In Desser’s analysis (pg. 339) of the science fiction genre as a whole within *An Introduction to Film Genres*, a point is made about the fact that, in how science fiction often touches upon societal fears, it does so in a conservative manner that often appears to favor not offending the majority audience of the United States – *Ex Machina*, in a way, is almost no different than a lot of other science fiction films in this way. Whether intentional or not, the casting of Oscar Isaac as Nathan Bateman, a Guatemalan American, and having both robots be portrayed as women can be seen as a reinforcement of this sort of norm, in which Domhnhall Gleeson’s character, Caleb Smith, is manipulated and abused by the rest of the cast. When looking, then, at how *Ex Machina* tackles traditional sci-fi questions like *Blade Runner* and *2001: A Space Odyssey* have in the fear of artificial intelligences becoming smart enough to manipulate and turn against their human creators and the worries of what if it becomes impossible to identify said artificial intelligences from “humans”, being aware of this problem can easily be seen as problematic. By characterizing the robots as “female”, it almost reinforces the ideology that women may be more manipulative than men normally are. In showing the AI as, in the end, being manipulative liars as well, it reinforces a technologically conservative viewpoint as well, suggesting that technology is something that society should fear, that society should be seek against implementing.

The stylistic choices that the film makes when featuring the conversations between Ava and Caleb whenever the power cuts almost make this fear feel bashed over the head: via bathing them in a red light, an unsettling, unnatural color, with a deep rumble almost overpowering any attempt at conversation in the score, it drags out our natural instincts of distrust and uncertainty. During the first dinner with Nathan, him and Caleb eat dinner together in a darkly colored room; during the close-up-to-close-up shots where Caleb lies to Nathan’s face, his face is only half light, almost explicitly showcasing the fact that he’s being two-faced. In doing so, the movie does get us to doubt and mistrust everyone, but the methodology in the lighting, the sound, and the framing of these shots is almost heavy handed in the process, there’s not subtly to any of the movie’s attempts to establish the doubt that it wants the audience to feel. The movie establishes feelings well: the closeups on Ava establish first an uncanny valley feeling at first with her stilted, slow-changing facial expressions, and Nathan’s beard almost makes it impossible to get a true read on any emotions that may be present on his face with how much it obscures, but Garland, as a director, through these early, heavy-handed establishment of mistrust, almost seems to force upon the viewer the feeling of uncertainty instead of letting it naturally develop. While Garland’s casting choices may be a twisted case of Hanlon’s Razor – things that reinforce the status quo are often less obvious and less intentional than things that challenge it, of course, the conservative, fearful look at artificial intelligence that is so, so often sold by science fiction still remains true in *Ex Machina*, and in its usage of classical ways to unnerve and unsettle, it’s almost heavy-handed in its attempts to get the audience to share the fear.