kant, Locke, Spinoza, Hobbes and Hume, to contemporary thinkers—Frankfurt, Fischer, Goetz, Coen, Ginet and Zagzebski, to name but a few—the whole debate has grown into a rhizome of thoughts striving to investigate all the possible derivative options of the controversy in focus. Consequently, a great many theories such as causal or logical determinism, fatalism, necessitarianism, compatibilism and libertarianism have emerged.[3] Within the framework of this article, though, the observation made by Aristotle, i.e. that a discussion of free will vs. determinism ineluctably involves an issue of moral responsibility, appears to be the most pertinent.

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In relation to clairvoyance (for the time being, let it be understood as a highly developed ability to predict future events on the basis of previous practices), the whole issue seems to concentrate on the questions of to what extent human choices are determined by a person's moral character (i.e. concerning making decisions followed by particular behaviours) or if those choices hinge on the person's various external circumstances; and finally, whether a person could free herself from these two "deterministic" threads and act in a way that was neither predicted nor expected, and so, in fact, create a *minority report* for her action. Aristotle argues that our moral character is the aggregate of all our choices that in time become our habits and, as such, they govern our choices and behaviour in the future (Aristotle, *NE* 1110b–1111a). In some way, we can claim that most of our decisions and behaviour can be rightly predicted on the basis of the statistical data collected from our previous actions, hence *a majority report* can be created. Any derivation from such an organized chain of determinants can hardly be foreseen since it assumes an essential change in one's model of behaviour. The question arises of whether a person is really able to escape her own character's determinism and if we can still talk about free will in this case (if "free" means "up to us"). In the Stoics' view, in turn, human nature rests on general laws of nature which should be followed for a happy life. Any resistance to nature results in pain, so, in a way, a human being can choose a life of pain, but this choice does not change the previously determined thread of events. As the well-known stoic phrase verbalizes it: "Aye, the willing soul Fate leads, but the unwilling drags along" (Seneca, "Epistula CVII" 11). Thus, there is room for choice in Stoic ethics, i.e. for the action of free will; however, if will is not contingent with the plan designed by

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[3] For a detailed discussion about the topic and full list of references see O'Connor and Franklin.

Fate, an individual has to come to terms with a life of pain that becomes a constant struggle, which is doomed, in advance, to failure:

> The programme of life is the same as that of a bathing establishment, a crowd, or a journey: sometimes things will be thrown at you, and sometimes they will strike you by accident. . . . Here is your great soul— the man who has given himself over to Fate; on the other hand, that man is a weakling and a degenerate who struggles and maligns the order of the universe and would rather reform the gods than reform himself. (Seneca, "Epistula CVII" 2)

Seneca's notion about *reforming* oneself in order to become compatible with life's programme designed by Fate seems to provide the best conceptual framework for the central idea of the plot created by Scott Frank and Jon Cohen for Spielberg's *Minority Report*.

CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND OF THE FILM: SELF-DETERMINISM FOLLOWED BY MORAL RESPONSIBILITY

The plot of Spielberg's film is loosely based on Philip K. Dick's 1956 short novel *The Minority Report*. It is set in the future (2054), when a specialized police department called PreCrime takes "criminals-to-be" into custody based on predictions provided by the three *precogs*. This controversial procedure rests on the assumption that the *precogs* can rightly foresee future crimes and the individuals responsible for them. Leaving aside for a moment the question of the *precogs*' competency, which will be discussed in the next section, the concept of imprisoning people, purely on the basis of presuppositions, can hardly be justified. The idea, as it seems, evokes both the Aristotelian determinism of human character and the Stoics' determinism of Fate, since it assumes in advance the train of programmed events that are the results of someone's usually as yet unstructured intentions of which they are not even cognizant, and as such it reflects a belief that human moral character is fixed and unchangeable and has to follow its nature. Consequently, the foreseen intentions are morally evaluated and become decisive evidence allowing the court to detain individuals. Significantly, the *precogs*' predictions are interpreted by technology and eventually appear as wooden lottery balls with the names of victim and murderer. The machinery, visualized as an oracle, is clearly reminiscent of the lottery of Fate described by Seneca quoted above, against which human will is defenceless. Fate is programmed and humans cannot change it, even though they usually decide to struggle. The question of

who designed the programme, i.e. who manages Fate, is of a theological nature: in earlier noir movies it is God that administers human life, while in neo-noir films it is technology. The lottery motif is reinforced during an early scene in the film where the first murder's visions, as provided by the *precogs*, are of a children's merry-go-round in motion—suggestive of a wheel of fortune—then, depending on the angle from which it is observed, the murderer's house becomes defined.

This highly deterministic approach to human behaviour, however, plotted in the fictive world of Spielberg's movie, has approached something of a reality in the context of contemporary politics, where the rhetoric of the threat of terrorism is used to establish policies that allow government services to not only intrude on privacy but also to detain people before they commit any crime—epitomized by the Guantanamo prison[4]—or even preventively attack them:

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> The film adapts Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon metaphor, setting its utilitarian ideal of autonomous supervisory institutions in dynamic tension with a legal model based on individual sovereignty. The film gives fictional form, in other words, to the competing imperatives of modern political philosophies as they have been congealed in everyday practices of rule. A number of mainstream reviewers depicted the film as a cautionary tale about the state surveillance apparatus sent into overdrive by America's "war on terror" (Lane; O'Heir; Ebert), and Slavoj Zizek has seized upon its fictional Bureau of Precrime to illustrate a critique of the "Cheney doctrine" of preemptive aggression. (Cooper 24)

The film, then, anticipated the narratives followed by the legal regulations in the post-9/11 world. Producers released the film in June 2002, a year after the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York, and in the year of Guantanamo's transformation into a military prison in violation of the Geneva Convention. Thus, already then, the political narratives had harshly turned into the propaganda of policies allowing the government to employ unlimited surveillance and aggressively invade citizens' privacy. The "one percent doctrine" of Dick Cheney, the then US Vice-President, mentioned by Cooper, was announced just after September 2001 and it assumed "that if there was 'a one percent chance' that a [terrorist] threat was real, 'we have to treat it as a certainty in terms of our response. . . . It's not about our analysis, or finding a preponderance of evidence'" (Briefly Noted). If a "preponderance of evidence" is not in use, then reality approaches the

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4   Naval Station Guantanamo Bay is a detention camp transformed in 2002 into a military prison where approximately 700 individuals, mostly from Arabic countries, are detained against the Geneva Conventions.

fictive world of *Minority Report*, with its presupposition of a person's guilt. In the movie universe, the would-be criminals, mostly murderers-to-be, are removed from their real lives and imprisoned in a benevolent virtual reality. The only evidence of their would-be crime is the foreknowledge of the *precogs*, the cassandric characters working for the police.

THE CASSANDRA'S LEGACY—*PRECOGS*

The PreCrime police department in the film works on the basis of the predictions of three *precogs*. This group of seers consists of one woman, who is the leader, and male twins, all young adults. The previsions of the woman—Agatha (Samantha Morton)—are accepted as the most accurate; however, the final decision to prevent a foreseen crime is made when her predictions are compared to those of the male twins—Arthur and Dashiell (Michael and Matthew Dickman). Together they operate as a group mind hardwired to a system that captures their visions and displays them on 3D screens. This collective cassandric character is formed by the adaptation of several mythical motifs.

All the *precogs* are children of drug-users and as such they are perceived as mentally disabled as a result of genetic mutations; however, their disability (i.e. clairvoyance) turns out to be an effective government tool. Doctor Iris Hineman (Lois Smith), an elderly lady seen in her beautifully kept greenhouse, was the designer of the experiment to use the genetic mutations of drug-addicts' children. But it has to be stressed that she meticulously chose only addicts who had taken neurotin, a drug for intellectuals which speeds up the brain's operation. Actually, the experimentation with drugs to improve human intellect, which can be perceived as an attempt to transcend human limitations in order to achieve god-like capabilities, turns out to be the impetus to connect its genetic end result with technology and create the divine, as it were, machinery of the oracle. The *precogs*' origins seem to correspond with the god-like hybrid of ancient mythology, just like Cassandra with her divine skill of clairvoyance.

The *precogs* were raised and educated as orphans by the government to be imprisoned in the PreCrime department's facility, deprived of private life, drugged and kept in a special pool as part of the technological system. Human subjects are here transformed into objects, into interfaces of data filtering and transferring—"it's better not to see them as humans," one character advises. In the film there are direct indications that this is a strictly scientific and technocratic approach to the human mind, since "science deprived us of miracles." Nonetheless, one character mentions that "the

real power lies not in the minds of *precogs*, but in the hands of the highest priest," who is personalized in the character of PreCrime's director, Lamar Burgess (Max von Sydow), an old man with a grey beard. Furthermore, police officers describe themselves as "more priests than cops." One of them, Danny Witwer (Colin Farrell), who was sent by the government to check the credibility of PreCrime's work, is portrayed as a deeply religious Irish Catholic, who wanted to be a priest when he was younger, studying at a seminary, and who still carries religious insignia such as a medallion which he kisses when in trouble. Such a religious framework has the effect of creating a reference to the theological orientation of previous noir movies, but now substituted by a technology-oriented approach.[5]

The ontological status of the *precogs* harks back to the circumstances of the mythical Cassandra, whose life was dedicated to the service of god and who was deprived of her private life. Cassandra, as a captive of war, was robbed of her previous life as a princess, and with the status of concubine had no rights as a free human being. Furthermore, her ontological status had previously been diminished by the curse of Apollo, when her refusal of his sexual advances rendered her a social outcast. Eventually, she was killed not *per se* but *per analogiam* to Agamemnon (by attachment to him), not as a person but as a concubine, so even in her death she found no markers of her personal identity. Even though she had predicted her own death, she had no power to prevent it. Thus, the objective status of the *precogs* directly refers to its ancient antecedents; however, the position which Agatha represents as female leader in the group, appears to subvert the notion of the lack of importance of the female voice represented in antiquity.

Agatha, whose skill of clairvoyance is the most highly respected, turns out to be a modern transposition of the figure of Cassandra, who in the movie universe becomes much esteemed, though only as a tool. Furthermore, as already mentioned, her predictions have to be juxtaposed and referenced with the visions of the male twins. This triple group mind perceptibly refers to both the ancient and Christian model of divine trinity. Thus, Agatha appears to be the centre of this trinity and as such her femininity is an advantage, although she has to be supported by a male element. Interestingly, though, in some versions of the ancient myth, Cassandra was supported by her twin brother Helenus, who had the same

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[5]   Rogers and Stevens quote Adam Roberts to underline the materialist, i.e. "non-theological thinking," being the basis of the development of modern SF that is seen as a "*re-emergence* of an *ancient* mode" (Rogers and Stevens 11, italics in the original). Although this observation is made in relation to literature, it might be relevant also to the change that occurs between the classical neo-noir movies and tech neo-noir.

gift of clairvoyance.[6] Hence, the twin brothers from Spielberg's movie are a multiplication of Helenus and his supportive power for Cassandra. However, although the divine might be a source of this trinity image, it is subjected to the power of technology in order to stress its operative and subordinate status within the oracle machinery.

THE CASSANDRA LEGACY—THE MINORITY REPORT

The main character in Spielberg's film is the PreCrime Captain John Anderton (Tom Cruise), who leads the police team in preventing murders-to-be. Surprisingly, one of the *precogs*' visions indicates that Anderton is about to commit a murder. He is forced to flee, despite not knowing how and why he is to become a killer as the prediction stands. His struggle to find an answer to these questions is the impetus to resolve his personal issues and to expose the unreliability and thus fallibility of the PreCrime system.

From a personal perspective, Anderton tries to retrieve his life from the trauma: having lost his son, apparently kidnapped, he divorced his wife and became a drug-addict. Against the *precogs*' vision, identifying him as a future murderer, he endeavours to reconstruct his identity so as to invalidate the prediction that he will kill. Even though the homicide he is foreseen to commit turns out to have been plotted by Lamar Burgess, the vision of this murder does appear to correspond with Anderton's state of mind. He suffers deeply from feelings of guilt over his son's disappearance and his use of drugs to try to escape the pain. While investigating the reasons predicting him to be a murderer, he comes to the realization that he is actually capable of killing the man who seems to be his son's kidnapper and killer. By struggling with his painful memories and intense desire for revenge, Anderton experiences a splitting of his personality, which he eventually salvages into the identity of a man reconciled with the past who is able to choose an alternative future, and thus fulfil his minority report and not kill. The dialectical tension between the past and the future in Anderton's personal struggle fits perfectly the model of the neo-noir character described by Abrams as quoted above, when the character's self is entangled in a time loop, and as split, "one self is always ahead, and the other is always behind" (Abrams 10). In fact, being hunted as a murderer-to-be, he himself chases his fragmented identity to prove that the minority report is feasible in order to verify the potential of his free will. It is significant that Witwer, who hunts Anderton and

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[6] The most important of the ancient sources is the *Aeneid* by Virgil (Book III).

whose background is of a religious nature, has noted that "everybody runs," which seems to describe the common situation of escaping one's painful self.

From the systemic perspective, Anderton intends to expose the fallibility of the PreCrime system and therefore he kidnaps Agatha to interrogate her about her visions. Finally, he discovers the issue of minority reports the *precogs* sometimes generate, which proves the possibility of an alternative future to the main predictions. The presence of minority reports would evidently discredit the PreCrime's *modus operandi*, hence they are hidden by the director Burgess since "we do not want justice in which there is a room for doubt." The *precogs*' minority reports thus become a sign of human free will *per se*, since they confirm that an individual can escape the determinants of her own character or rather its actual state, as Anderton could, and follow the protocol of an alternative. Witwer, as an auditor of the PreCrime system looking for flaws, admits: "But if there's a flaw, it's human. It always is." Eventually, the minority reports are proved to be such human flaws, which the technology of PreCrime cannot accept nor permanently eliminate. In fact, human free will is perceived as a flaw in the context of technological perfection based on programmed, fully determined, algorithms.

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CONCLUSIONS

The ancient *topos* of Cassandra would appear to be the spur for an extensive discussion of human free will and its limits, as it is involved in the decision-making process followed by moral evaluation. Steven Spielberg's *Minority Report* to a great extent deals with this *topos* by the creative adaptation of ancient mythical motifs and their actualization into current social and political issues. The conceptual framework of the neo-noir movie, in its sub-genre variation of a tech-noir set in the future, allows the director and screenwriters to set up a plot that explores both personal and institutional threads of events in order to observe and analyze both the break and restoration of the character's identity and the involvement of technology in human action with its almost "divine" nature of processing. The plot is developed from the standpoint of the overarching idea of the free will vs. determinism debate. The figure of Cassandra is recognized in the concept of the *precogs*, who are constructed on the basis of several mythical motifs such as Cassandra's twin brother and divine trinity. The theme of minority reports would appear to recall not only part of the discussion about free will, but also echoes the feminist debate about mansplaining and silencing the female voice, since it is mainly the female *precog* Agatha who generates

the minority reports that are hidden due to their contradictions. Most remarkable, though, is the plot itself, which in the conceptual framework of the neo-noir style thoroughly investigates the issue of human free will, as the protagonist strives to escape the determinism of his internal (characterological) and external (institutional) circumstances. Overall, Spielberg's film is a Hollywood production that goes to great lengths not only to entertain the audience, but also to explore serious issues regarding both current societal concerns and more universal questions about the nature of human action. As such, *Minority Report* deals in depth with epistemological and ethical issues already discussed in antiquity, both by artists (playwrights) and philosophers, by creatively absorbing them into the realms of a SF universe.

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