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Technology and the War on Terror: Film and the Ambivalence of Transhumanism

Abstract:

The War on Terror declared by the U.S. government after 9/11 resulted in the two most technologically equipped invasions the country has ever launched: the Afghanistan War and the Iraq War. American soldiers were provided with newly designed uniforms and weapons, with the best defensive armour and night-vision equipment, off-road vehicles, helicopters, and tanks. These enabled them to dominate the enemy technologically and guaranteed success in combat, minimizing the risk of injury and death among Americans. Film responded to these changes, playing with the issue of technology in war. In analysing Bigelow's war drama, *The Hurt Locker*, which focuses on U.S. military actions in Iraq, and Favreau's sci-fi *Iron Man*, which raises the problem of Afghan terrorists and thus implicitly deals with the Afghanistan War, this article looks over the role of technology in war and investigates the blurred boundaries between humanity and machinery in the era of technology. Additionally, the article examines Bay's *Transformers* and its sequels to see whether war machines possess humanity.

Key words: The War on Terror, technology, machine, transhumanism

Introduction: Film and the War on Terror

The terrifying terrorist attacks on 9/11 and the consequences they entailed have made the opening of the twenty-first century frightening and disquieting for the whole world—specifically for the United States. The U.S. government's War on Terror has resulted in multiple military operations, the longest of which are the interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq. The two wars in the Middle East can be considered a continuation of the long military history of the United States but, undoubtedly, they are especially noteworthy due to the novel techniques used in the conduct of warfare. The Afghanistan

War and the Second Gulf War turned into the two most technologically advanced wars the United States has ever launched. Indeed, the variety and abundance of newly-designed uniforms, arms, equipment, gadgets, and vehicles strikes one's imagination. The U.S. demonstrated its indisputable readiness to fight the enemy, thus avenging the deaths of thousands of innocent people on 9/11 and protecting the country's foundational values of freedom and democracy. Whether these interventions were successful or worth it are complex questions, but one can say without demur that the United States counted on their soldiers' obvious technological superiority over the enemy for the success of these military intrusions. As James S. Corum aptly puts it, "At the centre of modern U.S. military culture lies a belief in technological determinism: that technology is a central factor in warfare and that the country with the best technology is bound to win"; in terms of military planning, such an attitude is perhaps, as the scholar himself puts it, 'wrong'.¹ Nevertheless, this idea vividly illustrates the so-called American cultural belief in the unconditional power of technology to guarantee unreserved superiority and dominance to its possessor.

American cinema is teeming with examples of this faith in technology—in its unlimited power and ability to defeat the enemy—no matter how strong, ruthless, and insidious that enemy may be. Whether one distinguishes between films about wars that actually took place and science-fiction films that depict endless fights between humanity and aliens, robots and monsters, or whether one considers the two genres together, taking war films in general as one broad media category, one can find multiple cinematic examples that appeared long before the War on Terror that deal with the issue of technology in war. There is obviously a long chain of sci-fi films: from James Cameron's *Aliens* (1986) to James Cameron's *The Terminator* (1984) to Roland Emmerich's *Independence Day* (1996). Additionally, Hollywood dwelled on the importance of technology in films about real wars, which became especially prominent from the era of the Vietnam War onward, from Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* (1979) and Stanley Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket* (1987) to David O. Russell's *Three Kings* (1999).

Technology has become an integral part of war: the battlefield is no longer considered the territory of humans as machines have started to play a significant role there, too. The two recent interventions in the Middle East, however, have clearly foregrounded the leading role of technology that, in turn, explains the impulse of the cinema of the War on Terror which unites films about the two wars with the sci-fi films that were released in the era of the War on Terror and to various degrees either explicitly or implicitly reflects it, showing the grotesque capabilities of technology in the twenty-first century. Kathryn Bigelow's *The Hurt Locker* (2008), Peter Berg's *Lone Survivor* (2013), Clint Eastwood's *American Sniper* (2014), along with Jon Favreau's *Iron Man* (2008), *Iron Man 2* (2010), Shane Black's *Iron Man 3* (2013), Michael Bay's *Transformers* (2007), *Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen* (2009), *Transformers: Dark of the Moon* (2011), and *Transformers: Age of Extinction* (2014), Shawn Levy's *Real Steel* (2011), Ridley Scott's

¹ James S. Corum, *Fighting the War on Terror: A Counterinsurgency Strategy*, (St. Paul: MBI Publishing and Zenith Press) (2007). p. 117.

Prometheus (2012), Peter Berg's *Battleship* (2012), and Guillermo del Toro's *Pacific Rim* (2013) constitute a cluster of films that celebrate the new warfare and the era of new military technology.

The reason for this overt interest in technology and its role in war that action films and war dramas demonstrate is stipulated by the transformed nature of war. The 'new' war of the twenty-first century is peculiar due to the existence of the so-called faceless enemy which has been an impossible target for the U.S. and its allies since 9/11. It is thus unsurprising that when dealing with the problem of the global war, cinema vehemently attempts to present possible solutions for winning the war and eradicating terrorism. What 9/11 films have explicitly demonstrated is that the enemy is so elusive and strong that to win the war U.S. soldiers have to be technologically transformed. In other words, humans can never win the war on their own—in the twenty-first century we particularly strongly need advanced technology. Advancing this idea, action, sci-fi, and war films challenge the concept of the human body, suggesting that the 'normal' body is no longer needed, for it is not capable of successfully performing a military task. While terrorists are portrayed, in some way, as 'freaks', which 'assures spectators that terrorism can be overcome',² positive characters frequently, literally or metaphorically appear as superheroes who have to 'com[e] to terms with their *abilities, powers and bodies*.³ Andrew Schopp makes an interesting observation, claiming that 9/11 induced the belief that "risk must always be managed, even if at some level we know that such management is impossible".⁴ One, therefore, might argue that the new, technologically advanced soldier skilfully turns the 'impossible' mission into a real one and, what is even more important, an accomplishable task.

The cinema of the War on Terror thus proposes an intriguing shift that war demands: the transformation of human participants into machines. Being overtly *transhuman* in their nature, these films not only approve of 'cyborgization', i.e. the 'process of changing a human into a cyborg',⁵ but they see it as the only option that is available for the military today. The demand for a so-called transhuman, i.e. 'a being which due to technological augmentations boosts its body and mind abilities far beyond the standards',⁶ foregrounds the power of technology and sees it as the only means to

²Lisa Holden, and Fran Pheasant-Kelly, "Freak-Show Aesthetics and the Politics of Disfigurement: Reconfiguring the Cinematic Terrorist in the Post-9/11 Era", in *Reflecting 9/11: New Narratives in Literature, Television, Film and Theatre*, ed. Heather E. Pope and Victoria M. Bryan (New Castle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016), p. 200.

³Ivonne Tasker, *The Hollywood Action and Adventure Film*, (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell) (2015). p. 180. My italics.

⁴Andrew Schopp, "Interrogating the Manipulation of Fear: *V for Vendetta*, *Batman Begins*, *Good Night, and Good Luck*, and America's 'War on Terror'", in *The War on Terror and American Popular Culture: September 11 and Beyond*, ed. Andrew Schopp and Matthew B. Hill (Madison: Rosemont Publishing, 2009), p. 261.

⁵Rafał Michalczyk, "Transhuman and Posthuman – On Relevance of 'Cyborgisation' on Legal and Ethical Issues", 25th IVR World Congress *Law Science and Technology*, Paper Series 084: C (2012), p. 2.

⁶Rafał Michalczyk., p. 4.

win the War on Terror. Some more explicitly than others, the cinematic examples that this article analyses demonstrate a crucial shift in the image of a soldier/fighter, thus overtly commenting on the problem of humanity and machinery that exists in times of war. But most importantly, they question the ability of *humans* to defeat the enemy, celebrating the power of machines.

The Rise of Technology

When one talks about the predominance of technological progress in the twenty-first century, one should of course realize that technology appeared much earlier than in the time of the War on Terror. Significantly, starting from primitive technologies from the far past and finishing with the high technologies of today, technology has always given privileges to its owner, facilitating social, political, economic, and educational development. Thomas J. Misa draws attention to ‘the several technologically marked historical epochs, such as the Bronze Age . . . [and] the Iron Age’.⁷ Indeed, technology emerged when the first metal tools were created and widely applied. With the lapse of time, technology was improved and refined to such an extent that it now defines the status of its possessor and dictates the order in the world both in terms of military and economic domination. Richard Li-Hua claims:

Technology means state power to both developing and developed countries. Technology is regarded as a strategic instrument in achieving economic targets and in the creation of wealth and prosperity in developing countries, while technology is taken as an important vehicle to get large profits in developed countries. The effective use of technology is perhaps the most important issue faced by both developing and developed countries, and will undoubtedly become even more critical in years to come.⁸

Technology is therefore equated with power, and vice versa. Analysing Paul Virilio’s *War and Cinema: The Logistics of Perception*, Mark Lacy underscores a crucial observation made by the scholar:

Society is transformed by technologies that allow military leaders, police and policymakers to see the enemy before they arrive at the castle walls, before enemy

⁷ Thomas J. Misa, “History of Technology”, in *A Companion to the Philosophy of Technology*, ed. Jan Kyrre Berg Olsen, Stig Andur Pedersen, and Vincent F. Hendricks (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2009), p. 9.

⁸ Richard Li-Hua, “Definitions of Technology”, in *A Companion to the Philosophy of Technology*, ed. Jan Kyrre Berg Olsen, Stig Andur Pedersen, and Vincent F. Hendricks (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2009), p. 18.

ships arrive on the beaches, before the bombers arrive over our cities, before the terrorist arrives at the airport terminal.⁹

Daniel Sarewitz pinpoints the characteristic of technology as a manipulator and argues that “Power is the projection of human intent over other people, animals or things. Technology magnifies intent and makes it more reliable”.¹⁰

Yet, when considering the role of technology in war and its influence on modern warfare, it becomes clear that technology has stimulated progress on the battlefield, which allows one to define the war of the twenty-first century as a new, technologically advanced war that is more difficult to predict and at the same time easier yet harder to fight. Still, Sarewitz accentuates the ambivalence of the use of technology in war and the ultimate guarantee of superiority, accepting the idea of the ‘absolute supremacy in military technology’ of the U.S. as demonstrated in the Iraq War, but foregrounding the ambiguity of ‘the technology-power nexus’ and claiming that ‘the proximal objectives enabled by a technology—killing a soldier or destroying a building, for example—say little if anything about the power of that technology to facilitate broader outcomes, for example the compliance of one society to the will of another.’¹¹ Indeed, noticeable technological superiority on the battlefield may not and does not guarantee the same status in the political arena, yet it arguably plays in favour of the better-equipped side.

How does technology modernize war? Using the example of visual technology, Jose N. Vasquez contends that it ‘chang[es] the experience of war in dramatic ways’.¹² With the help of technology, soldiers are able to control the territory of the enemy and are more capable of protecting their own; they are able to fight at any time of the day and night, and they can reach the enemy from nearly every position—a feat which was hardly imaginable decades earlier. Vasquez speculates that “Conceptualized as ‘cyber warriors’, ‘cyborgs’, and ‘digital soldiers’, the futuristic war fighters once thought of as purely science fiction are gradually becoming reality”.¹³ This fascinating observation prompts me to address the issues of humanity and machinery as well as their relations in the modern times of technology and war. Is the widespread dependence on technology in the army a sign of technological self-enslavement, and can this tendency be characterized by the assumption of Antoine Bousquet that the development and improvement of technology is “nothing less than an attempt to insulate the system from

⁹ Mark Lacy, *Security, Technology and Global Politics: Thinking with Virilio*, (London: Routledge) (2014), p. 79.

¹⁰ Daniel Sarewitz, “Technology and Power”, in *A Companion to the Philosophy of Technology*, ed. Jan Kyrre Berg Olsen, Stig Andur Pedersen, and Vincent F. Hendricks (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2009), p. 308.

¹¹ Daniel Sarewitz, pp. 309-310.

¹² Jose N. Vasquez, “Seeing Green: Visual Technology, Virtual Reality, and the Experience of War”, in *An Anthropology of War: Views from the Frontline*, ed. Alisse Waterston (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009), p. 87.

¹³ Jose N. Vasquez, pp. 88-89.

uncertainty by creating a perfectly controlled and perfectly stable . . . artificial world”¹⁴ Do soldiers turn into machines, thus becoming science-fiction superheroes in the real world? Can we speak about a phenomenon such as ‘human machines’ or does humanity remain important even in perhaps the most unattainable, unimaginable, equivocal, and savage state—in war?

Humans or Machines? *The Hurt Locker* and *Iron Man*

Who are the soldiers of the twenty-first century, humans or machines? And whose victory is ultimately expected? Film provides a detailed and fascinating overview of the issue. I would like to focus on Bigelow’s war drama *The Hurt Locker*, which deals with the actual war in Iraq and Favreau’s action film *Iron Man*, which touches upon the issue of the war in Afghanistan.

The opening scene of *The Hurt Locker*, which immerses the audience into the world of a technologically advanced war, is the most memorable. Spectators are forced to see the action through the eyes of a robot driving through a street in Baghdad. As the picture is distorted, we realize that it is not a soldier but a robot that provides the overview of the locality. The camera moves and reveals a unit of soldiers arriving and taking their positions and then returns to the robot, thus making it evident that the mechanical character is as important to the operation as the human soldiers. The picture is distorted several times more before the director reveals that the robot is operated by a soldier. With the help of the robot, the soldiers find out what kind of bomb is planted nearby, and therefore are able to plan their further actions. They fasten a small cart to the robot and send it back to the bomb but, dramatically, the cart breaks on its way, demonstrating the imperfection of technology, and a sapper has to continue carrying out the operation. The audience observes Staff Sergeant Matt Thompson (Guy Pearce) being dressed in a special suit designed to protect him from the blast wave. The camera lingers for an instant and, as soon as the helmet is on and carefully fixed, the soldier is ready to perform the mission. The scene is fascinating as it arguably raises the issue of the human and robotic characteristics of the modern soldier. The suit makes him look rather unnatural, as if he himself is another technological innovation of the U.S. army. As he raises his head to see a helicopter, the audience is forced to see through his eyes and although the picture is not as heavily distorted as it was in the scene filmed through the robot’s camera, there is still something that disturbs our vision, i.e. the helmet’s transparent plastic visor; although the visor allows us to see everything, it makes the picture blurry enough to realize that we are looking through a barrier and there is a black frame around our field of vision. The soldier, therefore, represents a human being locked inside a technological product; he becomes part of that technology—a robot that breathes. What makes the ‘robot’ ultimately a human is his dramatized death as the bomb is activated by one of the

¹⁴ Antoine Bousquet, *The Scientific Way of Warfare: Order and Chaos on the Battlefields of Modernity*, (London: Hurst & Company) (2009), p. 11.

locals. Trying to escape the fatal ending, the soldier runs as fast as the suit allows him, but he is finally caught by the blast wave. As he falls down in slow motion, spectators notice the transparent part of the helmet covered with blood from the inside.

The soldier is substituted by a new sapper, which is a rather regular case in the army as newcomers take the places of those who die. However, such a ‘conveyor belt’ system allows for another interpretation, namely that just as a robot, machine, or gadget can break down and then be substituted, so can a human being, with the crucial difference that unlike a technological product, a human-being cannot be repaired. There are multiple scenes in the film where a new sapper deactivates a bomb, but I would like to underscore their importance to our understanding of the issue of humanity and machinery. The changing scenes—from the normal human interaction to the transformation of a soldier into a sapper who visually resembles a robot—are disturbing. Additionally, they reveal the ambiguity of the main character’s (Sergeant First Class William James, played by Jeremy Renner) nature. His fearlessness and calmness that often resemble indifference elevate him beyond an average human-being, thus hinting at his supernatural or hi-tech abilities that will allow him to stay alive, no matter what happens. At the same time, his care for a local boy as well as the presence of his wife and baby at the end of the film show James as a rather conventional human who has feelings. The film’s ending, however, contradicts this characterization as we observe smiling James in a sapper’s suit walking towards his next mission in Iraq, which he has volunteered for. He therefore gives up his ‘human’ life, choosing one enabled by technology. Thus, Bigelow’s words that *The Hurt Locker* reveals “dehumanising and humanising aspects of war” can, indeed, be interpreted in terms of the war and its constituent parts’ (one of which is undoubtedly technology) ability to not only control but also suppress the human side, turning soldiers into machines, both psychologically and physically.¹⁵

The story of Tony Stark (Robert Downey, Jr.), the main character of *Iron Man*, is somewhat reminiscent of the story of the sappers from *The Hurt Locker*. Considering the issue of the Afghanistan War and American participation in it, *Iron Man* is an apt example of an action film that explicitly deals with the duality of a war participant. Tony Stark, a wealthy businessman, creates an iron suit that he puts on every time the world is in danger. At the beginning, the film makes the story as plain as possible: there is a human-being inside of a highly technological, practically indestructible iron suit that accurately resembles the shape of a human body. Every time Tony communicates with somebody, he uncovers his face so that the audience is always aware that it is a *human* that interacts, takes decisions, argues, smiles, in short, performs all the actions that are typical of people. However, there is a nuance that is not to be neglected, namely that the suit is bonded to Tony (or is Tony bonded to the suit?) with the help of an electromagnet that was installed in Tony’s body when he was captured in Afghanistan, and later improved into a powerful reactor by Tony himself. What at first looks like Tony’s hobby later turns into an addiction that connects him and the suit so tightly that both the audience and Tony

¹⁵ Quoted in Lisa Purse, *Contemporary Action Cinema*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press) (2011), p. 162.

himself have difficulty distinguishing when Tony is a human and when he is a powerful superhero. Tony, whose high-tech weapons have guaranteed power and dominance to their possessors and fear to the ones at which they are targeted, now himself turns into such a high-tech weapon. Indeed, in the course of all the three parts of the film, Tony fights terrorists, criminals, and other bad guys, posing danger to them only when he is reincarnated as Iron Man.

In *Iron Man 2*, Tony goes as far as declaring: “I am Iron Man. The suit and I are one”.¹⁶ Tony’s general condition, however, worsens as the suit negatively influences his health and it becomes clear that if Tony does not stop being Iron Man, he will simply die. The generator that is mounted right in his chest and that figuratively stands for the heart of Iron Man, is slowly killing Tony and, thus, Tony’s powerful second self. Therefore, the question of whether to remain as Iron Man or to return to ordinary life should be rather easy to settle in such a situation; Tony, however, tries to figure out a way to continue being a superhero. Although Tony’s human qualities (such as devotion, his desire to protect his dearest ones, his ability to love, his patriotism, and his decision not to speculate and purely gain profit from his arms business, but to care for the well-being others) construct Tony as a human superhero; his robotic side also gets a lot of attention. We often find him in his laboratory where he creates all kinds of technologically advanced gadgets and robots. The laboratory is literally the place where Tony feels at home, surrounded by all the iron constructions and creatures that communicate with him. Tony, therefore, is presented as someone who gets more and more involved in the world of technology, inevitably alienating himself from the world of humans.

Tony’s addiction to the iron suit strengthens in *Iron Man 3*, where virtually at the beginning of the film he feels a physical and emotional bond to it, suffering from ‘anxiety attacks’¹⁷ any time he does not wear it and feeling comfortable and protected each time he is inside it. One can speculate that the reason for his fear of vulnerability is virtually a consequence of the events of *The Avengers* (2012), in which he was very nearly killed. Tony becomes even more involved in the world of machines that are, indeed, *living* creatures for him. Thus, we observe him placing the uncharged suit on the sofa in a way that he thinks the iron suit would find comfortable; showing compassion in the scene where a boy breaks off the suit’s finger, assuming that the suit can actually feel the pain. Tony stops sleeping, which represents his inconceivable physical endurance; he acknowledges that his suits are ‘part of’¹⁸ him and, indeed, this is how he is finally perceived by his girlfriend Pepper Potts (Gwyneth Paltrow), who, although struggling to accept the technological self of her boyfriend, upon finding the helmet, holds it close to herself thinking of Tony, as she assumes this is the only bit of him left after the brutal fight.

¹⁶ *Iron Man 2* (2010, Jon Favreau).

¹⁷ *Iron Man 3* (2013, Shane Black).

¹⁸ *Iron Man 3* (2013, Shane Black).

The *Iron Man* trilogy, therefore, is an important work that raises the questions of machinery and humanity in war. Unlike *The Hurt Locker*, however, it provides a radically different answer to the question: who wins? Tony Stark's humanity apparently wins over the technological, mechanical self of Iron Man as, at the end of the third part, we observe Tony throwing his generator into the ocean, thus demonstrating his acceptance of humanity and rejection of the robotic side for good. The same happens to the U.S. army (that with Tony's help became largely equipped with iron suits, turning into the most frightening army on the planet) when Tony takes the decision to liquidate all the robots that he created. *Iron Man*, therefore, makes a clear appeal to the audience: it is easy to fight against the enemy with the help of technology; however, it can also become our enemy as it deprives us of our humanity, turning us into machines that are not able to enjoy the privileges of human life.

Transformers: Humanity in Machines

Investigating the transformation of humans into machines, I inevitably address the opposite issue, namely whether machines in war can possess humanity. To examine the problem, I have chosen to analyse a recent series of films that are primarily concerned with machines, demonstrating the flourishing of the technological era and, as a result, of technological progress; the film series in question is Michael Bay's *Transformers* and its sequels.

The four films released so far can and should be treated as one story of relations between robots and human-beings. The film's most apparent message is that technology today is much cleverer, less biased, and somewhat more humane than humans themselves. The Autobots are arguably represented as the only truly good characters in the film (perhaps with the exception of a small group of people that includes Sam (Shia LaBeouf) and his friends). Their reason for being on Earth is to protect the human race from the evil Decepticons. They exist as a small group of robots that resembles a family in which everyone is ready to help, protect, and care for each other. More than that, their desire to save people (who in the course of the film do not seem to be very thankful for this, preferring to exploit the robots rather than treat them as equals or accept their technological superiority) stands for the robots' ability to feel love, devotion, responsibility, and compassion. There are a number of scenes in the film when, by means of contrasting a robot and a human, the director shows a tremendous difference between the two, accentuating humanity in robots and a certain inhumanity in a humans. For example, in *Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen*, we witness an Autobot pining because his friend Sam has to leave him to go to college, whereas later in the scene, Sam fails to say, 'I love you'¹⁹ to his girlfriend, which provokes a tense dialogue between the two. Thus, it is easier for a robot to express emotions rather than for a human.

¹⁹ *Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen* (2009, Michael Bay).

All the robots in *Transformers* and its sequels represent a specific race—a race of ‘intelligent mechanical beings’²⁰, as they call themselves. Indeed, their intellect and thinking abilities are striking, but what is more fascinating is their uncanny resemblance to the human race. First, the robots look very similar to humans: they have a body, limbs, a head, and a face. The robots are not clumsy despite their huge size; when they fight, they can literally feel pain; when they get a punch in the face, they spit out liquid that looks very much like a mixture of blood and spit; as mentioned earlier, they can cry; they also can propagate, as we witness in a scene in which multiple cocoons are revealed; finally, robots grow old and suffer from typically human health problems. Their inner qualities are peculiar too: the robots are humanly superior, as unlike people they all possess moral qualities and very often are shown judging humans, making them behave and act better. “It’s inhumane is what it is!”²¹ complains a robot that Sam locked outside in the rain. Indeed, according to *Transformers*, these are machines that possess humanity, whereas human beings do not.

This interpretation, however, may change dramatically if we consider Terence McSweeney’s suggestion that *Transformers* is a vivid projection of 9/11 in which the Decepticons stand for real terrorists.²² In this case, the Autobots represent humans who fight against terrorists. But then it remains unclear who the real people in *Transformers* are. Therefore, I propose examining the film not as a pure metaphor of the world after 9/11, but in terms of its treatment of technological progress. In this case, the film sends a clear message that machines could develop into such highly intelligent creatures that they will become more perfect than humans in all aspects.

Conclusion: Humans. Or Machines?

In a time of high-tech wars, the question whether humanity and machinery have become equal or whether one prevails over the other remains a complex issue. Despina Kakoudaki interprets “the tendency to imagine the artificial body as a mechanical, rather than organic, entity” in terms of neutralization of ‘human vulnerability’.²³ Arguably, this is a pivotal aspect to consider when dealing with the issues of humanity and machinery. Vulnerability, or perhaps also victimization, therefore, are not to be treated as purely physical aspects (although they are, indeed, here); as *The Hurt Locker*, the *Iron Man* trilogy and the *Transformers* series illustrate, emotions are one of the most crucial characteristics that define humanity. Thus, those who can feel are considered humane whether or not they are humans or machines. Technological progress, indeed, changes humans. While technology develops into more and better products, humans transform as well. The

²⁰ *Transformers: Dark of the Moon* (2011, Michael Bay).

²¹ *Transformers: Dark of the Moon* (2011, Michael Bay).

²² Terence McSweeney, *The ‘War on Terror’ and American Film: 9/11 Frames per Second*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press) (2014), p. 139.

²³ Despina Kakoudaki, *Anatomy of a Robot: Literature, Cinema, and the Cultural Work of Artificial People*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press) (2014), p. 69.

complexity of the issue will hardly ever allow anybody to provide a single answer to the problem of humanity and machinery. The analysed cinematic examples, however, do not give up on the human race, but underline the difficulty of remaining true humans in the era of technology.

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