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“Machines Making Machines?  
How Perverse.” Racism, (White)  
Sexual Anxiety, the Droids of *Star  
Wars* and the Prequel Trilogy

For an academic to say that racism is a pressing social concern seems to be almost a waste of breath in the present political climate and justifying that concern in an article as *almost* a waste of paper. Nonetheless, racism has been described over the years as “chameleon-like”<sup>1</sup> or “amazingly elastic”<sup>2</sup>, subject to a “conceptual inflation”<sup>3</sup> and buried in “metonymic elaborations” and “coded signifiers”.<sup>4</sup> To this day, anti-racist efforts seem only partially effective and are described as “always trying to catch up”<sup>5</sup> but never being quite able to do so. For all the consensus one might find over the inaccuracy and detrimental nature of racist ideologies, one of the main problems facing scholars is identifying racism concretely, not to mention working out how to combat it.

Speculative fiction, meanwhile, has risen from relative economic and critical obscurity at the start of the twentieth century to become one of the largest and most profitable genres of the mass media in the present day. Among the productions of speculative fiction, the Star Wars franchise remains particularly prominent. According to an estimate by *Fortune* in 2015, the Star Wars franchise was already worth roughly 42 billion dollars,<sup>6</sup> a figure that has since nearly doubled, reaching 70 billion.<sup>7</sup> <sup>8</sup> This measure covers the franchise’s monetary gains in box office revenue, home entertainment sales, toys and merchandise, video games, intellectual property value, books, tv series, licensing fees and collectable resale markets. Spread across all these areas, the franchise’s size and ongoing potential cultural impact

are unmatched. Understanding the ideological makeup of the series is thus crucial to understanding its impact in broader society.

Because of this, any overlap between the ideological makeup of the *Star Wars* series and the ideologies of racism must be of the utmost critical concern. To address that concern I attempt here to do a reading of certain parts of the series using the entry point of the droid characters, who I examine through the lens of Richard Dyer's findings on the role of whiteness in western cinema. This reading provides valuable insights into the ideological foundations of the *Star Wars* series and sheds light on some of the many ways in which racial ideologies are often inadvertently concealed and transmitted in popular culture.

Of course, the ideological foundation of the *Star Wars* franchise has not been entirely consistent. In particular, the later films, from Episode VII onwards, seem to take a distinctly revisionist stance towards the messages of their predecessors. To allow for some consistency, I restrict my examination to the original *Star Wars* film and the *Star Wars* prequel trilogy. The prior provides a good starting point for understanding the themes I discuss, while the latter builds on those themes toward interesting conclusions. I put less emphasis on *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back* and *Star Wars: The Return of the Jedi* due to their lesser focus on the droid characters. Whilst not chosen for that purpose, the films that are focused on represent all the *Star Wars* films that have been personally directed by George Lucas. This directorship may have contributed to the consistent droid presentation.

I begin with a summary of Dyer's perspective on whiteness as he relates it in his influential work, *White: Essays on Race and Culture*.<sup>9</sup> I then touch lightly on some readings by previous scholars of the droids of *A New Hope* as (racialised) Others. Working from this foundation, I examine the presentation of the two main droids (C-3PO and R2-D2) in *A New Hope* using Dyer's perspective. I argue that the droids display the fundamental traits of whiteness, often to a more extreme degree than actual white human characters. Nevertheless, their social position and treatment by other characters, including sympathetic protagonists, do not match the hierarchical position usually associated with whiteness. I attribute this and related contradictions to the work unreflectively trying to create sympathetic non-human characters who are heroic (a traditionally white-coded position) while still making them subordinate to and other than default humanity (also traditionally defined as white). The discussion then proceeds to the prequel trilogy, giving special attention to three key segments: the first introduction of C-3PO, the

first introduction of R2-D2 and the droid factory sequence (with the subsequent battle scene). I argue that the superlatively white traits of the main droids are extended further beyond the realm of human possibility in the prequel movies, now extending to their mode of production. Furthermore, the films present battle droids as distinctly non-white,<sup>10</sup> and their mode of production reflects this. This correlation between the presence of or opposition to white traits with specific production modes resonates strongly with the white sexual and reproductive anxieties identified by Dyer.

Dyer's study was not blind to the role of androids. In his analysis of the perceived symbolic connection between (racialised human) whiteness and death, he describes the android as the "definition of whiteness, the highest point of human aspiration", one which ultimately reveals "that to be white is to be nothing".<sup>11</sup> While Dyer's ultimate goal is to show the android as symbolic of the emptiness and lifelessness he sees in popularly (i.e. by whites) conceptualised whiteness, his words nonetheless ring true of a more significant trend among the intelligent non-human creatures of speculative fiction. However, even though the examples Dyer cites (the android, Ash, from the *Alien* films and the replicants of *Blade Runner*) reflect his traits of whiteness, not all fictional androids are similarly white. Moreover, their relationship (sometimes oppositional) to whiteness is deeper and more complex than Dyer acknowledges. That relationship can link intricately with the same themes of sexuality and reproduction that Dyer sees in his analysis of whiteness in Western visual culture. Dyer actually dismisses reproduction as being relevant to androids, as they "cannot reproduce themselves [...] at any rate sexually as opposed to technologically".<sup>12</sup> I disagree with this for reasons demonstrated later.

Nonetheless, Dyer's work provides an essential key to understanding the ideological makeup of the *Star Wars* films. Since its original publication in 1997 (with several new reprints in recent years), Richard Dyer's *White* has easily become the most influential and oft-cited work in the study of whiteness to date. Furthermore, it is of particular use here due to its status as a work contemporary to the release of the *Star Wars* prequel trilogy, being published only a short time before the release of the first of the films and offering a look at patterns of portrayals in cinema and other forms of visual culture leading up to the films' production.

Its most oft-cited insight is into how whiteness functions as an unseen, default status in western representations of race in visual media, noting how "[o]ther people are raced, we [whites] are just people"<sup>13</sup> and how "[a]t the

level of racial representation, in other words, whites are not of a certain race, they're just the human race".<sup>14</sup> What is even more important here is Dyer's contribution to the understanding of the way the spirit/body division is portrayed differently for whites than for non-whites. According to Dyer, whites are defined by "spirit" and a "get up and go" attitude and by the fact that "the white spirit could both master and transcend the white body, while the non-white soul was a prey to the promptings and fallibilities of the body".<sup>15</sup> According to Dyer, whites are portrayed as masters of their physical forms and defined by their spirit and intellectual qualities rather than their bodily forms. In contrast, non-whites are shown as being defined more exclusively by their bodies. White character, then, is defined by "energy, enterprise, discipline and spiritual elevation" and white bodies by "hardness and tautness ([. . .] often unfavourably compared with the slack bodies of non-whites)", and "upright-ness".<sup>16</sup> The relative slackness of non-white bodies is often seen as an advantage in pursuits such as dancing,<sup>17</sup> and non-white people, especially blacks, have been attributed exceptional athletic abilities.<sup>18</sup>

However, this perspective leads to concerns about certain white *incapabilities*, particularly in the area of sexuality and reproduction.

The problem is that whites may not be very good at it [sex and reproduction], and precisely because of the qualities of 'spirit' that make us white. *Our minds control our bodies and therefore both our sexual impulses and our forward planning of children. The very thing that makes us white endangers the reproduction of our whiteness.*<sup>19</sup>

According to Dyer, the problem is that the perceived non-whiteness of non-whites and their stronger link to their bodies is thought to make them more sexually driven, thus causing them to produce more offspring and putting whites at a reproductive disadvantage. This perception leads to white anxieties about being outproduced by non-whites and related anxieties about the rape of whites (predominantly white women) by non-whites,<sup>20</sup> thus corrupting the whiteness of their offspring and blurring the divisions between whites and non-whites.<sup>21</sup> These anxieties contribute to what Dyer calls the

conundrum of sexuality for whites, the difficulty they have over the very mechanism that ensures their racial survival and purity, heterosexual reproduction. To ensure the survival of the race, they have to have sex – but having sex, and sexual desire, are not very white: the means of reproducing whiteness are not themselves pure white.<sup>22</sup>

According to Dyer, this conundrum yields fears of overcrowding or “swamping,” in which the faster-reproducing non-whites out-populate and overwhelm the smaller number of slower-breeding whites.<sup>23</sup> This outnumbering may occur via miscegenation (possibly aided by either rape or their superior sexual prowess), mass immigration, or simply reproducing faster than the older inhabitants of the country after arriving.

Given the reproductive implications of whiteness, it may be no surprise that it bears a gender dimension. White men and white women are thought to experience their whiteness differently.

The white man has – as the bearer of agony, as universal subject – to have the dark drives against which to struggle. The white woman on the other hand was not supposed to have such drives in the first place. She might discover that she did and this is the stuff of a great deal of Western narrative, but this was a fall from whiteness, not constitutive of it, as in the case of the white man’s torment.<sup>24</sup>

These drives are, of course, sexual. “White men are seen as divided, with more powerful sex drives but also a greater will power.”<sup>25</sup> Women are more passive, lacking these drives, but as a result are also, as Dyer notes, more fundamentally white. Taken to an extreme, feminine whiteness can develop irreconcilable contradictions, as Dyer quotes from the work of Marilyn Frye, who studied the discourse of the Klu Klux Klan.<sup>26</sup> That discourse saw white women as having a duty to produce children, but “to imagine them having sex and being delivered of children is scandalous and virtually sacrilegious”.<sup>27</sup> A woman should be “a pure vessel for reproduction who is unsullied by the dark drives that reproduction entails”.<sup>28</sup>

This gender difference has also had implications for visual effects. Idealised white women glow (specifically glow, rather than shine, the latter of which implies sweat, which is associated only with men or less idealised women).<sup>29</sup> Men are more likely to have visible shadows on their features, while for women these are more aggressively eliminated.<sup>30</sup> Simply put, “the man is darker: his clothes are more sombre, his fair body is more covered, what is visible of his flesh is darker, light falls less fully on him. There is almost never any departure from this – it is as true of art cinema and pornography as of mainstream movies”.<sup>31</sup> Three-point lighting is used to achieve the desired glow for women, particularly on the hair, and makeup and white clothing can similarly be used to add to the effect.<sup>32</sup>

It may seem like a conceptual leap from seeing these traits in white and

non-white humans to seeing them in intelligent non-humans. Nonetheless, seeing non-humans in science fiction as representations of human Otherness is not new. Many scholars have linked intelligent non-human creatures of science fiction to real-world Others, such as Daniel Bernardi's claim that "[a]liens [...] can be said to be always already real world peoples – signifiers of nations, cultures, and identities – simply because there are no real space-time referents for living and embodied extraterrestrials".<sup>33</sup> According to Bernardi, such creatures (or at least aliens) are necessarily representations of real-world peoples simply because they must be representative of *something* real, and there are no actual aliens on which to base them. Gwyneth Jones expresses the same sentiment: "As long as we haven't met any actual no-kidding intelligent extraterrestrials (and I would maintain that this is still the case, though I know opinions are divided) the aliens we imagine are always other humans in disguise: no more, no less."<sup>34</sup> Meghan Gilbert-Hickey and Miranda Green-Barteet cast the net wider and see "racial markers [...] displaced by categories of otherness" including "extraterrestrials, cyborgs, telekinetic and intellectual powers, and technological adaptations".<sup>35</sup> According to Elizabeth Ho, such use of "metaphorical race" is "a common strategy in YA supernatural fiction" which "depends on the use of supernatural characters—vampires, werewolves, and the like—to serve, with greater or lesser success, as imaginary solutions to real racial problems".<sup>36</sup> Patricia Melzer described the use of aliens to deal with issues of racism but suggested that it is often poorly done:

[x]enophobia and racism in science fiction are usually transferred onto representations of aliens. These symbolic representations often replace any direct discussion of racism and fail to really address the problem.<sup>37</sup>

These same arguments could easily extend to droids or other sapient artificial intelligences. If like these authors we take it for granted that such creatures must have *some* real-life referents, then those referents must include humans (though they may include other things as well). If the droids are seen as a collective group, their human referent must be something that is identified as a collective as well. Nevertheless, the reference to humanity need not be specific. While I concede that our frameworks for conceptualising intelligent Otherness are limited to the human, I do not support any implication that fictional groups must *necessarily* be analogues to *specific* real-world groups. Speculative fiction texts construct many intelligent non-humans in reference to other intelligent

non-humans from the same genre. Elves imitate other elves and goblins other goblins in a line of heredity that links them only distantly, if at all, to specific human stereotypes. Fictional races no more need to be analogues of specific, real-world races than fictional characters need to be analogues of specific, real-world people.

Several interpretations see Otherness, and especially racial Otherness, as being enacted among the droids of the *Star Wars* films. These perspectives need to be accounted for if we are to find whiteness (functionally the opposite of Otherness in its naturalising effects) at work in the droids' construction. Dan Rubey, to start with, sees the films as filling the "chief emotional satisfactions of racism", "making use of and supporting racist habits of thought" and having a "race hierarchy" with robots at the bottom.<sup>38</sup> On a somewhat related note, J. P. Telotte sees *Star Wars's* droids epitomising the mechanical and logical forces that are also at work in the Death Star, thus helping to emphasise the hierarchy of human over non-human (and living over non-living). According to Telotte, "[t]hey are essentially slaves to a superior mankind, embodying a romantic dream of obedience and dogged faithfulness to a master".<sup>39</sup> Similarly, Diana Sandars sees robotics as a counterpoint to humanity. According to Sandars, Darth Vader is "android-like" due to having "vanquished his human nobility",<sup>40</sup> a description which suggests an implicit valuing of human over android. However, not all the readings condemn or reflect negatively on the droids' portrayal. For example, Lane Roth sees only *unsympathetic* characters, the 'cynical' Solo and the 'gruff' bartender (the latter openly discriminates against the droids), epitomising this antimony. In contrast, the more sympathetic Obi-wan Kenobi "treats the droids more kindly".<sup>41</sup> According to Roth, discrimination is exclusively the domain of unsympathetic characters, while the films do not necessarily support or encourage the kind of hierarchy such relations represent. All these readings focus on the droids' treatment or hierarchical position. I do not dispute the claims that the droids have a low social position but tend to disagree with Roth's claim that the didactic stance of the narrative is against their mistreatment. However, I argue that their hierarchical status is fundamentally at odds with how they are constructed (no pun intended) in a narrative that otherwise supports traditional (i.e. white, male-dominated) hierarchies. They are subordinate yet improved (compared to traditional portrayals of non-whites), even though these improvements fundamentally undermine the rationale for their subordination.

Many writers have expressed concern over racism and the intelligent

non-humans of the prequel trilogy, especially in response to the first film. Will Brooker offers a broad summary of the interpretations (scholarly and non-scholarly) of three creature types. The first of these is embodied by the gungan, Jar Jar Binks, which Brooker summarises as “an offensive caricature of Caribbean, Jamaican or African-American culture”.<sup>42</sup> The second, Watto, a toydarian, is seen as “an anti-Semitic stereotype, whether of Jewish or Arabic culture”.<sup>43</sup> Finally, according to Brooker the nemoidians were, “accused of exhibiting stereotypically ‘Japanese’ accents and behaviour”.<sup>44</sup> Notably, Brooker does not fully commit to these interpretations, but they are representative of numerous responses. Andrew Howe takes a similar look at the series as a whole. He rejects many interpretations of non-humans as racial Others, with the notable exceptions of the sand people, whom he sees as “a distinct analogue to the Bedouin and other such desert-dwelling nomadic cultures”<sup>45</sup> and Jar Jar Binks, where he states that “[s]ome of the criticism levied against Jar Jar Binks is legitimate, as actor Ahmed Best played the Gungan with an accent and cadence similar to Caribbean speech patterns. However, the similarities to this culture end there”.<sup>46/47</sup> However, such responses have mostly neglected the role of droids in the prequel trilogy; a neglect that appears to have foreclosed a crucial perspective for understanding the racial ideological underpinnings of the films.

Similarly, patterns of sexuality and virginity and the implications thereof (particularly Anakin’s transformation from innocent virgin-born virgin to his corruption by sexuality) in the prequel trilogy have already been noted by scholars like Roger Kaufman. Kaufman claims that “[t]he more fateful, destructive liaison between Anakin and Padmé suggests that Lucas is intentionally making a comment about the personality-degrading, society-destroying dangers of unbridled heterosexual desire”.<sup>48</sup> However, links between sexuality and droid (re)production remain largely unexplored.

## White Robots in the Original Trilogy

Two droids get our attention more than any others during *A New Hope*, namely R2-D2 and C-3PO. The latter could be described as a gold-plated humanoid and the former as a dustbin on wheels. On the surface they are far from white or even human. On closer scrutiny, though, many of their features resonate strongly with Dyer’s model. I first of all argue from within that model to show that the droids have the traits that are usually

used to rationalise the superior position of whites in the social hierarchy. I then contrast this with the ways in which the film constructs the droids' social position in defiance of the model's implications and places them in a superlatively low yet not consistently defined social position. I hypothesise that the contradictions inherent in this portrayal possibly stem from an unreflective attempt to reconcile the heroic (traditionally white-coded) and subordinate (traditionally non-white-coded) positions of the droids.

The most obvious of the droids' white-coded traits is their outward colour. While droids appear in the films as grey, brown, black, red-and-white and so on, R2-D2 is white with blue highlights and C-3PO is, as already indicated, golden. R2-D2's colouring could be said to be a mechanical analogue to white skin and blue eyes and C-3PO to blond hair, but these are relatively superficial. In fact, they can *almost* be discarded. Even in the case of humans, Dyer notes that "skin colour is not really just a matter of the colour of skin",<sup>49</sup> as demonstrated by everything from the non-effect of tanning on one's racial classification<sup>50</sup> to the way in which light-skinned groups have often been constructed as non-white.<sup>51</sup> The colouration of the droids is noteworthy but not a definitive indicator. Their whiteness is signalled much more strongly by their having the invisible traits of whiteness.

The most superficial of these can appear in the 'tautness' and 'uprightness' of the droids' bodies. Far exceeding the tautness of the human characters, C-3PO's joints can barely bend at all, while R2-D2 has very few joints to begin with. There is no exceptional looseness or athletic prowess to be seen in them, which might otherwise mark them as non-white. Their dancing ability, likewise, can be assumed to be mostly non-existent (something that would be demonstrated only at the end of *The Return of the Jedi*, released several years later).

According to Dyer, in human whites this tautness was thought to be indicative of a greater separation between spirit and body. In R2-D2 and C-3PO's situation this is definitely the case. C-3PO makes the separation explicit when in one scene he refers to his body as something external to himself and cries: "curse my metal body" when he does not feel he has responded to a situation quickly enough.<sup>52</sup> Both droids have skill sets focusing on the intellectual realm, from a knowledge of languages or mechanics to the ability to hack other computer systems. In terms of being representative of civilisation and civilised practices, it is difficult to surpass C-3PO, who was "designed for etiquette and protocol".<sup>53</sup> This point, combined with his general attitude and mode of speech (including his accent, which has

certain stereotypes in American cinema), makes him an outright caricature of civility. On the other hand, R2-D2 expresses a great deal of 'spirit' and 'get-up-and-go' attitude in pursuing his mission, surpassing the reluctant C-3PO.

Even though both droids are characterised as male, both through the use of pronouns and their voices (R2-D2's electronic beeps are heavily modulated speech from a white male's voice), their portrayals resonate with conceptions of feminine whiteness as much as masculine. While the main white human male characters struggle against a variety of 'dark desires' (lust, greed and the dark side of the force) in all parts of the series, C-3PO and R2-D2 appear to have no biological urges whatsoever. Although C-3PO expresses an expectation of pleasure over a coming autobath, he shows no sign of longing for it otherwise, and at no point does the desire for a bath influence his actions. Likewise, he shuts himself down at Obi-wan's residence in a conscious decision to save power taken after consulting his owner and assessing its possible effects (by ensuring he will not be needed in the short term), without expressing anything equivalent of fatigue or hunger. The colouration and the lighting effects they receive in *A New Hope* are ambiguous and are sometimes akin to those idealised white females receive. Princess Leia is always well-lit with few shadows, light in colour and never arrayed in dark clothing. The droids are often portrayed similarly, although several scenes show them in shadow or in sharp contrast. Interestingly, there are fewer of these scenes in the later releases of the films. The original screen version much more readily places the droids in shadow, but later edits have increased the lighting on them dramatically. Unlike idealised white females, they hold their status without significant contradiction. After all, they have no sexual urges, but neither are they expected to bear children. It is worth noting that C-3PO shines rather than glows and both are allowed to get dirty; something that is historically unthinkable for an idealised white female star. Notably, Leia's dress also has smudges during the Death Star escape, something that is never allowed to happen to Padmé in the prequels. While they are allied more strongly to the female style of representation, they are not wholly wedded to it.

If they are otherwise equivalent to whites (or at least to white women), the social position of the droids does not reflect this. As might be befitting of creatures occupying the lowest animate rung on *Star Wars'* great chain of being, droids occupy a liminal position in the work, somewhere between living beings and inanimate machines. While they command our sympathies

as full characters for most of the adventure, and while other characters at times treat them with respect (or disrespect) as people, various actions, even by the protagonists, presuppose that the droids are inanimate tools. One of the most striking examples of this appears in the scene where Luke prepares for his climactic attack on the Death Star. When a pair of technicians load R2-D2 into his x-wing one of them notes that his “R2 unit looks a bit beat up” and asks if he wants “a new one”.<sup>54</sup> Luke laughs this off, declines and expresses an attachment to R2-D2 by saying, “Not on your life. That little droid and I have been through a lot together.”<sup>55</sup> If R2-D2 was substituted with a human character for this scene the scenario would become absurd in the extreme. One can hardly imagine the technicians encountering a human rebel hero who smuggled the stolen plans, escaped from slavery, infiltrated the Death Star while hacking and compromising its systems and made the very attack they were about to set out on possible, then offering to replace or even discard him because he “looked a little beat up”.<sup>56</sup> A human might wear such battle scars as a point of honour, but for a droid they merely make him a damaged tool that ought to be replaced by one in better condition. This opinion is strangely reversed a few scenes later when R2-D2 returns from the battle in far worse condition and is restored by the same technicians to perfect repair rather than merely scrapped. Luke’s response (and his interactions with R2-D2 in general) seems analogue to the behaviour toward a pet rather than a tool or comrade-in-arms.

This pattern continues throughout the film, with similarly inconsistent implications. When R2-D2 enters the escape pod early in the film, C-3PO warns him that he is “not permitted in there” and can be “deactivated” (presumably the droid equivalent of killed) as punishment.<sup>57</sup> While one can imagine that threatening the death penalty for daring to use the escape pods may be ineffective (especially since the result of *not* using the escape pods is usually also death), and this certainly reflects strongly on the kind of value placed on droid lives, this scene is particularly notable for its reflection on the status of droids as tools or people. Treating their lives so cheaply implies that they are seen as tools here yet one does not expect to keep tools in line with threatened punishment. If they were mere hardware they ought to be controlled by correcting their programming, not by threatening retribution for misbehaviour. Comments like this, along with C-3PO’s later comment, “You’re lucky he doesn’t blast you into a million pieces right here!”<sup>58</sup> only make sense when acknowledging the droids’ genuine self-interest and free will.

Luke's comment in the desert that he has "never seen such devotion in a droid before"<sup>59</sup> raises the same sort of contradictions, as it would make no sense to speak of "devotion" in a tool, whose sense of loyalty ought to, at best, be a setting that can be adjusted easily, or at worst, not exist at all. Again, Luke looks at the droids as pets rather than as tools or people. Meanwhile, the droids tend to treat one another as people rather than as tools. As Roth pointed out, Obi-wan lists them as "passengers" and not as "cargo" when discussing passage aboard the Millennium Falcon. The rejection of the droids by the bartender in the Mos Eisley cantina, whatever else it may say about their social status, also presupposes their status as people. Devices might be rejected by saying they were 'disallowed', thus casting them as tools that their owner brings in or leaves outside. However, the exclamation of "We don't *serve* their kind here"<sup>60</sup> (my emphasis) portrays them as potential service recipients and thereby reinforces their status as people.

Droid actions may also be ignored, such as Han's failure to acknowledge C-3PO's "Hello, sir!"<sup>61</sup> at their first meeting. Much more significantly, in the award ceremony not only are the droids not given medals, but R2-D2, arguably one of the most prominent, effective and heroic characters throughout the whole adventure (not to mention the one wounded in the course of duty), is not even waited on before the ceremony begins. He has to slip in late behind C-3PO during the proceedings. When the droids are absent, such as when they hide from stormtroopers in Mos Eisley, the main human protagonists give no thought as to their whereabouts.

Of course, this lack of acknowledgement of droid agency sometimes works to their advantage. When the Imperials fail to fire on the droids' escape pod in the early scenes, they base their decision on the assumption that a lack of life forms represents a lack of ability to act or resist. Droids are sufficiently commonplace that the lack of consideration for the possibility that there could be droids aboard the pod or that the droids' escape could prove problematic is extremely telling of the assumptions made about them. Similarly, while the biological heroes have to struggle around the Death Star with great difficulty, the droids can move with impunity. The stormtroopers readily accept their deceptions and fail to acknowledge that non-biological creatures can be a threat. They do not recognise them as intruders despite droids like C-3PO, which Owen Lars can recognise at first glance as being "for etiquette and protocol", being very out of place in a military facility.

As the analysis so far has demonstrated, droids may be killed for minor infractions, such as trying to save their own lives in an escape pod or pos-

sibly just looking too beat up on the eve of a major battle (it is not clear whether R2-D2 would have been discarded or just sent down to maintenance and left out of the battle, or whether the distinction between the two options hinges on costs and materials or the value of his life). They are also enslaved and can have their memories erased at the whim of their owners, as evidenced by Uncle Owen's instructions to Luke. In the most explicitly racial of all points of discrimination against them, they could be subject to Jim Crow-like exclusion, as demonstrated in the cantina scene. This comes complete with the all-too-familiar phrasing of "[w]e don't serve their kind here", a strong echo of what non-whites have faced in Western nations for centuries. Droids are wholly marginalised in the society of the films.

No white men, white women, non-human biological characters, or (later in the series) non-white men (non-white women remain absent throughout the first trilogy) encounter any of the above problems. Despite the droids having white, even superlatively white traits, their treatment and social position are far worse than those lacking such traits. While there are many possible explanations for this, I would suggest that the apparent contradiction stems from assumptions that the creators have not fully examined. Among these is the assumption that, as machines, the droids are fundamentally tools and thus subservient to (biological) living beings, especially (white) humans. At the same time, as the droids represent fantastic and even heroic elements, they are to be admired. Thus, they are imbued with the admirable qualities that are taken for granted in (white) heroes. The contradiction occurs when these admirable qualities invalidate the traits used to rationalise the subordination of machines (lack of free will and self-awareness) and those used to rationalise the subordination of women and non-whites (lacking the traits of male whiteness). Here, the portrayal of droid subordination is left largely unsupported. *The droids act as servants for humans simply because that is what droids do*, which is taken for granted by their human masters and the droids themselves. This assumption has a strong resonance with many racist positions.

The analysis of *A New Hope* indicates that the droids, R2-D2 and C-3PO, are constructed (again, no pun intended) within the frameworks of whiteness described by Dyer, albeit somewhat more closely allied to female whiteness despite their characterisation as male. Despite their whiteness, their hierarchical position is lower than that of whites of either gender, non-white humans, or even other non-humans within the franchise. Carrying this reading to the prequel trilogy reveals more fully the contradic-

tions implicit in presentations of female sexuality. It also displays droids constructed as non-white (the battle droids), who provide an outlet for the full range of white sexual anxieties and fears regarding non-white peoples. This illuminates a fundamental divide amongst the intelligent non-humans of speculative fiction (from elves to zombies) that plays off the sexual anxieties described by Dyer to interlink gender, race and sexuality in the various non-human identities.

## Droids of Many Colours

In that light, there is little new in the prequel films to observe in the hierarchical position of the droids, save a larger acknowledgement of their agency on all sides. Anakin emerges as a character who, even up to his last interaction with the main droids in *Revenge of the Sith*, treats them with respect and protects them from discrimination (including Obi-wan's "loose wire jokes"<sup>62</sup> and defending R2-D2 from his criticism). Otherwise, the droids encounter many of the same forms of oppression. They are still subservient, R2-D2 is denied service because he is a droid (on the freighter transporting Anakin and Padmé back to Naboo) and C-3PO's mind is wiped at the end of the trilogy.

Much more information is given about their whiteness and the relative non-whiteness of their counterparts, the battle droids. Most of this new information can be gleaned from an analysis of three critical scenes across the two first films, which provide information about the production of droids in the *Star Wars* universe. The first two are the first scenes to introduce C-3PO and R2-D2 during *The Phantom Menace*, while the third is the scene (or scenes) surrounding the battle droid factory in *Attack of the Clones*.

The first of these further strengthens the reading of C-3PO as a white-constructed yet hierarchically subordinated being from the first film. His creation is patterned in a way that falls even more in line with Dyer's description of whiteness than his general portrayal during the first film. His creator builds C-3PO exclusively on a rational decision ('forward planning') and through the highly intellectually focused activity of assembling advanced technology, rather than through sexual intercourse. The environment is clean and even physically light. Unlike the 'not pure white' means (sex) of producing whiteness that Dyer identifies, C-3PO's production is extremely 'white' within the same conceptual framework. To emphasise the asexuality of it, not only is C-3PO produced deliberately and asexually by a

single virgin parent, but that parent is himself the product of a virgin birth. Truly a white ideal in its separation from 'non-white' sexuality, it further aligns C-3PO to the feminine side of whiteness by distancing him from 'dark' (sexual) desire and simultaneously sidesteps the problem of feminine sexuality by providing (re)production utterly devoid of female involvement.

This pattern is imperfect, though. For one thing, when we first see C-3PO activated and his final eye is attached, his creator is trying to impress a girl. Furthermore, if Anakin has been created by Sith power, as is suggested in the third film, he may be a product of passion (a literal 'dark desire' in the form of the dark side of the force), if not sexuality per se. Even with the qualifications for Anakin's 'virgin birth', his birth does not avoid the matter of female childbirth, only female sexual relations, as his single parent is a mother and not a father. Nonetheless, Padmé does not directly involve herself in C-3PO's construction, and having one male parent and no female, regardless of how 'virgin' that parent's birth was, C-3PO remains much 'whiter' in his production (separated from 'dark' sexuality or bodily urges) than any biological hero introduced in the films. As before, his alignment to female whiteness, rather than male whiteness, also remains imperfect, as evidenced by his darker appearance. Being without coverings ('naked' to use the word C-3PO interprets from R2-D2),<sup>63</sup> he is coloured darkly, shows sharp shadows and contrasts and does not glow. This glimpse into the literal inside of C-3PO is the closest the series comes to exposing him as having the internal 'darkness' associated with white men. This further emphasises the already-noted trends in his relative whiteness in the earlier film.

Unlike C-3PO's, R2-D2's creation does not appear on screen, although in the scene in which he is introduced we have some clues as to its nature. For one thing, Captain Panaka describes him as "an extremely well-put-together little droid". The choice of referring to R2-D2 as being "well put together" rather than a "quality model", suggests individual craftsmanship, although does not certify it. For another, we see him first with a collection of other astromechs, no two of which are identical (the droid next to R2-D2 is very similar to him but its legs are different). This again suggests individual craftsmanship rather than mass production. While we do not learn in the films when or where R2-D2 was created or by whom, there is at least some indication that his production was similar to that of C-3PO, involving hand craftsmanship and some individual attention to detail. Individual craftsmanship suggests forward planning and control over the numbers produced, which a scenario involving mass production would not imply. This

'forward planning' matches how whiteness (via white children) is reproduced in Dyer's model. Given his non-biological nature, we can assume that R2-D2's creation was not literally sexual. Nevertheless, the presence (or absence) of symbolic sexuality is essential, especially when making comparisons with the readings of battle droid production detailed later. If Dyer identified sexuality as being "not pure white", R2-D2's production as being devoid of symbolic sexuality, in contrast to the battle droids (explained later), indicates whiteness on his part, which the battle droids will be shown to lack.

Unlike R2-D2 and C-3PO, the battle droids *are* mass-produced in a giant plant akin to a vast, mechanical womb. Rampant sexual imagery surrounds their production. This imagery ranges from protruding, phallic mechanical arms to the rhythmic pounding of machinery to sudden cutaways to telescoping pipes, which grow in length before spewing hot molten metal into waiting receptacles and then shrinking back to their original size.<sup>64</sup> The dark and dirty environment likewise provides a sharp and ominous contrast to the clean, well-lit room of C-3PO's creation (being visually black rather than visually white). If the sinister sexual implications of the environment are not immediately apparent to the viewer, C-3PO himself soon arrives on the scene to describe what he sees as "perverse".<sup>65</sup> Even without the sexual imagery, if machines are, as has been suggested, constructed akin to *female* whiteness, C-3PO's comment of "machines making machines"<sup>66</sup> as perverse could already be justified by reference to the contradictions of female sexuality noted by Dyer and Frye. Other sexuality aside, the fact that the (female) machines reproduce at all can be understood as a sort of perversion.

In keeping with portrayals of white/non-white sexuality as 'rape', white (or functionally white) characters who trespass in this symbolic womb face symbolic sexual violation. For the males it means a form of symbolic castration. C-3PO experiences this in the form of a non-lethal decapitation (and subsequent transplanting onto a new body), Anakin through the severing of his lightsabre, the classic Jedi phallic symbol.<sup>67</sup> Padmé's fate is arguably bleaker. She is made into an iconic white female, her whiteness emphasised by an ensemble of all-white clothing (which somehow remains spotlessly clean throughout) and accented by frequently having her move in and out of bright, direct lighting. These combine to make her glow on screen with whiteness and purity. As Dyer identified as typical for white females, her role is to be threatened with rape by a non-white aggressor and then rescued

by a white male. In this case, the symbolic rape is enacted first through a grappling match, where she is overpowered by a dark-bodied alien, then by the alien flinging her into one of the passing buckets, within which she is threatened with destruction, both symbolic and literal, at the hands of one of the aforementioned telescoping liquid-spewing tubes. She is rescued from this climactic (pun intended this time) death only by the timely intervention of R2-D2, now filling the role of the white male and thereby further emphasising his own whiteness.

The battle droids, produced through this 'perverse' sexualised process, explicitly re-enact white anxieties. They are twice described as outnumbering and "overwhelming"<sup>68</sup> the less numerous Jedi (first in the title scroll and then by Count Dooku). The ensuing battle brings these fears to a realisation. The Jedi are threatened with destruction by the more populous and faster-produced droids and are saved only by the timely arrival of mass-produced fighters of their own. The swamping and overwhelming of the Jedi is emphasised by several high-angle shots depicting the emergence of the battle droids like an actual flood, washing over the arena and forcing the Jedi into a smaller and smaller space as they press in on all sides. Shortly before the battle halts several scenes show Jedi being killed, and when Dooku calls for the combat to cease and asks for their surrender, a crane shot emphasises the greatly diminished number of Jedi. This shot is followed by a close-up of Obi-wan kneeling next to a youthful-looking Jedi to check his vitals before rising with the implication that none were found.

The arena battle further emphasises the non-whiteness of the battle droids. Of particular note is the switching of heads between C-3PO and one of the battle droids. Their reactions suggest a different type of mind-body distinction at work with each droid. C-3PO's body is passive, only interfering in the battle droid head's actions via the stiffness of its joints (another white stereotype). The battle droid's body, on the contrary, dominates C-3PO's actions, compelling him to not only fight against the Jedi but also to shout lines like "Die, Jedi dogs!"<sup>69 70</sup> entirely against his will. The battle droid's body, as is presumed of the bodies of non-white characters, enslaves the spirit that inhabits it.<sup>71</sup>

The battle droids are thus clearly marked as non-white according to Dyer's framework. Their mass production suggests a lack of careful, forward planning in their creation and emphasises their ability to reproduce quickly and thus swamp or 'overwhelm' their less numerous opponents. Further, in contrast to the light, sterile, virgin nature of C-3PO's creation,

the battle droids' creation is marked by darkness, dinginess and rampant sexual imagery. Collectively, once created, they re-enact traditional swamping and overcrowding fears as they outnumber and threaten to destroy the Jedi. Individually, they prove to have minds that are closely tied to or even enslaved by their bodies. This tie appears particularly clearly in the exchange of heads between C-3PO and the battle droid during the arena scene. However, it is also emphasised elsewhere, such as how the droids on Naboo can be shut down by destroying the 'droid control ship'. They do not show the intelligence, ingenuity, or get-up-and-go attitudes of the heroic main droids. Indeed, they have so little initiative that they cannot act at all without the constant stream of orders from the control ship.

Applying Dyer's perspective on whiteness reveals a clear division among the droids in the prequel trilogy. On the one hand, the films reveal droids like R2-D2 and C-3PO as 'white' characters by construction but with nonetheless low hierarchical standing. They are defined by natures (divisions of spirit and body) and modes of (re)production (non-sexual ones, characterised by attention and forethought rather than desire) that appear as 'white' under Dyer's model, although somewhat closer to female whiteness than male, despite their portrayed gender. On the other hand, the battle droids are exceptionally non-white under the same model, being made by exaggeratedly sexualised and mass-produced means, thereby re-enacting 'swamping' fears on a faster time scale. They also experience a much stronger connection between their minds and bodies, as typifies representations of non-whites in Dyer's analysis.

This shows whiteness operating at a level far beyond the obvious in the *Star Wars* films (beyond, specifically, the film being a saga of light-skinned men who struggle tragically or heroically against dark desires — the 'dark' side of the force — while being supported by light-skinned and often white-robed women, who call them back to the 'light'). Furthermore, the battle droids are not the only mass-produced creatures to be displayed. Clone troopers experience similar modes of production, being mass-produced (Lama Su initially tells Obi-Wan that "Two hundred thousand units are ready, with a million more well on their way")<sup>72</sup> for a similar purpose. Their origins are sanitary and better lit, though whether those origins are less 'perverse' is not indicated to the viewer. Sexual imagery is substituted for reproductive imagery, with towers of glass vats containing human embryos provided as a backdrop for some of Obi-wan's conversations with Lama Su, and their origin environment is visually white rather than visually black.

The clone troopers are explicitly defined by their bodies over their spirits. It is by “tampering with the structures” of their DNA that they become “more docile” and “less independent”.<sup>73</sup> Thus, they are controlled by their masters more easily due to the nature of their bodies, which might appear as a step upwards from a white racist standpoint. They are whiter than the battle droids but are still fundamentally non-white, and they displace the battle droids as the main re-enactors of swamping fears in episodes three to six. They first overwhelm (more successfully than the battle droids) and nearly exterminate the Jedi and later threaten the same against the rebel alliance. Their whitening is mostly only symbolic, casting their dark bodies in white uniforms, yet even then an inner blackness can be seen around the seams of their attire to further emphasise the theme.

## Conclusion

Throughout speculative fiction this same pattern appears among all kind of non-human Others, ranging from elves, zombies and vampires to emergent artificial intelligences and aliens. Although not a perfect division, in general the more mass-produced a creature is, and the more its creation is associated with sexuality, physical desire, or eroticism, particularly sexual ‘perversion’, the more likely it is to be defined by its bodily form, and thus the more ‘non-white’ it is likely to be. Conversely, beings that are (re)produced slowly in smaller numbers, with more forward planning and less animalistic desire fuelling their creation, tend to be less defined by their bodies and more by their ‘spirit’, being ‘whiter’ by Dyer’s model. For example, the typical zombie movie includes mass-produced creatures (zombies) who reproduce via bites (sexual imagery), are defined by their bodies (often referred to as mindless), driven by bodily passion (hunger) and threaten to outnumber and overrun the protagonists. Zombie-like creatures contrast with Tolkien’s elves, who are long-lived, reproduce infrequently, are defined by highly spiritual natures and whose courtships offer little to no indication of eroticism.

Although this chapter mainly focuses on *A New Hope* and the prequel trilogy, due to the more interesting evidence available there, the presentation of droids remains consistent throughout the canon films thus far, in sharp contrast to characters such as Chewbacca, whose presentation has been significantly revised in later films. While their social position is less naturalised, droids like BB-8 still fall in line with the presentation of C-3PO and

R2-D2, while the imperial droids of *Rogue One* remain fundamentally in line with the battle droids.<sup>74</sup>

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- <sup>1</sup> Neil MacMaster. *Racism in Europe, 1870–2000*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan Limited, 2001, p. 2.
- <sup>2</sup> Guillermo Rebollo-Gil and Amanda Moras. Defining an ‘Anti’ Stance: Key Pedagogical Questions about Engaging Anti-Racism in College Classrooms. *Race, Ethnicity, and Education*. Vol. 9, no. 4, 2006: 381. doi: 10.1080/13613320600957702.
- <sup>3</sup> Robert Miles. *Racism*. London: Routledge, 1989, p. 3.
- <sup>4</sup> John Solomos and Les Back. *Racism and Society*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996, p. 27.
- <sup>5</sup> Ghassan Hage. Recalling Anti-Racism. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. Vol. 39, no. 1, 2016: 125. doi: 10.1080/01419870.2016.1096412.
- <sup>6</sup> Jonathan Chew. Star Wars Franchise Worth More Than Harry Potter and James Bond, Combined. *Fortune*. 2015-12-23. <http://fortune.com/2015/12/24/star-wars-value-worth/> (accessed 2022-11-18).
- <sup>7</sup> Umesh Bhagchandani. Who is the Richest Star Wars Cast Member in 2022? Net Worths, Ranked – From Ewan McGregor and Hayden Christensen Reprising Roles in Disney+’s *Obi-Wan Kenobi*, to Harrison Ford and Natalie Portman. *Style*. 2022-06-04. <https://www.scmp.com/magazines/style/celebrity/article/3180180/who-richest-star-wars-cast-member-2022-net-worths-ranked> (accessed 2022-11-18).
- <sup>8</sup> *Fortune* in Chew, Star Wars Franchise Worth More Than Harry Potter and James Bond Combined cites a claim by *The Telegraph* in Telegraph Reporters. ‘Look at the Size of That Thing!’: How Star Wars Makes its Billions. *The Telegraph*. 2016-05-04. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/films/2016/05/04/look-at-the-size-of-that-thing-how-star-wars-makes-its-billions/> (accessed on 2022.11.18), which states that ‘No other entertainment franchise - not even James Bond and Harry Potter combined - reaches the estimated total of \$42 billion in the Star Wars ledger. (Potter’s total revenue from books, movies and toys has been estimated at \$25 billion; Bond’s estimate is a paltry \$8 billion).’ For comparison, *Fortune* cites the franchise value of *Twilight* as around six billion dollars and the *Lord of the Rings* also around six billion dollars.
- <sup>9</sup> Here cited from Richard Dyer. *White: Twentieth Anniversary Edition*. London: Routledge, 2017.
- <sup>10</sup> The use of the term, ‘non-white,’ is inherently problematic, both in the way it generalises a diverse category of people and the way it reinforces a non-existent white/non-white binary. Nonetheless, I find myself faced with the same conundrum as Dyer (in *White: Twentieth Anniversary Edition*, p. 48) in “trying to see the specificity of whiteness” and being forced to address the status of those who are constructed as outside that specification. For much the same reasons as Dyer, compounded by the fact that wookiees and battle droids do not have specific racialised referents among real-world peoples, I must echo his conclusion: “Reluctantly, I am forced back on ‘non-white.’”
- <sup>11</sup> Dyer, *White: Twentieth Anniversary Edition*, p. 278.
- <sup>12</sup> Dyer, *White: Twentieth Anniversary Edition*, p. 281.
- <sup>13</sup> Dyer, *White: Twentieth Anniversary Edition*, p. 38.
- <sup>14</sup> Dyer, *White: Twentieth Anniversary Edition*, p. 40.
- <sup>15</sup> Dyer, *White: Twentieth Anniversary Edition*, p. 61.
- <sup>16</sup> Dyer, *White: Twentieth Anniversary Edition*, p. 58.
- <sup>17</sup> Dyer, *White: Twentieth Anniversary Edition*, p. 43.

- <sup>18</sup> Dyer, *White: Twentieth Anniversary Edition*, p. 61.
- <sup>19</sup> Dyer, *White: Twentieth Anniversary Edition*, pp. 64–65, emphasis added.
- <sup>20</sup> Although in *White: Twentieth Anniversary Edition*, p. 63 Dyer quotes Jenny Sharpe (in *Allegories of Empire: The Figure of Woman in the Colonial Text*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), who claims that rape motifs emerge in India only after the 1857 rebellion and were particularly significant in the post-civil war fiction of the USA. He stresses that non-white on white rape is a ‘recurrent motif’. He also points out in *White: Twentieth Anniversary Edition*, pp. 64, 216, 251–2 that while concern over inter-racial sexuality was “explicit to the point of psychosis in earlier texts”, it nonetheless is ‘betrayed’ by public responses to some films at least up into the early 90s, and his analysed works contain various examples of the rape motif, such as the attempted rape of a woman by a monstrous gorilla in *Gli Amori di Ercole* from 1960, or the actual (effectively fatal) rape of a white woman by an Indian man in *The Jewel in the Crown* from 1984.
- <sup>21</sup> Dyer, *White: Twentieth Anniversary Edition*, p. 63.
- <sup>22</sup> Dyer, *White: Twentieth Anniversary Edition*, p. 63.
- <sup>23</sup> Dyer, *White: Twentieth Anniversary Edition*, p. 64.
- <sup>24</sup> Dyer, *White: Twentieth Anniversary Edition*, p. 66.
- <sup>25</sup> Dyer, *White: Twentieth Anniversary Edition*, p. 65.
- <sup>26</sup> Marilyn Frye. *The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory*. Berkeley: Crossing Press, 1983.
- <sup>27</sup> Dyer, *White: Twentieth Anniversary Edition*, p. 66.
- <sup>28</sup> Dyer, *White: Twentieth Anniversary Edition*, p. 66.
- <sup>29</sup> Dyer, *White: Twentieth Anniversary Edition*, p. 164.
- <sup>30</sup> Dyer, *White: Twentieth Anniversary Edition*, pp. 135–136.
- <sup>31</sup> Dyer, *White: Twentieth Anniversary Edition*, p. 176.
- <sup>32</sup> Dyer, *White: Twentieth Anniversary Edition*, p. 167.
- <sup>33</sup> Daniel Bernardi. *Star Trek and History: Race-ing Toward a White Future*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1999, p. 12.
- <sup>34</sup> Gwyneth Jones. Aliens in the Fourth Dimension. In *Speaking Science Fiction: Dialogues and Interpretations*. Andy Sawyer and David Seed (eds), p. 201. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000.
- <sup>35</sup> Meghan Gilbert-Hickey and Miranda A. Green-Barteet. Introduction. In *Race in Young Adult Speculative Fiction*. Meghan Gilbert-Hickey and Miranda A. Green-Barteet (eds), p. 6. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2021.
- <sup>36</sup> Elizabeth Ho. Asian Masculinity, Eurasian Identity, and Whiteness in Cassandra Clare’s *Infernal Devices* Trilogy. In *Race in Young Adult Speculative Fiction*. Meghan Gilbert-Hickey and Miranda A. Green-Barteet (eds), p. 153. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2021.
- <sup>37</sup> Patricia Melzer. *Alien Constructions: Science Fiction and Feminist Thought*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006, p. 80.
- <sup>38</sup> Dan Rubey. Star Wars: Not so Long Ago, Not so Far Away. *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media*. Vol. 18, 1978: pp. 9–14. <https://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC18folder/starWars.html> (accessed on 2022.11.18).
- <sup>39</sup> J. P. Telotte. ‘The Dark Side of the Force’: Star Wars and the Science Fiction Tradition. *Extrapolation*. Vol. 24, no. 3, 1983: p. 220. doi: 10.3828/extr.1983.24.3.216.

- <sup>40</sup> Diana Sandars. Astonish Me: Science Fiction at the Movies. *Australian Screen Education*. Vol. 33, 2003: p. 53. doi: 10.3316/ielapa.820862008746381.
- <sup>41</sup> Lane Roth. Bergsonian Comedy and the Human Machines in 'Star Wars.' *Film Criticism*. Vol. 4, no. 2, 1979: p. 2. <https://search-ebcsohost-com.libproxy.tuni.fi/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=cookie,ip,uid&db=mlf&AN=2014130075&site=ehost-live&scope=site> (accessed 2022.11.18).
- <sup>42</sup> Will Brooker. Readings of Racism: Interpretation, Stereotyping and The Phantom Menace. *Continuum*. Vol. 15, no. 1, 2001: p. 15. doi: 10.1080/713657758.
- <sup>43</sup> Brooker, Readings of Racism: Interpretation, Stereotyping and The Phantom Menace, p. 15.
- <sup>44</sup> Brooker, Readings of Racism: Interpretation, Stereotyping and The Phantom Menace, p. 15.
- <sup>45</sup> Andrew Howe. Star Wars in Black and White: Race and Racism in a Galaxy Not So Far Away. In *Sex, Politics, and Religion in Star Wars: An Anthology*. Douglas Brode and Leah Deyneka (eds), p. 12. Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2012.
- <sup>46</sup> Howe. Star Wars in Black and White: Race and Racism in a Galaxy Not So Far Away, p. 18.
- <sup>47</sup> For fear of contributing to a common misconception, I must stress that Jar Jar does not actually speak with a Caribbean accent. His speech has no features of Caribbean English, save those it shares with American English. At no point does he perform h-dropping, consonant cluster reduction, GOAT vowels, FACE vowels, zero tense markers/plural markers/indefinite articles, etc. Ahmed Best is, after all, a professional voice actor and capable of producing accents other than the one his ethnic origins might imply.
- <sup>48</sup> Roger Kaufman. Homosexual Romance and Self-Realisation in Star Wars. In *Sex, Politics, and Religion in Star Wars*. Douglas Brode and Leah Deyneka (eds), p. 122. Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2012. Kaufman here cites Roger Kaufman. High Camp in a Galaxy Far Away. *Gay and Lesbian Review Worldwide*. Vol. 9, no. 5, 2002, pp. 33–35. [link.gale.com/apps/doc/A90892990/ITOF?u=tampere&sid=bookmark-ITOF&xid=1b9ec9ba](http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A90892990/ITOF?u=tampere&sid=bookmark-ITOF&xid=1b9ec9ba) (accessed 2022.11.18).
- <sup>49</sup> Dyer, *White: Twentieth Anniversary Edition*, p. 87.
- <sup>50</sup> Dyer, *White: Twentieth Anniversary Edition*, pp. 86–87.
- <sup>51</sup> Dyer, *White: Twentieth Anniversary Edition*, p. 79.
- <sup>52</sup> George Lucas (dir.), *Star Wars, Episode IV: A New Hope* (Twentieth Century Fox, 1977).
- <sup>53</sup> Lucas (dir.), *Star Wars, Episode IV: A New Hope*.
- <sup>54</sup> Lucas (dir.), *Star Wars, Episode IV: A New Hope*.
- <sup>55</sup> Lucas (dir.), *Star Wars, Episode IV: A New Hope*.
- <sup>56</sup> Note that this offer of replacement *cannot* be mistaken as being for R2-D2's benefit. The focus of the phrasing is on whether Luke requires a different (better) droid, not whether R2-D2 requires maintenance. Further, Luke declines with a show of affection for R2-D2, suggesting that his fondness for R2-D2 leads to the droid's inclusion in the battle. If the focus was on replacing R2 for his own good, Luke's fondness would motivate him differently.
- <sup>57</sup> Lucas (dir.), *Star Wars, Episode IV: A New Hope*.
- <sup>58</sup> Lucas (dir.), *Star Wars, Episode IV: A New Hope*.
- <sup>59</sup> Lucas (dir.), *Star Wars, Episode IV: A New Hope*.
- <sup>60</sup> Lucas (dir.), *Star Wars, Episode IV: A New Hope*.
- <sup>61</sup> Lucas (dir.), *Star Wars, Episode IV: A New Hope*.

- <sup>62</sup> George Lucas (dir.), *Star Wars, Episode III: Revenge of the Sith* (Twentieth Century Fox, 2005).
- <sup>63</sup> George Lucas (dir.), *Star Wars, Episode I: The Phantom Menace* (Twentieth Century Fox, 1999).
- <sup>64</sup> Many of these devices do not seem to serve any real purpose. Many of the chopping, pounding blades do not actually cut anything, and it is hard to imagine why the molten metal, already carried thus far by pipes, cannot be carried the rest of the way by the same method, rather than shuttled around in large buckets. The sexual imagery may be the only reason for the inclusion of some elements, while others serve the dual purpose of providing obstacles to be overcome by the heroes.
- <sup>65</sup> George Lucas (dir.), *Star Wars, Episode II: Attack of the Clones* (Twentieth Century Fox, 2002).
- <sup>66</sup> Lucas (dir.), *Star Wars, Episode II: Attack of the Clones*.
- <sup>67</sup> If the Freudian implications of this castration were not strong enough, Anakin responds to the loss of his lightsaber by making reference to the individual he has twice in the film thus far referred to as being an approximation of his father, saying, "Obi-wan is gonna kill me!" This association makes arguably more explicit the reading of the act as a form of sexual violence.
- <sup>68</sup> Lucas (dir.), *Star Wars, Episode II: Attack of the Clones*.
- <sup>69</sup> Lucas (dir.), *Star Wars, Episode II: Attack of the Clones*.
- <sup>70</sup> It is worth noting that no other battle droids yell taunts of this nature. The statement seems to only exist to emphasise C-3PO's loss of control.
- <sup>71</sup> One might attempt to interpret this scene as indicating that C-3PO's mind or spirit is 'weak' and thus unable to control the battle droid's body, while the battle droid's own spirit is 'strong' and thus controls C-3PO's body more easily, which is the opposite of the reading above. Given the lack of internal conflict portrayed with the battle droid, this reading seems unlikely. C-3PO's body is not shown as being overcome by the battle droid. Rather, it has no influence on the battle droid at all.
- <sup>72</sup> Lucas (dir.), *Star Wars, Episode II: Attack of the Clones*.
- <sup>73</sup> Lucas (dir.), *Star Wars, Episode II: Attack of the Clones*.
- <sup>74</sup> BB-8 is light coloured, "one of a kind" (implying individual craftsmanship and "forward planning" in his construction, like R2-D2) and shows considerable initiative and "enterprise" (Dyer p. 58). Imperial droids, such as K-2SO are dark, mass-produced and defined by their programming. Even K-2SO, who has been reprogrammed, has traits ascribed to "side effects of the reprogramming" and presumably helps the rebels at all because of the reprogramming itself. This is a contrast to C-3PO who in *The Return of the Jedi* identifies "impersonating a deity" as being "against his programming" but is able to proceed to do so anyway as the situation demands, in a mechanical-equivalent act of spirit conquering biological (mechanical) nature. It is noteworthy, however, that BB-8 displays much less "stiffness" than R2-D2.

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