# Know Thyself: Human Mimesis in Android Fiction

Inaugural-Dissertation zur Erlangung des
Doktorgrades der Philosophie
der Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität
München

Vorgelegt von
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2023

Fakultät für Sprach- und Literaturwissenschaften

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Tag der mündlichen Prüfung: 01.02. 2022

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## I. The Fowl and the Mountain: Introduction

When Fons Elders opened the Chomsky Foucault debate on human nature in 1971, he compared the philosophers to tunnellers carving away at opposite sides of a mountain (cf. Chomsky et al. 1). The image of humanity as a mountain to be explored, charted, and yet never entirely conquered, is a powerful reminder to consider the magnitude of the question asked: is there such a thing as objective, collective and inherent humanness? Elders choosing to evoke the mountain – and, with it, the great, grand, and maybe sublime – indicates the concept's simultaneously undeniable presence and lofty intangibility. Is human really so insurmountable a concept that even the great thinkers have to tunnel through that, which will not be climbed? During the debate, Chomsky, per his theory of universal grammar, argued in favour of the existence of "innate organising principles" (Chomsky et al. 4), making up human nature, whereas Foucault deemed these patterns societal constructs, created according to "epistemological rules" (Chomsky et al. 23). The chicken and the egg: The question whether we are who we are due to some inherent nature or due to external influences and cultural self-fashioning is age-old. Humanity has searched for a universal definition of itself even before Plato's tongue-in-cheek, characterisation of the human as a biped without feathers in his *Politicus*. However, even then humorous simplifications on the subject were not generally appreciated: According to Diogenes Laërtius' *Vitae Philosophorum,* Diogenes the Cynic presented the lecture hall with a plugged fowl in mockery of this definition.[1] Between the fowl and the mountain, the discourse on human nature – its existence, its origin, and its character – has been a constant presence throughout the Anthropocene. Humanity is and remains in search of itself.

This is a book about humanity. The ways in which we have talked about ourselves, negotiated ourselves, defined ourselves. It engages with the identities we have conceptualised for ourselves and the versions of humanity we have created. It traces human self-narratives: the language, the images, and the ideas we

1 See: Book VI/p.43 (Diogenes Laertius, translation Hicks).

have used to express a fundamental question that has occupied us for most of our examinable existence: Who are we?

I use the term 'humanity' in this context, to refer to both this abstract, collective sense of 'we', the quality of humanness, as well as the human species as such. These multiple meanings – ranging from the concrete to the conceptional – express the concept's nuance and indefiniteness. They underline my effort to trace this ubiquitously felt but curiously intangible state of being human; an identity we live, feel, and utilise but have never been able to ascertain. While occasionally culminating in caricature, philosophy has never entirely let go of its search for a precise and concise definition of humanity and has made many attempts to declare what exactly defines humannes. What essential quality it is that unifies us as humans and distinguishes us from the non-human (a category that is no less and maybe even more problematic than its counterpart)? Beginning with the words we have found to describe ourselves and ending in more or less complex philosophical constructs influencing generational cultural notions, humanity has sought to determine itself endlessly. Plato's reductionist approach[2] is an attempt to define human through our most essential corporeal features. Later, in his *Politeia*, he divides the human soul into a rational head and the irrational chest and stomach, dominated by emotionality and desire. Finally, in his *Politicos*, Plato's man is a statesman, defined by the political quality in social relation to each other. Since Plato, humanity has consistently continued to enquire after itself from antiquity to today.

Know thyself! The first of the three Delphic maxims, once inscribed onto the pronaos of the Temple of Apollo, is still as relevant and yet unreachable to us as it has even been. While the individual has developed and thrived, a collective human identity remains undefinable. We do not know ourselves, beyond a patchwork of associative qualities, changing from culture to culture and epoch to epoch. We have proudly named ourselves the noble crown of creation and yet recoiled from the banality of our evil. We have defined ourselves by the superiority of our intellect, as well as our emotional potential. We have declared our nature to be both selfless and selfish. We described ourselves as a communal

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2 Which was later amended to include broad nails. See: Book VI/p.43 (Diogenes Laertius, translation Hicks).

animal, and yet elevated the racial, gendered, cultural, national individual above our human community. Our identities have been many and no approach to an ultimate definition – philosophical, religious, cultural, or otherwise – has truly withstood the test of time or been able to encompass our immense diversity. No solution has been able to clearly delineate and define essential humanness. In short, humanity, as a satisfyingly defined concept, simply does not exist. The only constant of our collective lives, and arguably the most valid counterpoint to the previous observation, has been our unique and unwavering aspiration to find ourselves nonetheless.

Georg Bertram refers to it as humanity's "charakteristische Unbestimmtheit" (19)[3], and William Desmond has identified the question after a definition of it as "the despair of history" (106). He engages with what he calls *potency* and *sense* of being. Part of a larger metaphysical system, his theories seek to place human selves in relation to *ethos*, rather than a single, inherent definition. His work is centred on the implications of being and thus interested in our apparent inability to satisfyingly define ourselves. What is human, if our very being remains indeterminate? Desmond notes that it is the plurality of approaches that is most productive for human self-fashioning. He states that "[…] the power of the indeterminate becomes original and freely creative. In the human being, becoming becomes the promise of mindfully directed self-becoming." (106). Our lack of definite identity is here seen as productive, as it means the freedom to fashion and re-fashion ourselves, consciously and constantly. For Desmond "man is excess" (106). He rejects Ockham's razor and instead considers human's self-aware self-reflection as humanity's most definitive quality. However, our self-creative freedom leaves us stranded, caught in between "the promise of yes to being, and the deformed refusal or revolt against being" (Desmond 107). Human identity has certainly been and still is subject to an inconsistent and even dichotomous discourse, struggling for but also against a univocal definition of ourselves. A, let alone the, quintessential human, therefore, does not exist. While our being is evident, what it is that we are is unclear. The human exists, and yet humanness itself seems increasingly intangible. Human identity encompasses

3 "characteristic indeterminacy" (Bertram, translation mine).

many things – the good and the bad, or as Desmond puts it: "from the peak to the pit" (107) – yet the one thing it cannot provide us with, is unity.

It is evident that those who want to find humanity must initially – and ironically – accept that 'the' human does not exist. This acceptance is uncomfortable, both personally and scholarly. The act of analysing humanity as a concept must necessarily become a balancing act between the knowledge that humanity is ultimately what Desmond has titled "the equivocal thing par excellence" (106) and the conflicting fact that the object of the analysis is so persistently present that its influence cannot be negated by any pesky technical non-existence. Admittedly, human identity is a patchwork of markers that are more felt than verifiable and neither constant nor tangible. We may never have known and perhaps will never know who we are, exactly. However, it is this very ineffability that has driven especially our post-modern understanding of ourself. Self-reflection influences our entire history. All previous and present convictions that humans have held about human nature, the positive and the negative, are what have shaped and begotten our self-image today: We are always first and foremost self-made. Never mind that our self-making has never actually been successful in the sense of an all-encompassing and lasting definition of humanness. Kant's rational animal might be self-conscious, yet what self it is we are conscious of is unclear. We have delineated ourselves from many Others, yet never collectively determined ourselves.

Age-old among the many ways in which we have sought ourselves is our artistic self-reflection.[4] Art has been a constant means to consider and express ourselves as humans. Percy B. Shelley, for whom art, and specifically poetry was "the centre and circumference of knowledge" (1840, 47), has extensively commented on art's ability to clarify truth. In the foreword[5] to the 1818 edition of his wife Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein,* he states that the text, while surely not believable

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4 The term art is here and in the following used in the most general sense of human artistic expression and thus meant to include literature.

5 The foreword was published anonymously, but is commonly attributed to the author, since it fits his style, diction, and references the origin story of the novel witnessed by him. Considering the familiar name-dropping technique and musings on poetry the foreword contains, as well as the comments betraying intimate insights into Mary Shelley's process, it can be assumed that he is indeed the author.

> was recommended by the novelty of the situations which it developes, and however impossible as a physical fact, affords a point of view to the imagination for the delineating of human passions more comprehensive and commanding than any which the ordinary relations of existing events can yield. (1994, 11).

To Shelley, art is here able to not only depict humanity but also to display it in an accessible way that facilitates comprehension. The fantastic nature of the text in question does not hinder this process. On the contrary, according to Shelley, the abstraction helps to depict the truth because it is more arresting than depicting nature as is. Is self-recognition more effective, if it is imparted through arresting mimesis? Can art convey what non-artistic reflection cannot, because it is able to utilise a projection surface instead of communicating directly and can shape that surface in new and exciting ways? If recipients are more receptive to abstracted content and more readily apply experiences gained through art to their self-image, art might be among the most important platforms on which human identity is negotiated. Art can contain and express human identity and thus majorly influence the discourse thereof. Shelley goes on to state: "I have thus endeavoured to preserve the truth of the elementary principles of human nature, while I have not scrupled to innovate upon their combinations." (1994, 11). This implies that art is not only able to influence the discourse on human nature through depicting its condition, it actively re-imagens it. Not unlike the fictional Frankenstein, Shelley claims the ability to rethink and thereby enhance humanity. In other words: to create human identity through art. According to this, art can not only mediate the truth, it also shapes and even creates it. Shelley confirms this impression in his *Defense of Poetry* when he singles out what he calls the "creative faculty" (1840, 55) as the foundation of all knowledge. He writes:

> […] it creates new materials of knowledge, and power, and pleasure. […] The evaluation of poetry is never more to be desired than at periods, when, from an excess of the selfish and calculating principle, the accumulation of the materials of external life exceed the quantity of the power assimilating them to the internal laws of human nature. (1840, 55).

Again, he pronounces art capable of conveying what knowledge the mind otherwise cannot grasp. The function of art is thus not only to depict what we already know but also to open up our minds to reflect and understand that which we do not. It depicts not only the existing but the possible. Art surpasses mental limitations set by culture or custom and produces insight and realisation.

As such, art is uniquely situated to explore that age-old question which touches us all equally, and yet has not been answered so far: the unmanageable issue of human identity. Humanness as a concept has been strangely resistant to any attempt to fully comprehend and define its essence. It has been and still is art that has dug the deepest and, true to Shelley's assessment, not only been able to depict the respective zeitgeist but also partook in determining it. Beyond mere representation, art shows humanity's potential and explores not only what it is but what it could be. Artistic depictions of humanity have encouraged recipients to think beyond established models and delineations of humanity and imagined the fantastic, the noble, and the gruesome alike. Philosophical worldviews, cultural modes of humanity, and scientific theories can be traced through art. Humanity has expressed itself continuously and comprehensively through many forms of artistic production. As Marcel Proust once declared his work to be a magnifying glass through which readers might see themselves (cf.432), all art can be understood as self-expression and self-exploration. Humanity has painted, sculpted, and performed itself; scattering self-portraits throughout history – to be seen, read, experienced, and understood today.

Setting out to trace this history wholly and comprehensively would be an impossible task, given this history's extent and plurality. Gathering all that humanity has ever portrayed itself as through artistic means would also likely not yield any meaningful results beyond a general retroactive notion of how humanity's self-perception has developed. However, this is not what this analysis is after. In this book, I engage with a specific sub-category of human self-reflection: the figure of the artificial human in art. The android, in the sense of an artificially created representation of a human,[6] is a variation on the familiar mimetic model inherent in artistic production: where we commonly reproduce ourself in art, android art places one mimetic self-reproduction within another. It therefore holds enormous analytical potential for the premise of this book. After all, we can best see ourselves when we look into a mirror.

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6 The term's specific application can be vague, due to the very intangibility of the human category this book addresses. Consequently it is in use for a number of android-related figures like cyborg hybrids or disembodied human-like interfaces. I use it in the traditional sense of an artificially created, physical and mental representation of humanity. Other figures, depending on their mimetic excellence and function, may also apply to the discourse I address in this project.

Michel Foucault, too, recognises a second vantage point on an issue as an asset: In the first chapter of *Ceci n'est pas une Pipe,* the author compares the efficacy of the two versions of Magritte's renowned painting *La Trahison des Images*. The first showing only the pipe and text, with its simple assertiveness, and the second, an etching in *Aube a l'Antipodes*, showing two pipes (ill.1). To Foucault, this plurality of subjects depicts "multiplie visiblement les incertitudes volontaires." (10).[7] The doubling opens up Magritte's contemplation of presentation and representation. It layers the mimetic dynamics inherent in art, laid bare by the artist's inscription. Foucault wonders:

> il y a deux pipes. Ne faut-il pas dire plutôt: deux dessins d'une même pipe? Ou encore une pipe et son dessin, ou encore deux dessins representant chacun une pipe, ou encore deux dessins dont l'un représente une pipe mais non pas l'autre, ou encore deux dessins qui ni l'un ni l'autre ne sont ni ne repré sentent des pipes, ou encore un dessin représentant non pas une pipe, mais un autre dessin qui, lui, représente. (Foucault 1973, 11ff.).[8]

The mimetic complex described here – a maze of representational relations and implications – is visually contained within the depiction of the pair. The nature of their relation to each other is unclear and full of possible nuances. Whether they are interpreted as original and copy, allegory and representation, or concept and depiction, the art manages to express its multitudes. Magritte's work is thus able to engage with complex and dichotomous questions through doubling. By confronting

ill. 1

7 "multiplies intentional ambiguities before our eyes" (Foucault, translation Harkness 15).

8 "There are two pipes. Or rather must we not say, two drawings of the same pipe? Or yet a pipe and the drawing of that pipe, or yet again two drawings each representing a different pipe? Or two drawings, one representing a pipe and the other not, or two more drawings yet, of which neither the one nor the other are or represent pipes? Or yet again, a drawing representing not a pipe at all but another drawing, itself representing a pipe" (Foucault, translation Harkness 16).

the subject with its mimetic equal, the nature of the subject is thematised and challenged.

A brief explanation of the term mimesis and its usage in this book: The concept's complexity, multifaceted-ness, and manifold applicability have been a central part of its scholarly reception so far. Gunter Gebauer and Christoph Wulf address the term's broad range of meaning[9] and locate it in "annähernd allen Bereichen menschlichen Vorstellens und Handelns" (Gebauer et al., 9);[10] Matthew Potolsky calls it a "most fundamental" (1) principle, which "defines our way of thinking about art" (1), as well as "a map, as it were, of the relationship between art and nature" (11); and Thomas Metscher situates it in fundamental ontological considerations (cf. 6).[11] In light of this immensity and rather than concentrating on a certain aspect of the broad spectrum of meaning the term communicates, this analysis means to utilise precisely this nuanced and multifarious nature. I am utilising mimesis as a spectrum of meaning, both in the general sense of the term regarding imitation, copy, and reproduction, as well as in its more nuanced, situational meanings. In this, the term resembles this book's other central concept: humanity. Just like mimesis has been addressed and engaged with in many different ways throughout its conceptual history, human, too, is polymorphic. Human identity, the idea and concept of 'the' human, has been constructed, evoked, and used in a similar way as 'the' mimetic and its various forms, interpretations, and applications. I utilise this similarity for my analysis: A consideration of both the human and the mimetic by confronting it with copies and nuances of itself.

Humanity addressed itself in art through representation and self-reflection. Consequently, it can and must be considered a treachery in itself: *Ceci n'est pas un homme*. Depicting humanity in art is a mimetic process. Gebauer and Wulf, who declare mimesis "eine *conditio humana*, die unterschiedliche Ausprägungen

9 "Bedeutungsvielfalt" (Gebauer et al, 9)
"variety of meaning" (translation mine).

10 "nearly all spheres of human imagination and action" (translation mine).

11 "Mimesis hat […] ihren genetischen Ort in Seinsverhältnissen" (Metscher 6)
"Mimesis is genetically […] located in conditions of being" (translation mine).

des Menschen erst möglich macht." (9, original emphasis),[12] locate it in all manners of artistic production.[13] Their assessment that

> Mimesis widersetzt sich der harten Subjekt-Objekt-Spaltung und der Eindeutigkeit des Unterschieds zwischen Sein und Sollen. […] Sie stellt eine sonst nicht erreichbare Nähe zu den Objekten her und ist daher auch eine notwendige Bedingung von Verstehen. (11)[14]

identifies mimesis' central function: to bridge the gap between art and reality and create nearness between the depicted and the depiction. Art imitates in order to connect and reflect: "eine *Identifikation* einer Person mit einer anderen. Jemand identifiziert sich mit Hilfe seiner mimetischen Fähigkeiten, wenn er im Anderen sich selbst sieht" (Gebauer et al. 13, original emphasis).[15] Humanity in art is structurally exceptional, because in this instance the relationship between creator and creation is determined by the particular dynamics of self-reproduction. The artist depicts their humanness, copying the self, and representing it through art. Artistic depiction thus functions as a mode of mimetic reproduction. Humanity, as a simultaneously abstract and personal quality, is assimilated when it is adapted for and in art: The artist reproduces themselves. As such, depicting humanity is a statement on it, made through mimetic means. Exploring humanity through the lens of artistic depiction means entangling the analysis, and oneself, into this structure. Since this entanglement can obfuscate productive self-reflection, the process of artistic self-mimesis is greatly assisted by a reflective figure which is able to access the same mimetic relations as a human figure but is not and can therefore be positioned and infused as required. Consequently, a productive approach to humanness, like Magritte's pipe, necessitates a mimetic counterpart in order to open up human self-reflection through artistic representation and to encompass and express its mimetic layers. Who then, is humanity's second pipe?

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12 "a *conditio humana* that enables the various manifestations of human in the first place." (Gebauer et al., translation mine).

13 „über die körperliche Darstellung von anderen Personen, von Tanz, Musik und Theater, und über die Vergegenwärtigung durch Schreiben und künstlerische Gestaltung" (Gebauer et al. 11).

14 „Mimesis resists the rigorous subject-object division and the unambiguity between eing and ought. It facilitates an otherwise impossible proximity to the object and is therefore a necessary condition of understanding." (Gebauer et al., translation mine).

15 "an *identification* of one person with another. Someone identifies himself by means of their mimetic ability when they see themselves in the other." (Gebauer et al., original emphasis, translation mine).

The android figure has fulfilled this function over the course of a long and rich literary and artistic tradition. The term's etymology[16] – deriving from *ἀνδρο εἰδης* – expresses the figure's mimetic relationship to humanity: The android is formed after humanity, functions as a likeness of a human template, and serves to represent and depict it. It follows that its position in artistic production is a reflective one. By introducing the mimetic copy, the reference is approached, examined, and scrutinised. Its structural position in relation to humanity facilitates its artistic function. The artificial human in art is a representation of a representation. It's depiction mimics and trans-locates creator-creation-dynamics into the artwork. Gebauer and Wulf have described this mimetic function as facilitating discourse on the creation of symbolic worlds by creating them.[17] Likewise, we thematise humanity by representing it. Artistic self-mimesis mirrors itself, by adding another, metafictional layer of mimetic reproduction into the artwork. The artistic act is imitated within itself, thus bridging what Gebauer and Wulf differentiated as "*darstellende* und die *dargestellte* Mimesis" (34, original emphasis).[18] Layering self-reproduction onto self-reproduction enables human self-reflection by creating a meaningful mirror. Much like the two pipes allow for a more nuanced and inclusive portrayal of the issue than the one, android art creates an observation point onto humanity that goes beyond the elementary self-reflection of artistic mimesis: The android in art exists a distanced-but-not-detached point of view from which humanity may look upon itself.

Klaus Benesch has described this function in his book on the cyborg figure as a junction between authorship and technology during the Antebellum years:

> Since identity […] has no essence of its own, it can only be grasped indirectly, that is, by way of projecting an other or double of the original self. If it is true […] that the concept of identity and the concept of fiction are closely related in that both rely on the construction of stories […], then we must acknowledge the symbolic universality of the cyborg as a continuing dramatization of the modern self vis-à-vis the technological system. (2002, 30)

He identifies the hybrid figure as a "heuristic tool" (Benesch 2002, 7/27) that enables a point of view encompassing humanity and technology (cf. 2002, 4).

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16 "Etymology: […] Greek *ἀνδρο-* man + - -like: see -oid suffix" (OED).

17 "Wir sprechen über die Art und Weise, wie symbolische Welten erzeugt werden, indem wir selbst eine symbolische Welt herstellen." (33).

18 "*depicting* and *depicted* mimesis" (Gebauer et al., original emphasis, translation mine).

Benesch's findings on cyborg figures that precede their traditional Science Fiction context are applicable for my consideration of the android figure. I, too, read the artificial human figure as a reflective intersection between humanity and non-humanity in a technological but also general sense that "captured much of the contemporary cultural imagination at large" (Benesch 2002, 28). My analysis examines these self-mimetic properties in the context of the android figure and throughout its artistic occurrence. Give the considerable timeframe the figure spans, it follows that the android in art captured and continues to capture contemporary selves and, thus, provides a tool to engage with manifold versions of human identity. Gebauer and Wulf, too, emphasise the self-reflective and alienating effect mimesis has on humanity: "Mimesis ermöglicht es dem Menschen, aus sich herauszutreten." (11).[19] Artificial human figures utilise this function by explicating their creation, design, function, and interaction and thereby revealing what conceptualisations of humanity they represent. Since the android functions as human without being human, it avoids the automatic attachment to associations, implications, and limitations human identity entails. It provides a functional Other, located at the intersection of a human Us and non-human Others we create to delineate ourselves from and thereby makes humanity approachable. Where differentiation produces identity and facilitates being, a figure inherently like us but not us effectively subverts this differentiation and is bound to disrupt our being by challenging the boundaries of our identity. As a result, they are able to function as a projection surface for the artistic discourse on the *conditio humana*: The android figure has and continues to illustrate fundamental inquiries after human provenance, purpose, and identity – or lack thereof. By striving after or against their mimetic template, they, explicitly or implicitly, comment on humanity as a concept. The individual android's design, character, and structural function within the work can highlight qualitative statements made about human nature and add to age-old yet never abandoned discourse on human nature.

The android in art is mimesis within mimesis: if art is imitating life, then within this imitation, humanity's own representation (literary and otherwise) represents itself through the creation of the android. This second level of

19 „Mimesis enables humans step outside themselves." (Gebauer et al., translation mine).

representation – artists creating representations of humanity, who in turn recreate humanity artificially – is further complicated by the rapidly approaching reality of android technology, adding another layer, or, at times, closing the mimetic circle entirely. It poses the question whether in this instance life does mimic art, or if the motif was merely an accurate prognosis of the inherent human need of self-mimesis. Either way, our preoccupation with our own automatisation, imitation, and enhancement is apparent the resulting mimetic maze: a Russian doll or cyclic structure that reflects how entangled art and life, identity and representation, reference and reproduction truly are.

The premise of this book is therefore as follows: The android in art functions as a projection surface for human self-reflection. Its depiction enables an artwork to explore the mimetic dynamics of self-reproduction by reproducing them within the artwork. Artistic human-android relations thus allow artists and recipients to consider themselves, as humans, freely and conceptually: Humanity is discussed within the framework of artistic self-mimesis. The respective structural position, function, and characterisation of the android figure are meaningful indicators for the work's position on what constitutes, defines, or possibly delegitimates humanity as a concept. They are therefore significant contributors to the general artistic discourse on human identity and, by extension, influence cultural and individual human self-perception.

The diversity of this discourse can hardly be overstated. Any approach at an analysis of it is also complicated considerably by the deeply personal nature of the question at hand. After all, this is, at its core, about who we are, or, more precisely, about who we thought and think we are and how we have communicated those thoughts. The ways in which humanity has defined itself through art, the image it has created through self-reflection and projection onto the android figure. How have we talked about and negotiated humanity in art and what effect have these implicit and explicit conversations had on our cultural narratives? What can the figure of the android, our – actual and fictional – mimetic copy, tell us about how we see ourselves? How do their faults and strengths, their desires and strives, relate to our self-image? What do the relationships between fictional creators and creations imply? Do we paint ourselves as benevolent or exploitative? Is our self-portrait flattering or sceptical?

The sheer number of questions the structural setup of android-related art alone poses indicates the basic problem of the analysis: the overabundance of material and possible approaches to organising it. Humanity has been near-constantly pre-occupied with artistic self-reflection throughout its history and the results take countless forms. To quote Desmond again,

> The univocal mind will look for one defining characteristic that provides the conclusive essential definition. And yet we have a pluralization of essentials, all of which seem quite reasonable in their own way. This pluralisation tells us that we ought not to be miserly in our mindfulness of the human. Logic is stingy, art is generous, man is prodigal. He calls for imagination and *poiēsis*, the image and *aisthēsis*, as well as the analytical category. Human being is an aesthetic excess prior to logicization.(106).

The wide range of art has left us with a plurality of options to define us, a dichotomous multitude of essentials. Humanity has had many faces and painted many portraits of them. Even the limitation to android-related art leaves this analysis with an embarrassment of riches.

Any effort that aims to utilise this wide variety of artistic approaches, calls for a restrictive, yet representative frame that helps to structure the analysis. I am going to organise my chosen examples under collective terms that correspond to trends within it. Excessive as it might be, self-reflective art featuring artificial human figures does exhibit notable thematic tendencies. There are several recurring themes and a repertoire of recognisable motifs that have proven a proclivity for certain aspects of humanness to be deemed essential or defining. The majority of these qualities, being part of an established and potent tradition, have also been developed, questioned, and deconstructed progressively. Under the headers Corporality, Emotionality, and Sociality this book aims to examine the nuances and implications of these trends in the artistic discourse on human identity. I have isolated these three concepts as the principal categories used regularly and consistently to establish artificially human characters' access to humanity. My effort to extract the overarching narrative from the material's magnitude discards less prominent and less stable categories: Some have become obsolete as the motif developed: the concept of intelligence, for example, as a meaningful marker separating humanity and technological representations of humanity was lost gradually as machines' processing power surpassing humans' was normalised. Others, like creativity, can be understood as subcategories to the

chosen headers and will appear several times in context of characters' corporeal, emotional, and social development.

The selected examples represent different states and aspects of the overarching narrative I assert and analyse in this book. They are chosen in order to demonstrate the respective categories' diversity and progression, as well as their stability over the considerable time the android figure, and this book, span. The artwork and literature discussed encompass the android figure from Ovid's *Metamorphoseon Libri* (1-8 AD) to Jonathan Nolan and Lisa Joy's *Westworld* (2016). It is dominated by white, western perspectives, who have arguably also dominated the input into recorded discourses on humanity as a whole historically and thus shaped the narrative that is being traced. I engage with the consequences of this dominance, as well as the associated prevalence of male points of view. The human self-perception and self-reception thematised in this book is to be read accordingly and therefore critically – a problem that underlines the precarious nature of the concept I am approaching in this book. Nevertheless, the temporal and medial diversity my heterogenous corpus attest to, as well as the extent of the accompanying discourse on the figure and the technological realities it prefigured provide a meaningful basis for this testimony on the human narrative. My examples range from the literary (novels, short stories, narrative poetry, and drama) to painting, sculpture, performance, and film. They all engage with humanity through artificial human figures and they all negotiate these figures' humanness by means of one of the categories above. The existence of these recurrent categories, a discernable pattern of questions and answers that have remained interesting and perhaps rewarding for artists and recipients alike, supports my thesis and corroborate my goal: to provide a selective, yet representative, perspective on how art has portrayed, represented, re-invented, and created humanity.

Patterns in the discourse suggest two things: Firstly, the existence of another mimetic layer in between artworks. Secondly, a confirmation of Desmond's impression that humanity is an "entity of exaggeration and hyperbole" (106): Extensive parallels concerning the form and function of the android figure in art imply a tendency for stylising humanness for the purpose of its artistic self-fashioning. The emergence of the categories analysed here suggests artworks

often prioritise adherence to a human narrative over a more differentiated, realistic depiction of humanity. Oftentimes, humanity is constructed as an idealised goal, or condemned entirely, with the android either striving after or suffering under. The artificial human in art has been utilised to create and shape an image of human nature that benefits the respective agenda; be it political, philosophical, or otherwise. However, this tradition has also been challenged and the figure used accordingly: android art has deconstructed simplistic perspectives on humanity and commented on the nuances, intangibility, and, at times, frustrations associated with the concept. Thus, the figure offers insight, not necessarily into who we 'really' are, but into our self-perception, and our self-awareness. In short: the android is a mirror for our self-narration. This reflection can be simplified, idealised, or damning. It may show us in a favourable light or distort our features. It may also show us our nuanced, realistic selves, by thematising, questioning, and deconstructing the perspectives that have affected and effected our idea of humanity so far.

The term deconstruction is here used in the Derridean sense; as a counter-model to the idea of an absolute and true essence of a thing, propagated for example by Plato. If according to Derrida the singularity and iterability of a thing are not readily separated, could the android and the human be aligned? The deconstructionist approach lends itself to a critical reading of the chosen texts and their perspectives on authenticity. By extension, this approach can be applied to humanity as a concept as well. Derrida's concern with revaluating classic dialectics can be extended towards the artificial and the non-artificial human. If the existence of the essentially 'human' is to be questioned, then the boundary between mimetic copy and reference, as well as human and artificial human can be deconstructed and the concept itself developed. Considering the terms human and humanity in the context of *différance* is interesting, since what exactly the signified is, is heavily debated. Ever since the earlier mentioned fowl-incident made a mockery of simplistic definitions of humanity we are somewhat at a loss, identity-wise. This loss and the ways in which we have engaged with it are where this book applies its enquiry. In the absence of a satisfying definition, the signifier, human, is tied to established cultural images rather than a clearly distinguishable thing. Human identity creates itself, by abstraction, cultural

narratives, and disassociating itself from the non-human, rather than determining its boundaries. The artificial human is an artistic means to test these boundaries, by creating a non-human figure able to fit the cultural image currently associated with the signifier. This deconstructionist approach attempts to discern the components the image consists of and analyse them.

The artificial human and its relationship to humanity must also be considered in the context of the power structure the mimetic hierarchy entails. The android can be read as a mimicry in the Bhabhaian sense and thus function as commentary on its human mimetic reference and creative authority. Homi Bhabha's post-colonial concept of "a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite" (126) is applicable to the fictional and lately potentially real dynamic between artificial and non-artificial humanity. His assertion that mimicry is "profound and disturbing" (126) to the imitated party, even "destroy[s] narcissistic authority" (131), holds true for the android figure's effect on the discourse I engage with in this book. Fictional musings on artificial humanity have affected discourse on humanity in a similar sense as Bhabha describes: Like the colonial subject "alienates its own language […] and produces another knowledge of its norms. The ambivalence which thus informs this strategy is discernible" (126), the android's imitation of humanity challenges our perceived boundaries of humanness. In negotiating fictional access to the category, we negotiate our real identity. In the case of the android, this "process of classificatory confusion" (Bhabha 132) is a self-afflicted one, because humanity consciously creates its mimetic subject. Android art, as many of the following examples will show, generates and utilises the 'but not quite' as a means to self-reflect on human identity. Consciously, or unconsciously, we have and continue to produce our own mimetic mirror and enable it to approach, question, mock, or even overthrow the identity it reflects. I therefore read the genre both as assertive of and challenging to humanity, since it simultaneously appoints humanity as an authority in a mimetic hierarchy and seeks to topple it.

At the outset of this introduction, humanity was compared to a mountain. The comparison is apt: Our relationship to our own identity has been characterised by our inability to define ourselves; rather like the speechless Romantic before Mont Blanc, the fowl is at a loss before the mountain of itself. However, again

like the Romantics, it is not actually speechless. We have and continue to produce artistic abstraction approaching that, which we cannot apprehend otherwise and is only expressible and explicable by utilising concepts beyond the physical, tangible world to describe it. Like the aforementioned tunnellers, we work tirelessly to penetrate and ascend. Every piece discussed in the following can be considered a hand carving further into the darkness, determined on illuminating it. The tools may vary, as do the routes the tunnels take us. The goal, however, remains the same. Reaching the light, in which we may behold ourselves. What a piece of work is man![20]

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20 Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet* II ii 115.

## II.1 Corporality

### II.1.1 Questioning the Humanness of the Body

Confronted with the vast mass of aspects to and facets of humanity, I first of all reach for what is closes to us all: our physical humanness. When approaching ourselves as a concept, the first thing we rest our gaze upon is that, which is indisputably, tangibly there: our human bodies. As the language I here fall back on immediately suggests: looking at humanity is perceived as a physical act and associated with bodily imagery. We reach for, we gaze upon, and we look at ourselves, metaphorically and literally. Our materiality becomes us.

Humankind, scientifically speaking, is first and foremost a biological phenotype: *Homines Sapientes* are *Hominina*, a subtribe of *Hominidae*; distinguishing them from other animals and primates as a distinct group (cf. Goodman et al. 265). Regardless of anthropological or philosophical approaches to the distinctiveness of its social and intellectual capabilities, its emotional potential, and its self-reflective agency, humanity is – at least biologically – well defined. Human is a terrestrial mammal, characterised by erect posture and bipedal locomotion with high manual dexterity and a comparatively large and complex brain. The phenotype is diverse but immediately recognizable. Since we "generally assume a body to be a universal entity that functions approximately the same way around the world and across time." (Anderson-Fye 18), our human bodies are a, maybe the, constant in human history. As societal structures branch out, evolve, and disappear the body itself remains, mostly unchanging. Its parameters allow for instinctive classification of a fellow member of the species: Your body is human, you are human, and therefore we are human. This body can be damaged, expanded, and decreased; it can be enhanced or disfigured, even killed. As long as it remains within the biological criteria for *Homo Sapiens*, there is no question of its identity. Thus, the human quality of a human body transcends its mutation, mutilation, and even death.

The reassuring simplicity of this definition is, however, easy to unravel; both technologically and artistically. Artistic human self-reflection through the

android figure reveals several potential disconnections between humanity and the physical boundaries of its identity. Throughout its long history, the figure continuously exposed the limits of defining ourselves through absolutist biological categories. It did and does so through one main question: Is the artificial human to be classified as human? Negotiating this question time and again quickly deconstructs the ontological boundary of our bodies. For what physical reasons can the artificial human not be considered human? If it fits the criteria for *Homo Sapiens* but is not human, where(in) lies the difference? What new, adjacent category does the android's Otherness imply? How and where is this Otherness contained and how reliable can we distance everything we soncider a human body from it?

The complexity of the problem in rooted in the question what quality the artificiality of the artificial human body is opposed to. 'Natural', after decades of deconstructing the term in critical discourse, is an eminently problematic concept. What is nature after all, especially human nature? If there is a 'natural' human that can be juxtaposed to an 'unnatural' one, is the artificial human to be found within the parameters of this 'unnatural' condition? Do artificiality and nature contradict each other absolutely, where humans are concerned? Judith Butler has remarked that "The relation between culture and nature […] implies a culture and agency of the social which acts upon a nature, which is itself presupposed as a passive surface, outside the social and yet its necessary counterpart." (2011, 4). She illustrates the problem with the notion of human nature as an essential, passive concept in opposition to 'unnatural' influences like culture as "degrading nature to that which is 'before'" (2011, 4). Nature is, of course, in itself a concept brought forth by culture. It is challenging to imagine anything absolutely untouched by something as ubiquitous as social influence, including human identity, or, indeed, our concept of corporality. Mary Douglas, in "The Two Bodies" states that "the human body is always treated as an image of society and […] there can be no natural way of considering the body that does not involve at the same time a social dimension" (79).

Nevertheless, the term remains in use; maybe because existing terminology fails us when trying to communicate categories as instinctual and emotionally loaded as our humanity. Etymologically, 'nature' has biological, and

distinctly corporeal, connotations such as genitalia, bodily fluids, and birth.[21]It seems the two concepts – nature and corporality – share a ubiquitous and likewise intangible character. Thus, the question remains: what is a 'natural' human body, exactly? How is it created and can it be evolved, added to, or restored without losing its humanness? At what exact point is a humanoid body not or no longer perceived as a human body? What, in other words, is the essence of humanity in a corporeal sense? The questionable terminology indicates how problematic any attempt at distinguishing between artificial and non-artificial bodies proves itself to be. The questions soon outnumber the answers.

Negotiating the humanity of the body happens not only in philosophical and artistic theory but also in practice. Existent medical options like in vitro fertilisation and incubation have expanded the spectrum of human procreation beyond fertilisation, foetus, and birth. Differentiating human and artificial human at their place of origin is therefore not entirely without complications, as Karsten Weber confirms in *Verbesserte Menschen: Ethische und Technikwissenschaftliche Überlegungen*. According to Weber, separating a "*Gemachtsein*" from a "*Geschaffensein*" (36, original emphasis)[22] in an effort to delineate a 'natural' human from a technological, or cultural android is a potentially problematic concept. Being made and being born are an artificial opposition: "Nicht erst seit heute ist die Geburt von Menschen ein alles andere als natürlicher Prozess" (Weber et al. 36).[23] The circumstances of conception are no longer identity defining; they are controlled and in parts of the world commercialised.[24]

21 Anglo-Norman and Old French, Middle French, French *nature* active force that establishes and maintains the order of the universe, group of properties or characteristics that define objects (early 12th cent.), sort, species, race (early 12th cent.), attributes, innate disposition of a person (late 12th cent.), constitution, principle of life that animates and sustains the human body (early 13th cent.), genitals (early 13th cent.; also in Anglo-Norman in specific senses 'menstrual discharge', 'semen'), and its etymon classical Latin *nātūra* birth, constitution, character, the genitals, the creative power governing the world, the physical world, the natural course of things, naturalness in art, in post-classical Latin also the divine and human nature of Christ (6th cent.), the need to defecate and urinate (1300 in a British source) < *nāt-* , past participial stem of *nāscī* to be born (see nascent adj.) + *-ūra* -ure suffix. (OED).

22 "being made" vs "being created" (Weber, translation mine).

23 "Not only in recent days has human birth been anything but a natural process." (Weber, translation mine).

24 The for-profit sale and distribution of semen and oocytes, as well as commercialised gestational surrogacy are legal or illegally thriving in several countries and form a global network of reproductive 'tourism'. In the US specifically, the legal vendors offer control not only over the possibility of pregnancy itself via fertility treatments and egg freezing but also the sex and general

'Nature's' decisive power over human status has been, if not replaced, at least restricted. Weber identifies the boundary between nature and technology as generally alterable and potentially man-made (cf.35). It could be argued, considering humanity's age-old endeavours to understand and control our reproduction that we were 'unnatural' beings all along, further corroding the ontological boundaries around our identity.

Changes to the status quo of the body are made, not only in the very beginnings of its formation but also during its lifetime: Prosthetics, from artificial limbs to implantable bioactive neuroelectronic interfaces,[25] raise the question how artificial additions to the body affect its human identity and status. If the material and specific origin of the shape influences its classification while its function remains the same, that begs the question according to what criteria and at what point this change occurs. Where are the concrete corporal boundaries between human and artificial human? Where do we draw the lines between human, cyborg, and android? Referring to this problem of classification, Donna Haraway's "Cyborg Manifesto" states that "Late twentieth-century machines have made thoroughly ambiguous the difference between natural and artificial, mind and body, self-developing and externally designed, and many other distinctions that used to apply to organisms and machines." (2000, 293ff). The seemingly steadfast corporal sphere of the human condition is being progressively deconstructed. As the lines between body and object are blurred and reformed in the shape of an

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genetic make-up of the resulting child; including the colour of eyes, hair, skin.
The Fairfax Cryobank, for example, offers sperm in "Just 3 Easy Steps […]: 1. Select your sperm donor using our Donor Search. 2. Place your order by calling us […] or by ordering online 3. We will confirm your order, collect some information […] and ship your specimens." A helpful drop-down menu lets the customer select race, hair, and eye colour (additional possibilities include height and education) and subsequently leads to profiles of eligible donors, complete with a childhood picture and an audio-file of their voice. <https://fairfaxcryobank.com/> (last accessed 30/08/21).

25 The medical fields concerned with artificial additions to the body for therapeutic purposes are diverse and expanding. The replacement of limbs, bones, skin and other organs, as well as certain brain functions are part of medical practice and research.
Neuroscience is progressively developing treatments involving implants to treat a range of disabilities and afflictions; cf.
Adewole, Dayo and Daniel K. Cullen. 2019. "Bioactive Neuroelectronic Interfaces". *Frontiers in Neuroscience*. <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fnins.2019.00269/abstract> (last accessed 12/03/19).
Microbiological 'Tissue engineering', a term coined by Auguste Villiers de l'Isle-Adam's 1886 novel *L'Ève Future*, is concerned with artificially created histoid-transplants; cf.
Maher, Brendan. 2013. "Tissue Engineering: How to Build a Heart". *Nature*. Vol. 499 Issue 7456. 20-22.

ontological maze of corporal uncertainties, distinguishing human from non-human can no longer remain instinctual nor definitive.

Giorgio Agamben, in *The Open: Man and Animal*, argues that the human phenotype functions as an anthropological machine (cf.26); “neither a clearly defined species, nor a substance; it is, rather, a machine or device for producing the recognition of the human” (Agamben 26). Acknowledging the areas in which its clearly defined boundaries are vulnerable to negotiation and deconstruction, Agamben sees the human body’s recognition value as its primary function. Human corporality thus becomes less irrefutable biological fact and more anthropological tool; a signifier of humanity. According to Agamben, the machine “functions by excluding as not (yet) human an already human being from itself, that is, by animalizing the human, by isolation the non-human within the human” (37). Already acknowledging the potential for a non-human body to become human, he states that human corporeal identity creates itself by distinguishing itself from Others. Although Agamben focuses on animalistic Others,[26] his use of the word machine to describe how human bodies function anthropologically, is of interest for this analysis’ approach to humanity through the android figure. Agamben’s theory allows for artificial versions of the anthropological machine – mechanic machines if you will – to signify in the same way a non-artificial human does. The Other might thereby assimilate itself through mimetic means. By creating artificial bodies, mimetic copies of humanity are literalised and thus able to affect and potentially appropriate humanness. Additionally, considering the complex power dynamics inherent in creator-creation-relationships, humanity could appropriate and abolish itself.

Art and its own relationship with nature run parallel to this discourse on the contiguity of artificial and non-artificial humanity in real life. Artistic depiction creates and contextualises human understandings of nature; including our own: “nature, for us is *made*, as both fiction and fact.” (2004, 65, original emphasis), as Donna Haraway puts it. Art has thematised the deconstruction of humanity’s corporal boundaries long before reflecting them became substantial in the face of technological reality. Many medical and aesthetic procedures that tend to challenge established notions about the humanity of the body have been

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26 I address human-animal relations and their productive Otherness in II.3.3.

imagined artistically before they were explored in reality. The reciprocal relationship between art and life has been part of artistic discourse from antiquity to today. From Plato and Aristotle's fundamental understanding of art as an imitation of life[27] to Oscar Wilde's counterpoint that life imitates art in turn,[28] the cyclical, mimetic connection between the two remains of interest. Jeff Kelley, in his edition of Allan Kaprow's *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*, writes: "we rewrite the book in terms of ourselves. We distill a clause from a paragraph, and if it resonates with whatever else we read and write and think and do, it becomes in time an operating principle, a philosophical stance." (xi). The human habit of extracting meaning and conviction from art elevates it from a mere imitation of reality, to a way to give back to it. To inform, influence, and shape the world. Much of what is, has been imagined before it was and much of what is to come will be inspired by our collective human imaginations. Kelley's specification that the artistic experiences resonate with each other to impact reality holds true for the artificial human's journey from art to real life: it is our continuous artistic engagement with the figure, that brings it to life. Self-reflection is among the main motivators for this engagement. Kaprow himself states that

> artists have found their identities over and over in that white expanse of canvas, and many the resulting works look remarkably alike. When the plunge into depths bring togetherness up to the surface, the adventure must be shifted to the pursuit of identities. (50ff).

By deriving identity from art and feeding this identity back into it, we produce humanity. The concept is as constructed as it is internalised and art is an essential aspect of both its creation and distribution.

As part of this process, the artificial human, a literalised thought-experiment, has been imagined in many forms. Fictitious creation-processes of artificial human bodies have been depicted countless times: diverse scenarios ranging from divine intervention, alchemy, and pseudo-science to semi-realistic concept engineering and factory production settings. The problem of these bodies' humanity, or lack thereof, is often among the central themes. The depicted bodies' materiality, their origin, and deterioration (or lack thereof) are part of the physical

27 For a more in-depth explanation and discussion of the idea's significance for this book, see II.1.4.

28 As detailed in "The Decay of Lying".

delineation of humanness from and through its mimetic copy. Their mimetic relationship to humanity enables us to reflect and thereby contemplate our past, present, and potential future selves. Klaus Benesch has argued that “cybernetic bodies seem to provide sites of cultural indeterminacy that call forth radical ideological concepts and allow for the constant reenactment of the many fantasies and fears associated with the shaky status of the “posthuman” self” (2002, 29). He identifies the mimetic process as simultaneous embodiment and disembodiment (cf.33), reinforcing the hybridity and in between status of the artificial human figure and its significant potential for both identification and abstraction. The details of the portrayal are of interest here, because the figure's efficacy includes the meta-level. While layering depiction upon depiction and mimesis upon mimesis, the medium and technique through which we produce these figures are meaningful indicators of their artistic functions. Their materiality itself is productive. Because of this, android art habitually explores the questions raised earlier: How can we approach the corporeal dimension of humanity, if it cannot be defined?

In an effort to trace some of this artistic discourse on the corporality of artificial humans and see how they translate to notions about corporeal humanity, I discuss three instances of artificial men in art[29] in the following chapter. The selected examples are from different periods and employ different approaches to art, humanity, and artificial humanity. They also all arrive at differing conclusions, if any. As is often the case, the questions asked are of greater interest than the answers provided: I read *Frankenstein* as a failed mimesis and a comment on the materiality of the human. In “The Bicentennial Man” I analyse a systematic negotiation of the boundaries around corporeal humanity the text explores in the context of very literal self-mimesis. Finally, with *Uncanny Valley*, I approach performance art’s physical presence in the context of a meta-commentary on theatre, art, and (in)authentic humanity. The discussed bodies range from

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29 I explore the considerable significance of gender and, by extension, sex for the android figure in greater detail in II.3.2. Suffice it so say at this point that the androids employed as examples in the following are consistently male, as their portrayal and perception is better suited for a general examination of corporeal humanity. Artificial female bodies are traditionally explicitly female and subject to objectification and fetishisation on the basis of their artificial sex. The male body by contrast can stand in for humanity as a whole; underlining how masculinity is widely treated as a human standard that femininity deviates from.

monstrous to naturalistic; from mimetically perfect to explicitly artificial. Their categorisation, placement, and function within the three commentaries on the physical boundaries of humanity serve as a starting point for this examination of ourselves.

### II.1.2 Monstrous Materiality in *Frankenstein*

In her preface to the 1831 one-volume edition Mary Shelley calls her novel *Frankenstein* her "hideous prodigy" (10).[30] Shelley's metaphoric miracle child prompted three editions and a theatre adaptation during her own time and has since established itself as an irrefutable presence in both popular culture and scholarly research. Often credited with founding the genre of Science Fiction with its first publication in 1818[31] and since adapted into heterogeneous art forms, the text has entrenched itself into scholarly research and the popular cultural consciousness in equal measure. Its themes and topics – human hubris, the ethics of science, artificial humanity, and the question who really is the monstrous villain of the story, creature or creator[32] – have sustained relevance. In the context of rising public awareness about artificial intelligence and medical advances in cybernetic organisms, it is *Frankenstein*, Shelley's "hideous phantasm" (9), among other predictive art, that is revisited, discussed, and used to evoke disturbing worst-case-scenarios of scientific progress gone wrong.[33] In the following, it is going to be analysed focusing on the distinct

30 All following citations, unless otherwise indicated: Shelley, Mary. [1831] 1994. *Frankenstein*. Penguin Popular Classics: London.

31 Without the author's name, but with the earlier cited foreword by Percy B. Shelley.

32 This problem makes the proper framing and indication of the creature challenging at times. I have chosen to refer to the creature as it and its creator as he, indicating their respective failed and established classification as human. In the following, the various pronouns referring to the androids will be chosen according to this differentiation and thus vary.

33 In lieu of a complete list of adaptations and modern re-interpretations, a short selection of recent retellings shall indicate the text's continued relevance and extensive potential:
*Penny Dreadful*, a 2014 Netflix series by John Logan, featured the familiar figures inhabiting new power dynamics: Here Frankenstein builds his creature a female mate, who reverses the complete lack of female agency in the novel. The portrayal links creature creation to gender creation and shows her emancipation and empowerment as a feminist critique of male entitlement to the female form.
In 2016 Liam Scarlett with The Royal Ballet staged a *Frankenstein* adaption for dance, translating the text's themes and conflicts into choreography. The bodily expression and physical presence of

material quality of its artificial human figure and the impact this mimetic catastrophe and its corporeal narrative frame have had on the tradition that followed her. I am going to read the text as a failed human self-mimesis and focus on how it constructs humanity, as well as non-humanity, through deterministic corporality.

Shelley's curious term "prodigy" is among several evocations of a nurturing, maybe maternal relationship between Shelley and her text in the 1831 foreword to the revised, and arguably somewhat defused, edition. The foreword addresses the author's then unusual combination of gender, age, and grotesque subject matter: "the question, so very frequently asked me, 'How I, then a young girl, came to think of and to dilate upon so very hideous an idea?" (5). The colourful origin of her text as a ghost story writing competition with Lord Byron and her then-lover and later husband at lake Geneva in the summer-less summer of 1816, is conveyed among the humble disparaging of her "scribbling" (5) and praise of her husband's superior intellect (cf.6). The foreword is the public self-portrait of a woman successful in the male-dominated world of literary art; her womanhood explicit and entailing a performance of expedient Socratic humility. Arguably, Shelley thereby conducts a form of mimetic self-construction building a potentially artificial public self with words, much like her titular figure recreates himself through flesh. In this context the image of the text as prodigy is interesting: the "offspring of happier days" (10) that she is affectionate towards (cf.10), associates text-production as an artistic procreation-process with the relationship between the proud but humble mother and the prospering child.

Linking authorship to parenthood is a well-established trope. The creative process has been linked to pregnancy and birth, and the relationship of artist and art to parent and child numerous times throughout literary history. Since Plato compared biological and spiritual pregnancy in his *Symposium*[34] the topos of specifically male immortality through art has been introduced and perpetuated by

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the performance fit with this analysis' corporeal reading of the material.
Jeanette Winterson's 2019 novel *Frankkissstein* retraces its pretext's focus on the relation between mind and matter in combining current musings about artificial intelligence, gender and body identity, sexuality, and Brexit in a literary echo of *Frankenstein.*

34 "Those who are pregnant in the body only, betake themselves to women and beget children-this is the character of their love; their offspring, as they hope, will preserve their memory and giving them the blessedness and immortality which they desire in the future. But souls which are pregnant-for there certainly are men who are more creative in their souls than in their bodies conceive that which is proper for the soul to conceive or contain." Plato here quotes Dinotema of Mantinea (cf. Castle 194ff.).

the likes of William Shakespeare[35] and Alexander Pope.[36] Terry J. Castle goes as far as calling it "the traditional fixation on the poetic birth" (207) in his examination of English poetics from 1660 to 1820 and the earlier cited Klaus Benesch asserts that "writing in Western culture is best defined by its similarities to the power of procreation" (2002, 17). He cites Sandra Gilbert's and Susan Gubar's inquiry after "the pen [as] a metaphorical penis" (Gilbert et al. 3), as well as Edward Said's description of the author as "a begetter, father" (Said 49), underlining the prevalence of the literary paternity metaphor (cf. Benesch 2002, 17) as "a metaphor for the allegedly male forces of genius" (Benesch 2002, 18).

Art framed as an opportunity to recreate and perpetuate the (male) self can be read as an asexual reproductive strategy; an opportunity to create an extension of the self, emancipated from the biological and societal restraints of sexual procreation. Fathering children is dependent on female biology, whereas creating art is sovereignty: an independent, controllable furthering of the artistic self. The metaphor is, of course, a physical one. Family ties traditionally have a biological connotation and the process of procreation a profoundly corporeal one. Conception, pregnancy, labour, and birth have all been linked to artistic creation; utilising the bodily experience, both in positive and negative depictions, to convey the experience of creating art: The artistic idea is depicted as fertilisation or impregnation and the creative process as gestation or pregnancy (specifically the process of nurturing a new being into existence through one's own, physical self). The completion of a work of art is in turn linked to labour and ultimately birth; painful but wondrous.[37]

35 "Those children nursed, delivered from thy brain,/ To take a new acquaintance of thy mind." (sonnet 77 l.11-12).

36 "How hints, like spawn, scarce quick in embryo lie/ How new-born nonsense first is taught to cry/ Maggots half-form'd in rhyme exactly meet/ and learn to crawl upon poetic feet" (The Dunciad I. 55-62).

37 Phillip Sidney, for example, writes in the first sonnet of his sequence *Astrophel and Stella* "Thus great with child to speak, and helpless in my throes,/ Biting my truant pen, beating myself for spite/'Fool' said my Muse to me, 'look in thy heart and write." (l.12-14). The bodily uncomfortableness of pregnancy, and by extension the physical risk and severity associated with it, are linked to the speaker, the fictive, first-person poet. The writing process becomes physical; the urge to create – in this case to express his affection for a loved one – is expressed as a bodily condition: inescapable, agonising, and self-expanding. Thus, Sydney links human reproduction and artistic production through the means of artistic self-mimesis: The poet is recreating himself in the fictitious poet immortalising himself through art.

Shelley's own claim on the metaphor of art as offspring thus serves two functions: it establishes her within the male-dominated literary tradition from antiquity to 19th century England, while also evoking notions of femininity and respectable motherhood necessary for the socially acceptable performance of womanhood at the time. Interestingly, the ambiguity of the metaphor in the preface corresponds with the same imagery in *Frankenstein* itself. Frankenstein is depicted as a creator figure who, literally, recreates himself. The creature's mimetic body, reimagining humanity, can be read as a form of asexual procreation, not unlike artistic production. The relationship between Frankenstein and his creature is repeatedly implied as parental. Their first verbal interaction demonstrates this creative dynamic:

> you, my creator, detest and spurn me, thy creature, to whom thou art bound by ties only dissoluble by the annihilation of one of us. […] Do your duty towards me, and I will do mine towards you. […] I am thy creature, and I will be even mild and docile to my natural lord and king if thou wilt also perform thy part, the which though owest me. Oh, Frankenstein, be not equitable to every other and trample upon me alone, to whom thy justice, and even thy clemency and affection, is most due. Remember that I am thy creature; I ought to be thy Adam, but I am rather the fallen angel. (95ff.).

The creature's plead towards its maker situates their relationship within a firmly hierarchical power dynamic. Its maker is evoked as a creative triad of god, artist, and parent. On the textual level, Frankenstein is a creator in an abstract, religious, as well as explicit, physical sense. Extra-textually, Frankenstein appears as a metaphorical artist and creator of artificial life.[38] Interestingly, the creature's emotionally loaded submission is qualified by a corporeal threat: in pointing out its physical superiority (cf.95), the creature arrests its maker in a mimetic relationship and resultant responsibility that he does not want – by physical means. The body created thus extorts and enforces a creator-creation-dynamic physically from its maker. The text manifests its internal and external allusions to the creation process as a complex, corporeal relationship through the physically charged relationship of its protagonists.

In "Birth Without a Woman: Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* in the Context of Eighteen-Century Ideas on Birth, motherhood, and Midwifery", Julia Schneider argues that Shelley's depiction of Frankenstein's asexual reproduction can be read as a critique of male scientific dominance over the child-bearing female body due

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38 Frankenstein refers to his work as 'art' (cf.54).

to the increasing access and alteration of the obstetric field by male medical influences during the 18th century.[39] The lack of female agency and predominantly female (and filial) victimhood in the novel links Frankenstein's science with death: "women are the ones most threatened by Victor's science. […] bodies in transition are at the mercy of scientists. They have the authority to decide life and death. […] it is Frankenstein's kiss that transforms Elizabeth into a corpse." (Schneider 51ff.). According to Schneider, Frankenstein's creation act equals the "muting of female influence" (56) and its failure can be read as a hyperbole rejecting purely scientific approaches to parentage. She draws a connection between the deformed product of Frankenstein's reproductive act and the idea of *maternal imagination*, a "pseudoscientific theory […] used to claim that monstrous births are caused by the female mind, which is portrayed as easily impressionable" (Schneider 48). Following this reading, the text is critical of male connoted notions of self-reproduction, not only in an abstract, literary way but also in an immediate physical one. His asexual attempt at self-mimesis not only fails but does so disastrously. This interpretation further emphasises the corporeal element in the text: a most physical approach to humanity through its reproductive preoccupation.[40] The thematic link between human reproduction in a biological and a mimetic sense, including the concept of artificial humans as a self-mimetic act comparable to sexual reproduction, is connected through the idea of self-immortalisation. The figure of the artificial human in art associates artificial and non-artificial human-making.

These aspects of creative power in and through art embed Frankenstein's plot in an underlying structure of mimetic relations and allusions. Thus, the text is a pertinent example for the structural model of human self-mimesis introduced earlier: humanity representing itself through artistic reproduction and depicting these mimetic figures likewise reproducing themselves artificially. Progressive mimetic relations linking humanity to its artificial reproductions: literal, fictional, and everything in between. The author's self-framing and creative act are mirrored by her creation's creative efforts: Shelley's authorship and

39 Interestingly, this access and Shelley's access to the male dominated literary field mirror each other, though one is facilitated by patriarchal social structures, while the other is aggravated by them.

40 This link is further explored in II.2.3.

Frankenstein's experiment are mirroring parts of the text's mimetic complex; the scientist's creation of life a grotesque metaphor for the artist's own creation. Both creators engage in a form of asexual procreation of the self: Shelley's "hideous prodigy" (10) and Frankenstein's "monster on whom I h[ave] bestowed existence" (60) are both offspring of their respective creators. Creating the text is thus collated to creating the creature's body: collecting parts, stitching them together, and bringing the new form to life. Grave robbery and reviving dead matter become a metaphor for artistic creation. Shelley's text, like most literary production, did indeed draw inspiration from various sources.[41] The echoes of other texts forming a new one are mirrored through the bizarre physical realisation of the metaphor. As the deceased limbs of other bodies form a new body, the text is formed. Likewise, the text's structure, the Russian doll of narrative perspectives nestled into each other – captain, creator, and creature – is reminiscent of a body stitched together from differing parts: the recipient, both extra- and intertextual, remaining on the outside, the skin, Frankenstein's mad tale forming its body, and the creature at its heart.

It is worthwhile to consider Europe's 18th-century relationship with mimesis as an artistic concept in this context. The rise of individualism and the prevalent idea of the artist as 'genius', a lone creator whose artistic might yields art organically, necessitated renouncing art as an inherently intertextual and thus mimetic process. After previous periods' focus on collective categories of belonging, the individual emerged – with a vengeance. Arguably influenced by the streamlining forces of industrialisation and automatisation, many romantics rejected the notion that art could be the product of conscious manufacturing. Art was widely understood as original, 'authentic' creation, as opposed to a re-production of existing material. The birth metaphor for artistic creation evokes this mindset powerfully: art is meant to be conceived, grown, and birthed from nothing; a product only of one self. It bridges cultural notions which valued "etherial, non-sensory (male) over the purely corporeal (female) contributions to

41 The French translation of German Ghost stories *Fantasmagoriana* is mentioned by Shelley as the inspiration of the contest that motivated the novel initially (cf. Macdonald et al.: 10). Samuel Taylor Coleridge ("Ancient Mariner") and William Wordsworth ("Tintern Abbey") are quoted directly.

procreative processes." (Benesch 2002, 19)[42] and thus allows male creators to self-reproduce abstractly and creatively. Notably, *Frankenstein* fundamentally breaks with this image: both the text and its creature are explicitly not naturally conceived and wholly born figures. They are patchworks; compounds of bits and pieces and their made-ness and explicit physicality are openly thematised. Shelley's para-textual engagement with her process, the text's narrative layered-ness, and her figure's literal, corporeal patchwork all differentiate the text from the period's prevalent understanding of art. It is an expressly mimetic text written in an age of mimetic decline. While Shelley evokes motherhood as creative authorisation, her text is neither an abstract nor 'natural' growth: it is an artificially built, asexually created physical product and so is the creature, whose technological creation and mimetic corporality utilise and transform the established metaphor of artistic paternity to a hybrid between the male and female connotations of the procreative process Benesch details.

Compared to the works of authors like Sidney or Shakespeare, Shelley utilises the topos of patrilineal poetic self-production somewhat more explicitly: The offspring is no mere metaphor in the text but tangible flesh. Frankenstein aspires to recreate himself by discovering an artificial way to create a human body and spirit; the "ability to give life to an animal as complex and wonderful as man" (51). His declaration to "pursue nature to her hiding places" (51) implies a rivalry or even opposition of his own and biological creative processes. He alludes to ultimately wanting to reverse natural death.[43] In *Transient Bodies in Anglophone Literature and Culture*, Sarah Schäfer-Althaus and Sara Strauß read Frankenstein's desire to cheat death as part of a larger tradition of morbid fascination with the human body's transience in English literature (cf.9). They presents various ways in which human corporeal mutability has been processed through artistic production. The alienating, yet solidarizing effect the human aging process, illness, and death have on the corporeal dimension of human identity is of special interest for this project, and highly relevant for my thesis and the works

42 Here Benesch's argument paraphrases Thomas Laqueur's *Making Sex*.

43 "Pursuing these reflections, I thought that if I could bestow animation upon lifeless matter, I might in process of time (although I now found it impossible) renew life where death had apparently devoted the body to corruption" (52).

I explore regarding it.[44] Humanity's quest to overcome its mortality is part of the artificial human figure's appeal, which, according to Schäfer-Althaus and Strauß, is because our physical decay is how "the body ultimately draws attention to the transience of the human existence." (11). Thus, our corporeal existence's biological consequences are part of our artistic self-thematisation and potentially indicate our individual and collective ephemeral nature. *Frankenstein* portrays the disastrous consequences these failed human ambitions to immortalise ourselves potentially entail.

The creature is the embodiment of this initial hubris: its isolation, suffering, and revenge are the destructive consequence of the attempt at artificial self-recreation. Initially it is its creator's conviction that his "new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me." (51) His claim to artificial paternity becomes explicit when Frankenstein states that "No father could claim the gratitude of his child so completely as I should deserve [my creation's]." (51ff.). His illusion of independent, proprietorial, and absolute fatherhood abruptly ends in the face of his eventual success. Interestingly, it is his creature's living face that provokes his immediate change of heart:

> It was one in the morning; the rain patterned dismally against the panes and my candle was nearly burnt out, when, by the glimmer of the half-extinguished light, I saw the dull yellow eye of the creature open; it breathed hard, and a convulsive motion agitated its limbs.
> How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe […]? His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful Great God! His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of pearly whiteness; but the luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun-white sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion and straight black lips. (55).

Notably, this very visual description of the creature is the first time its body is comprehensively described. Where before abstract notions dominated Frankenstein's musings on his project, he is now confronted with the actual physicality of his eagerly anticipated creation – and he recoils. What he expected to be beautiful reveals itself as monstrous to him. Especially the eyes, an organ

44 In the following, I am thematising physical vulnerability to death and illness both as human identifiers, marking us as part of our ontological group in "The Bicentennial Man", and one of the ways to alienate ourselves from our corporeal existence in *Uncanny Valley*. Beyond that, the greater, or lesser, physical durability of the examined androids are almost always analytically productive aspects of their characterisation and structural function.

traditionally associated with mirroring soul and character, are disconcerting. The translucence and turbidity evoked by his description give an impression of not-quite-humanity; a distorted imitation of a healthy human body. Thus, the verdict on the creature's humanness is passed long before the creature is shown to think, speak, or act. It is deemed a catastrophe solely based on its corporeal presence and aesthetic.

Up to this point, Frankenstein's creative fervour is absolute. He describes himself as a man obsessed.[45] His fixation, leading him to isolate himself from family and friends and focus solely on his work, is described as a physically and mentally taxing process: "I appeared rather like one doomed by slavery to toil in the mines […]. Every night I was oppressed by a slow fever, and I became nervous to a most painful degree" (54). The description of the bodily sacrifices Frankenstein makes to create life suggest a physically present rather than purely abstract relation to his creature. Like a biological child, the offspring is born through physical suffering. This physicality is not only apparent before the creature's awakening but also characterises the ensuing interactions between creator and creature.

Frankenstein's emotional process – his horror, relief, and anger – is conveyed via corporeal reaction and imagery throughout the text. His horror initially and immediately manifests in flight; he removes himself from the laboratory and tries to follow up this physical flight with a mental one: he goes to sleep. When he awakens he again reacts bodily to the situation: "a cold dew covered my forehead, my teeth chattered, and every limb became convulsed" (56). Confronted with his creature, who has followed him, Frankenstein's horror at his own creation has not diminished. He recoils from the creature trying to touch his body and flees once more. His horror is again expressed physically: "Sometimes my pulse beat so quickly and hardly that I felt the palpitation of every artery; at others, I nearly sank to the ground through languor and extreme weakness." (56) and "a cold shivering came over me" (58). His continued flight – "endeavouring by bodily exercise to ease the load that weighed upon my mind." (57) – finally succeeds and his relief, too, manifests itself physically: "I felt my flesh tingle with excess of sensitiveness, and my pulse beat rapidly. I was unable to remain for a

45 E.g. "I had desired it with an ardour that far exceeded moderation" (55).

single instant in the same place; I jumped over the chairs, clapped my hands" (59). After this immediate high, he lays sick with "a nervous fever" (59) for several months.

The relationship between creator and creature is dominated by the uncontrollable physicality of Frankenstein's reaction to his successful experiment. His immediate horror is later refueled by its crimes and the anger he targets the creature with, too, expresses itself physically when he tries to attack it (cf.95). However, the initial revulsion he feels is entirely instinctual and embraced with the same indiscriminate fervour and physical expression as his earlier devotion to his work was. From one moment to another his obsession inverts itself; what he perceived as the beautiful features of scientific progress before becomes the "unearthly ugliness […] too horrible for human eyes." (94ff.). Before the creature has done anything to incriminate or redeem itself ethically, it is its appearance, a quality entirely controlled and bestowed by the creator now renouncing it, which instantaneously causes Frankenstein to classify it as a non-human abomination and abandon it emotionally and physically. In the moment it opens its eyes and draws its first breath, ergo before it can manifest moral sense or corruption, it is labelled and judged upon its defining quality: hideousness, a term which is applied to the creature fourteen times in the 1818 edition. It remains the main catalyst of not only Frankenstein's but every human's reaction of physically manifested horror[46] towards it. This horror is entirely independent from moral outrage over the creature's eventual deeds. Its deformed appearance is established as the unsurmountable rift between humanity and itself and thus as an indicator of inhumanity. That the condemnation he is experiencing is entirely material in nature remains apparent when creator and creature eventually find each other again: in an attempt to make itself heard, the creature attempts to cover Frankenstein's eyes (cf.97). This is also evident in its one positive interaction with humans: the initial conversation with the blind De Lacey (cf.128ff.) proves that it is its body, not its character that dehumanises the creature. Frankenstein however can not let himself be blinded as he cannot bear the physical touch of his creation.

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46 See for example the De Lacey's reaction of fainting, flight and physical violence (cf.130) to his appearance, a family that was extensively characterised as morally righteous people, and William's instant revulsion (cf.137), establishing that even children instinctively reject its monstrous form.

This shows that the corporeal dissociation from its fellow humans is twofold, concerning identity and interaction. Since "All men hate the wretched" (95), the creature's body is both used to classify it as non-human and, consequently, physically rejected. It is never touched non-violently throughout the text.

The creature is a curious combination of material repulsiveness and linguistic beauty; a dichotomy that is mirrored by the humanity of its voice and the monstrosity of its body. The text itself is subject to this as well, though it inverses the contrast and instead juxtaposes its gruesome content with the aesthetic materiality of the language. When it eventually focalises, the creature's eloquence, emotional sensitivity, and personal tragedy contrast with the instinctual repulsion and instantaneous dehumanisation Frankenstein describes beforehand. In Frankenstein's tale the creature initially has no voice; his horror does not allow him to listen to it ("He might have spoken, but I did not hear" (56)). To the recipient, however, the creature's expressive enunciation is immediately humanising. Within the textual medium, language becomes the means of depiction twice over: two contrasting pictures are painted with words, two accounts given, and two portraits of the creature are painted. Whether the recipient chooses the human or the humane version shapes their interpretation, of both the novel and the nature of humanity, as either a physical or an abstract quality.

The text makes the creature's humanity apparent in various ways: Generally speaking, its emotional range and social nature attest to its internal non-monstrosity. Furthermore, the creature is portrayed with an affinity for music (cf.103) and literature (cf.123ff). The reference to a vegetarian or vegan diet (cf.141) also alludes to a non-violent nature.[47] The creature, in its own words, "glowed with love and humanity." (96) Notably, the text chooses the very same

47 Both Shelleys were early advocates for the meat-less diet, as illustrated for example by P.B. Shelley's philosophical poem with notes, "Queen Mab": "The whole of human science is comprised in one question: How can the advantages of intellect and civilisation be reconciled with the liberty and pure pleasures of natural life? How can we take the benefits and reject the evils of the system which is now interwoven with the fibre of our being? I believe that abstinence from animal food and spirituous [sic] liquors would, in a great measure, capacitate us for the solution of this important question." (Shelley 1821, Canto 17. VIII.). A vegetarian diet is here presented as culturally healing and can thus be read as a meaningful characterisation in *Frankenstein*.
It is noteworthy that the creature later does feed Frankenstein a hare (cf.198), his willingness to kill an animal to keep his creator alive underlining the absoluteness of his desire for revenge and the pursuit of Frankenstein's prolonged perdition at the cost of its own moral superiority.

overarching qualities examined in this thesis in order to express its creature's humanness. This suggests that this comparatively early example for the pattern may well have influenced later depictions of artificial humanity and suggest mimetic connections between versions of the figure. Alternatively, the parallels may indicate stable and ubiquitous notions on what humanity is characterised by. In *Frankenstein*, the creature's early engagement with human cultural achievement and subsequent identification with and even surpassing of human values and morals are however nullified by the determinative nature of its body. Its appearance is the defining element to all its interaction with humans, no matter its approach. Physical monstrosity is here shown to trump morality, sociality, and intellect. Interestingly, the only human quality it is awarded without question is gender.[48] Maleness is assigned to it instinctively even by those denying its humanity. In this case, gendering the artificial human figure is caused by the creature's undeniable corporality. Gender-assignation may in this case be the directly related to sexual characteristics selected for the creature by its creator. Sex and gender are therefore consciously bestowed and consequently applied, even as the body in question is explicitly classified as non-human. Following the generally pervasive motif of physicality, sex remains the deterministic factor here, as the creature's social isolation hinders its performance of social gender identity (although the creature itself nevertheless does identify with the label). Generally speaking, the creature's corporeal and social non-humanity is entirely grounded in the materiality of the body in question, suggesting that human identity is here presented as an entirely corporeal category, removed from emotional or mental aspects. Even though the creature's body is human-like, its monstrosity outweighs all other traits and establishes it firmly as Other.

This is expressive of cultural attitudes towards the corporeal Other that developed during the text's emergence. Late 19th and early 20th century England saw a noticeable cultural fascination with deformity. The increased importance placed on rigid societal norms distinguishing the proper from the improper during the Victorian age resulted in a heightened sensibility for Otherness in a negative sense. Driven by religious influence on notions of morality, imperial expansion

48 The ubiquitous presence of gender in almost all chosen artworks is thematised in II.3.2.'s closer examination of its implications for social human identity production.

necessitating a clear national identity, and the beginning class-movement, culture perpetuated the need to confirm an Us by differentiating it from Others. Visible Otherness was an enticing possibility to make the intangible tangible. Those whose difference was plainly observable helpfully delineated the in-group associated with morality, civilisation, and intelligence from the out-group. *Mens sana in corpore sano*, the idea that what was considered a healthy character presupposed a healthy – that is typical, 'normal' – body, facilitated ostracising the corporeal Other. In *A Cultural History of Disability in the Long Nineteenth Century,* Editors Joyce Huff and Martha Stoddard Homes discuss the intricacies of this culture and understanding of the connection between corporality and humanity. Their collection quotes *Frankenstein* at the beginning of its introduction, immediately acknowledging the role of artistic representation in cultural portrayal and production: "the novel poses commentary on the tyranny of the visual in social relationships – but also juxtaposes a disability experience of isolation, stigma, and peril with one in which a disabled person is an integral part of a familial or social network." (1).[49] Huff and Holmes here reference the contrast between De Lacey's blindness and the creature's deformity, the different reactions they trigger, and the greater impact of aesthetic deformity on perceived humanness. They quote Robert Bogdan's definition of the 'freak' as a "frame of mind, a set of practices, a way of thinking about the body" (3), rather than a purely physical category and thus reinforce the link between humanity as an abstract concept and a corporeal identity. Formats like the 'freak-show' sensationalised visible human physical differences to that end. Monetisation resulted in exaggeration, falsification, and exploitation of atypical bodies and facilitated narratives connecting physical 'abnormality' with moral and mental chasms.[50] Nadja Durbach, who calls 'freak-shows' "the primary cultural site for public and professional encounters with the atypical bodies in the nineteenth century" (23), differentiates between the larger and multi-faceted group of people with disabilities at the time and 'freaks', in the sense of people, who utilised physical differences performatively. The creature, whose artistic function

49 They thematise the interplay between individual and social and thus connect corporeal and social humanity, a connection I am exploring further in II.3.

50 A trend observable in the art produced at the time, for example Robert Louis Stevenson's similarly influential 1886 novella *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*.

arguably performs the deformity of human form in order to explore the corporeal boundaries of humanity, can be counted among the latter group. Durbach states that the institution of 'freak shows'

> obviously depended on drawing a distinction between the "normal" bodies of spectators and the "abnormal" bodies on display. They attracted audiences not only by using atypical bodies as others against which the self could be measured, but also by stimulating curiosity about the instability of race, gender, sexuality, class, civilisation, colonialism, immigration, slavery, individualism, and, in fact, the very boundaries of humanity (28).

She thus confirms the implications of the artistically placed atypical human body for the conceptual boundaries of humanness. The fascination with the Other body is both an attraction in itself and reveals how unreliable a human identity based on corporality is. Confrontation, not only with our mimetic copy but a distorted and deformed copy of ourselves, questions the nature of our self.

The creature's proposed solution to its corporeally determined Otherness and consequent societal isolation is the creation of another like it: another attempted self-mimesis layering the text's self-reproductions. To remove itself from one group identity, where it is rejected, it seeks to establish another. The demand underlines the perceived insurmountable barrier his deformity constitutes. Monstrous materiality is here depicted as an Otherness that cannot be overcome and effectively bars the creature from humanity – both in a social and identity-inducing sense. Its hope to create other Others like it indicates that norms can be created through shared characteristics and thus suggests that societies, including human society as a whole, are artificial constructs that exist through shared identities. Self-creativity is thus established as a corporeal and social basis of humanity. The creature attempts to lay claim on this basis and become a third creator figure in the text's mimetic complex.[51] It is, however, unable to recreate itself in the same manner in which Frankenstein, and by extension the metaphorical artist, has done: independently. The creature is mimetically impotent, as it cannot re-create itself artificially and has no means to do so biologically. Its tragedy is the inability to procreate and the consequent dependence on the creator who rejected him. The resulting power dynamic favours the creative figure. Frankenstein's refusal and the creature's inability to

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51 Before demanding a mate to procreate, the creature also tries to gain a child companion non-sexually cf.137. When this fails, it notably exclaims its power to "create desolation" (137), seeking emotional refuge in negative creative agency.

persuade or pressure him seal its fate and ensure its eventual extinction. Self-mimetic ability is here suggested as essential for the survival of both the individual and species. It is noteworthy that Frankenstein explicitly refuses the creature's request because he is afraid that creating a female mate would enable "a race of devils [to] be propagated upon the earth" (160). To create a female counterpart for his original male offspring would complete the allusion to Frankenstein as a creator-god in the Christian sense. His refusal to give his creature the means to procreate and thus biologically re-create itself in its offspring denies his creation what religious culture establishes as the inherent human ability: the god-given capability to procreate and populate the earth. Re-creation of the self is thus suggested to be part of the human condition and Frankenstein's denial of it equals his denial of the creature's humanity.

This thematic link between biological, artificial, and artistic self-reproduction implicates the aforementioned idea of human bodies as transient. Reading the creature as a failed self-mimetic act and the subsequent denial of reproduction for both Frankenstein and his creation established the artificial human figure as a reflection on *memento mori*. The attempt to immortalise oneself through self-recreation is the attempt to overcome mortality.[52] The creature's existence, life made from death, is the physical manifestation of this theme. Its body is the rebirth of the already born and died, a rejection of human transience. Body snatching,[53] the historical practice associated with utilising dead human bodies to further medical science and thus, by extension, life, here facilitates life in the literal sense and entrenches it into corporality. The undeniable success of the process is overshadowed by the creator's human failure. Frankenstein created life, yet, in his eyes, not humanity. The monstrous body he imagines himself a father to, is so instinctually aversive that his own body cannot recognise it. The text thereby anchors humanity in corporality. It is implied that *Frankenstein* denies its creature the same human transience: it is created fully formed and does not appear to age. Instead of natural death, its suicide can be read as an artificial, self-precipitated death. The creature was made to last, to overcome human

52 This semantic level to the figure shall be examined more closely in II.1.3.

53 Shelley would have been personally familiar with the praxis, as St. Pancras cemetery, where her mother was buried had a reputation for body snatching at the time she resided near it (cf. Schneider 57).

mortality, and yet chooses death freely. That this should be its preferred conclusion, reinforces the text's emphasis on self-reproduction and a thus ensured physical collective as an essential part of humanness.

Frankenstein's Adam, however, must remain without Eve and in retaliation for the destruction of its mate it kills Frankenstein's. It is not only companionship the creature begrudges its creator, it is Elisabeth's proposal to give Frankenstein children that seals her fate: "let us […] transfer our love for those whom we have lost to those yet to live. […] new and dear objects of care will be born to replace those of whom we have been so cruelly deprived" (184). The killing of women in the novel is the metaphorical death of the means to biologically – 'naturally' as opposed to artificially – recreate the male self. They remain reduced to this function in the text and are without independent aspiration, agency or, in the case of the creature's potential mate, life. As Frankenstein remains bride- and childless, he ends as a failed creator figure on several levels: he fails his offspring both creatively and emotionally and sabotages its attempt to procreate itself. Thus, he remains unsuccessful in all three aspects of the previously mentioned triad of creator figures: god, artist, and parent.

The novel's subtitle, *The Modern Prometheus*, appears curious in this context. Prometheus, the mythical creator of humankind and thus among the quintessential creator figures of artistic tradition is here linked to the failed Frankenstein, whose creative power only results in death and destruction. The early Frankenstein may have seen himself as a Promethean figure – rebelling against nature and her restrictions in creating a new species – but applied to the character later in the text, the title appears to almost mock its protagonist. Modernity appears here in a negative connotation, the implied creative force grotesquely failed. Additionally, the evocation of the Prometheus-myth is an interesting choice for the particular dynamics of *Frankenstein* because of its relevance for the text's notion of science. Prometheus – the giver of civilisation, science, and technology in a larger sense – famously bestowed humanity with an ability it does not inherently, physically possess: survive by its own means. Science and technology exist as the basis of human survival and Frankenstein, as a scientist, represents the receiver of this Promethean gift. His creature, however, is an attempt to create a non-animal independent of these abilities. Physically, the

creature does not need Prometheus' fire to function as his artificial body is much more suited to survive in a natural habitat than humans are (cf.116). That the text's creator figure should use his mythical gifts of science and technology to create a being physically mostly independent of them is striking; especially in the light of the rejection of that creature. Since the text has traditionally been read as a cautionary tale against the dangers of blind scientific hubris, a theme it doubtlessly incorporates, this detail is surprising. It would suggest that the text can also be read as a caveat against a false renouncing of the Promethean gift and the creation of a new human species independent of it.

In summary, *Frankenstein* explores the boundaries between human and non-human in corporeal terms. Physical appearance is presented as the instinctual, immediate category-defining humanity and dominates all secondary aspects like intellect, morality, and culture. The creature, despite its efforts, cannot and will not be classified as human, neither by others nor, ultimately, itself. Even though its material is human in origin, its monstrous composition is excluding it from its desired identity: "endued with a figure hideously deformed and loathsome; I was not even of the same nature as man." (116). Its greater physical durability and endurance (cf.116), its size, and above all its objectionable aesthetic prove insurmountable. The text is comparatively unyielding concerning its conclusion on the boundaries of humanity: It rejects artificial humanity as a form of humanness based on its bodily Otherness. Indeed, the corporal aspects are so dominant throughout the text that they effectively subdue its discussions of other aspects of humanity, such as moral integrity and appreciation for art. Frankenstein's failure as a creator is evident on many levels, but his failure in the physical creation process is pivotal. It is the body he created that is inhuman, not the character that was formed by its eventual socialisation, and it is its body that cannot be helped. The novel's cautionary tale of man, non-man and ambition concludes in death. The creator is reduced to the very material he built his offspring from and the creature declares not merely its intention to die but to burn its own offending body and eradicate all traces of it:

> "Soon these burning miseries will be extinct. I shall ascend my funeral pile triumphantly and exult in the agony of the torturing flames. The light of that conflagration will fade away; my ashes will be swept into the sea by the winds. My spirit will sleep in peace, or if it thinks, it will not surely think thus. Farewell." (215).

*Frankenstein's* early and uncompromising perspective on human corporality has often been revisited, since these early stages of Science Fiction literature. Later iterations of the motif continue to question how much of human identity is rooted in its physical appearance, to what degree our bodies inform our humanity, shape our internal and external perception. In the following, I turn towards one of Isaac Asimov's attempts to solve this question. "The Bicentennial Man" approaches the topic in a similarly explicit manner, through the progressive humanisation of an artificial body. However, this mimetic construction of an artificial human body is draws upon depicted as conscious and autonomous process. Humanity's creation becomes its own corporeal creator and in doing so, dismantles the power dynamics that characterise *Frankenstein*.

### II.1.3 Mimetic Incarnation in Asimov's "The Bicentennial Man":

Isaac Asimov's oeuvre is a crucial part of how we think in and about robotics today. His substantial contribution to the literary reach of the android figure has had a significant influence on the field and shaped the approach to its eventual technical realisation. Asimov's work, whether it engages with futuristic societies, technology, or philosophy, has first and foremost, been about exploring humanity. His 1976 story about an artificial man's quest[54] to become human, too, can be read as a philosophical negotiation of human identity. "The Bicentennial Man" portrays the android's progressive humanness in the context of several criteria: thematising social relationships with human characters, creativity as assign of the robots budding emotional capability, well as the development of free will and agency.[55] The text's main focus, however, lies on a detailed discussion of human corporality in relation to these mental and emotional aspects of humanity. The

54 In the sense of a journey to a specific goal, the term 'quest', usually primarily used in Fantastic literature, is remarkably applicable to Asimov's text. The metaphorical journey of the hero in the Campbellian sense can be applied to Andrew's pursuit of humanity. After all, "human "nature" is a nature continually in quest of itself, obliged at every moment to transcend what it was a moment before" (Auden 40).

55 These aspects of human identity are also thematised in II.3.4.

question of how the material, origin, and function of the android's body affect his status as artificially human lies at the centre of the text. Humanness is negotiated in terms of skin, intestines, and the materiality of the brain. Android Andrew functions as a reflector figure who is utilised to introduce categories and stages of humanity and humanness and describe their effect on the classification of the protagonist. I am examining it under its leading question: "Have you ever thought you would like to be a man?" (636),[56], and the way it deconstructs and examines the human identity in stages. The text ultimately attempts a definition of humanity, situated alongside the boundaries between artificial and human corporality.

Interestingly, Andrew's progressive self-humanisation, which the story traces alongside his developing corporeal self-construction, begins with his desire and decision to wear clothes. Covering his artificial and initially still overtly robotic body provides a catalyst for the story's gradual exploration of mimetic incarnation. The text portrays different social implications for human and robotic bodies and thereby implicates their perceived differences. Covering the body – "For warmth, cleanliness, protection, decorativeness." (649) – is perceived as a human privilege. The android's human family describes the idea of clothing on a robot as "a shame" (649) and initially rejects hiding Andrew's "beautifully functional" (649) body. Exhibiting the robotic body is here portrayed as desirable, thereby classifying the robot as an admirable piece of machinery to be put on display. This classification constructs an artificial contrast between public, artificial and private, non-artificial human bodies. The civilised norm to be covered only applies to the latter, while the other is externally marked as Other by its nakedness. Andrew's desire to cover up his artificial body ("I feel bare" (649)) and claim to privacy for his supposedly public body, consequently implies a demand for reclassification. The text shows his choice to wear clothes eliciting varying degrees of uncomfortableness: from his family's incomprehension, to disgust (cf.652), and even violence. These reactions validate the symbolic impact Andrew's action has and posit clothing as a signifier for humanity.

In this context, the cultural implications, traditions, and language the practice to clothe our human bodies have resulted in are of interest. The behaviour

56 All following quotations, unless otherwise indicated: Asimov, Isaac. 1983. "The Bicentennial Man". In: *The Complete Robot.* Harper Collins Publishing UK: London.

can be considered both an indicator of human identity and an expression of our position within it. The topic is part of the critical discourse on the process of human civilisation and a significant marker for the distinction between what we currently and commonly understand human culture to be and the communities that preceded this model. Norbert Elias, in *Der Prozess der Zivilisation*, first published in 1939, theorised a linear, progressive human civilisation process; tracing the evolution of primitive pre-modern groups to modern society and its notions on the body as a private entity. Hans-Peter Dürr has dedicated a considerable part of his oeuvre to argue against this model. In *Der Mythos vom Zivilisationsprozeß Vol 1: Nacktheit und Scham*, he convincingly shows pre-modern societies as complex social structures that extensively regulated the covering and uncovering of bodies. This suggests that while the framework might change, the principle remains: that and how we cover ourselves is part of how we culturally express our humanity. Clothing is a tangible way to signify belonging, community, and identity. Similar to our bodies we utilise it to consciously communicate who we perceive ourselves to be – or how we want others to see us. However, in contrast to our bodies, clothing is impermanent and mutable: we can use clothes to control the image we broadcast and the construct a self we wish to convey. That "The Bicentennial Man" should choose this particular cultural signifier is meaningful for its portrayal of humanity as a visual, corporeal identity. Before the text goes progressively deeper onto and into its protagonist's body, it accesses him from the outside. The decision to clothe the artificial body, even before Andrew's corporeally mimetic endeavours, signifies a claim to the cultural implications of this act.[57]Asimov's depiction utilises these communicative properties and develops its position on the humanity of the body based on the initially violent human reaction to Andrew's act of resistance through dress.

Andrew's attacker's statement "It's the free robot. […] Why else would it be wearing clothes?" (651), interconnects human clothing with the attribution of freedom to an individual. Freedom is among the categories "The Bicentennial

57 In *Dress Sense: Emotional and Sensory Experiences of the Body and Clothes*, Editors Donald Clay Johnson and Helen Bradley Foster introduce selected perspectives on the multifaceted meanings we import onto our clothes: clothes as expressions of gender, age, culture, religion, politics – and resistance. For further thoughts on clothing as a means for political activism and social resistance, see chapter 3 on "Dress, Hungarian Socialism, and Resistance" by Katalin Medvedev.

Man" employs to conceptualise a definition of humanity. The robots' subordinate relationship to their human creators links the question of identity to the question of freedom: ontology affects hierarchy. The three laws[58] effectively establish absolute control of the creative species over its mimetic creation. Freedom is here portrayed as humanising a subject, while non-free entities are dehumanised. Wearing clothes for Andrew therefore is not only a desire; it is a deliberate decision made in order to disassociate himself from other robots with no desire and concept of freedom: "'Different! Andrew, there are millions of robots on Earth now. […]' 'I know, George. [...]' 'And none of them wear clothes.' 'None of them are free, George.'" (649). If a robot claiming to be human and a robot claiming to be free are alike, it follows that the appropriation of clothing is meant not only as an appropriation of human status but also as a claim to freedom from human authority.

The human reaction to this implicit claim illustrates the power dynamic between human and artificial human portrayed in the text and can be read in line with Bhabha's earlier quoted statement on the effect of mimicry on the mimetic authority. Portraying violence against Andrew and his clothed body characterises human society and its visceral need for the re-establishment of that hierarchy at this point in the text. Andrew's attackers immediately execute control over his body: "Stand on your head" (652). This need for control then escalates to the desire to destroy the offending body and ultimately the demand for the robot to destroy himself in what can be read as a literal deconstruction:

> 'We could take him apart. Ever take a robot apart?' 'Will he let us?'
> 'How can he stop us?'
> There was no way Andrew could stop them, if they ordered him in a forceful enough manner not to resist The Second Law of obedience took precedence over the Third Law of self-preservation. In any case, he could not defend himself without possibly hurting them, and that would mean breaking the First Law. At that thought, he felt every motile unit contract slightly and he quivered as he lay there. The tall one walked over and pushed at him with his foot.
> 'He's heavy. I think we'll need tools to do the job.'

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58 Asimov's Three Laws of Robotics:

1. A robot may not injure a human being, or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm.
2. A robot must obey the orders given it by human beings except where such orders would conflict with the First Law.
3. A robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Law

> The nose said, ‘We could order him to take himself, apart. It would be fun to watch him try.’ ‘Yes,’ said the tall one, thoughtfully. (652).

The text’s depiction of immediate, instinctive cruelty suggests a felt threat. The attackers utilise bodily harm to subdue what they perceive as a corporeal insurgency. Andrew’s claim to agency and power is an attempt to emancipate artificial human identity. The text thus constructs body privacy as a distinctly human quality; expressing a fictitious hierarchy between robots and humans through the different societal framings of their bodies. This conflict introduces the text’s negotiation of humanity within corporeal terms.

The desire for clothes does not only indicate the contrast between the artificial and human bodies in the short story. Andrew’s expression of that desire also portrays the character as a conscious subject. Corporeal and abstract identities are here presented as beholden to each other. It is Andrew’s notions of and on his body that inform his sense of self. His statement “I feel bare without clothes. I feel different, George.” (649) shows Andrew’s capability to perceive his status as an Other emotionally. His concept of modesty and desire to act upon it establishes Andrew as having and being able to express a concept of an I and a consciousness of his subject status. In the tradition of Descartes’ *Cogito, ergo sum*, the entity who thinks, who reflects, in this case upon his desire to be clothed, must be, not necessarily human but nevertheless be and exist as a conscious subject: “Et ayant remarqué qu’il n’y a rien du tout en ceci: *je pense, donc je suis*, qui m’assure que je dis la vérité, sinon que je voy tres clairement que pour penser, il faut estre.” (Descartes 1637, 34, original emphasis).[59] Andrew’s de facto non-humanity makes his subject status in Descartes’ terms remarkable, as his design is explicitly meant to prohibit this property. It also explicitly disqualifies him from being a machine under Donna Haraway’s definition ex negativo: “machines were not self-moving, self-designing, autonomous” (2000, 293). He thus exists in between mere machine and human subject status.

Foucault, in “The Subject and Power”, defines a subject as follows:

> There are two meanings of the word ‘subject’: subject to someone else by control and dependence; and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both

59 “And as I observed that in the words *I think, hence I am*, there is nothing at all which gives me assurance of their truth beyond this, that I see very clearly that in order to think it is necessary to exist […]” (Descartes, translation Veitch 36, original emphasis).

> meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to. (Foucault 1982, 781).

Foucault's subject status is an expression of a two-fold power dynamic in relation to oneself and others. On the one hand, consciousness and self-knowledge award power to the subject over their self, while control and dependence, on the other hand, award someone else power over the subject. Thus, the self-aware reflection of the self creates the subject, just as much as hierarchical relationships create the subject they are subjugating. Asimov's text is strongly reminiscent of this model: The robot reflecting upon his corporeal identity, in a conscious and self-aware manner, creates himself as a subject. He thinks, therefore he is. Judith Butler's defence of the Foucaultian concept of the subject elaborates on this idea: In her discussion of the power dynamic between constructing and constructed subject, she dismisses the personification of subject-constructing power, whereby power itself becomes a subject and instead argues that construction is "a process of reiteration by which both 'subjects' and 'acts' come to appear at all." (Butler 9). Thus, according to Butler, constructing the subject is a repetitive, mimetic process that creates both the self and the power that it holds and is held by. This reading also applies to Andrew's literal self-construction: a mimetic process that creates both robotic and human identity. Subject-status is here negotiated via corporality, i.e. the human, or human-like, body utilised as a means to achieve autonomy, identity, and humanity. Through his subsequent mental and physical self-recreation Andrew is not only constructing another body for himself but also produces a different power dynamic. Andrew's mimetic agency is of interest in this context: Following the traditional hierarchy between creator and mimetic creation, the artificial human in art does not usually execute control over their body to the extent Andrew does. The android is typically designed and manufactured by human characters and their physical appearance, including corporeal-based identities such as sex and race, controlled by others. Andrew determines his corporeal reality and his degree of mimetic accuracy. His humanity is his own choice; his progressive physical mimesis self-motivated: "My body is a

canvas on which I intend to draw" (671). This autonomous mimetic endeavour and agency of the mimetic object corroborate his subject-status.[60]

Andrew is cognitively unique among robots and the manufacturer refuses to reproduce artificial humans like him, as "Your unusualness is an embarrassment to the company." (Asimov 660ff.). Here, the text briefly touches upon reproductive rights, and the idea of a corporeal community of kin, which were central to *Frankenstein*'s understanding of humanity. "The Bicentennial Man" however, leaves these concerns behind in favour of an isolated approach: Andrew's reflective capability transcends that of the other robots, which are restricted and controlled by their inferior construction, and he remains unique among them. He alone has the mental potential to challenge his assigned identity and his position in the hierarchical relationship to humanity. His hierarchical position is in conflict with his self-perception as non-robotic. In this, the text overcomes Foucault's external determination of the subject, as Andrew gradually and autonomously refuses to create his identity in subjugation to humanity and instead frames himself as one of them. He rejects his assigned subject status within the existing hierarchy and instead creates himself as a dominant subject through self-reflection and physical assimilation. After he gradually emancipates himself from his original human owners and their progeny, who either die or continue to support him in his quest, he enters several hierarchical relationships as the dominant party. Initially with other robots – "he wandered among the robot population, every one of which treated him with the robotic obsequiousness due a man." (672) – and later also with humans: "It didn't even occur to Andrew that he was giving a flat order to a human being. He had grown accustomed to that" (673). The android's progressive familiarisation – both mentally and corporeally – is contrasted with the text's progressive de-familiarisation. The world and timeline the recipient initially recognises evolve over the two hundred years of Andrew's story into a progressively futuristic society. Andrew's goal to be recognised as human, however, remains consistent. This underlines the concept's endurance in defiance of changing humans in a changing world, and illustrates its antithetic stability and malleability.

60 The text is here reminiscent of *Star Trek*'s Data and his own acquisition of humanity through autonomous mimesis, analysed in II.3.3. The mimetic act as a conscious endeavour can be compared according to a corporeal and a social interpretation between the two interpretations.

"The Bicentennial Man" constructs its negotiation of this concept around an isolated protagonist and develops its individual subject under different aspects of humanness until it arrives at the defining quality. Consequently, "The Bicentennial Man" is not a thematisation of robot ethics or rights nor is it strictly concerned with an expansion of conceptual humanity to include artificial entities. It is specifically interested in the exact combination of emotional and physical adjustments the artificial human must make in order to become human. Through this approach, it means to arrive at a definition of the essential human quality or qualities that determine a human versus non-human classification of humanoids. Thus, at its core, it is searching for the smallest common denominator of humanity. The text thereby illustrates the earlier introduced reciprocal mimetic model of art: Discourse on humanity as a concept is here processed and affected utilising an artificial human figure as a projection surface. The artist, in his capacity as a human, recreates himself through the artistic creation of human figures, who in turn recreate themselves as androids, which have subsequently been established as a technological reality with an ongoing influence on artists and the artistic discourse. "The Bicentennial Man" partakes in this model and the discourse it facilitates. The undeniable influence[61] Asimov's work has had on the

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61 In 2011, a joint publication from the British Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council and Art and Humanities Research Council detailed five primary rules and seven "high level messages" for the design, build and usage of robots; the "principles of robotics". These principles are very much an extension of Asimov's three rules and demonstrate the very direct influence fiction can have, not only on the discourse on, but the real implementation of its ideas:

1. Robots are multi-use tools. Robots should not be designed solely or primarily to kill or harm humans, except in the interests of national security.
2. Humans, not robots, are responsible agents. Robots should be designed; operated as far as is practicable to comply with existing laws & fundamental rights & freedoms, including privacy.
3. Robots should be designed in ways that assure their safety and security.
4. Robots are manufactured artefacts. They should not be designed in a deceptive way to exploit vulnerable users; instead their machine nature should be transparent.
5. The person with legal responsibility for a robot should be attributed.

1. We believe robots have the potential to provide immense positive impact to society. We want to encourage responsible robot research.
2. Bad practice hurts us all.
3. Addressing obvious public concerns will help us all make progress.
4. It is important to demonstrate that we, as roboticists, are committed to the best possible standards of practice.
5. To understand the context and consequences of our research, we should work with experts from other disciplines, including: social sciences, law, philosophy and the arts.
6. We should consider the ethics of transparency: are there limits to what should be openly available?

current developments in artificial intelligence and robotics ties this particular mimetic relation noticeably into the real world and has in turn affected further artistic production involving the figure. In this instance of life mirroring art mirroring life, humanity both challenges and manifests its own perceived boundaries and thus actively participates in a discourse on human identity that is tangibly affected by android art.

Andrew's contribution to this discourse is grounded in the text's detailed negotiation of his access to human identity. His subject status – as evidenced by his conscious reflection upon his identity, his claim to freedom, and his rejection of hierarchical relationship to humanity – in itself does not qualify him for human status. The aversion[62] and occasionally violent rejection he experiences reinforce the need to physically pass as human to argue his humanness. This establishes a clear link between deceptively naturalistic mimesis of the human phenotype that is visually indistinguishable from humans and abstract human identity; echoing *Frankenstein*'s position that corporality determines if not humanity itself, then its social acceptance. Andrew consciously replaces his mechanical body piece by piece in order to make it as human-like as possible. This process is portrayed within the frame of a legal battle in the text, allowing for the language of the business and later legal negotiations to remain primarily devoid of emotive language. The result is a clinical, abstract approach to an inherently loaded topic and a fundamental, philosophical discussion held entirely in neutral, technical terms. Asimov's style generally appears intentionally 'robotic': the text's overly constructed dialogue devoid of illogical irregularities and the purposefully structured plot result in an impression of artificiality; mildly reminiscent of Socratic dialogue. Andrew's story is a mere vehicle for the argument presented and the conclusion reached. Interestingly, the text contrasts this rigidity with a surprisingly tragic ending to existentialist, emotionally loaded story.

In order to arrive there, Andrew undergoes a systematic, mimetic incarnation. His first bodily modification places his unique positronic brain, which

7. When we see erroneous accounts in the press, we commit to take the time to contact the reporting journalists.

<https://epsrc.ukri.org/research/ourportfolio/themes/engineering/activities/principlesofrobotics/> (last accessed 11/07/21).

62 The text describes his "frequently humiliated by thoughtless human beings" (663) during this phase.

is legally defined as “the seat of Andrew’s personality […] and […] the one part that cannot be replaced without creating a new robot.” (661), inside a new artificial body. The new android body, unlike his initial metallic one, outwardly passes as human. The mimesis of these artificial human bodies is so perfect that they fail as a commercial product because humanity rejects an artificial version of itself that is not easily identified as robotic:

> ‘[…] They worked perfectly well, with their synthetic fibrous skins and tendons. There was virtually no metal anywhere except for the brain, yet they were nearly as tough as metal robots. They were tougher, weight for weight.’
> Paul looked interested. ‘I didn't know that. How many are on the market?’
> ‘None,’ said Smythe-Robertson. ‘They were much more expensive than metal models and a market survey showed they would not be accepted. They looked too human.’ (662).

This artificial preservation of corporeal markers of artificiality underlines the maintained hierarchy’s constructed-ness. If the subjugated subject is no longer immediately visually identifiable, its submission is potentially compromised. Therefore, the artificial human must signal its artificiality physically.[63] Andrew’s insistence on an outwardly humanoid body is the next step from his insistence on clothes further delegitimises human authority over him. He thus disassociates from other robots and their hierarchical position and claims access to humanity. His eventually perfect mimesis of human appearance overcomes the uncanny valley effect,[64] and outwardly passes as human.

His mimetically excellent appearance, however, does not suffice for his classification as human. Andrew proceeds in his bodily transition and also adjusts the inner workings of his body, his aforementioned “beautiful functionality” (649). A digestive system is created in order to give him the ability to eat, which is a bodily function connecting corporality and sociality. The subsequent

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63 Interestingly, when adapted for other media, android characters which originally pass as human or are constructed of biological material in the original text are at times depicted as wholly or partly mechanic. See for example the iconic depiction of Boris Karloff as Frankenstein’s creature in film versus the text’s description or the common change of *R.U.R.*’s synthetically biological robots to metallic machine men in performances, which will be discussed in II.2.3. These changes suggest that real recipients, too, are affected by visual markers indicating Otherness and that artistic production utilises this effect.

64 The uncanny valley effect describes a feeling of uncomfortableness produced by the relation of human likeness and familiarity in an object, according to the robot designer Masahiro Mori in 1970. Mori observed an increase in familiarity proportional to human likeness, up to a certain point, where close but not perfect likeness disrupts familiarity and instead results in a feeling of uncanniness. I discuss the concept in more detail in II.1.3.

discussion of an anus – “Or the equivalent” (669) – to “discard” the “incombustible fractions” (671) shows the text’s commitment to absolute realism in Andrew’s mimesis of a human body. Andrew’s physical transformation extending to his insides suggests that the idea of corporeal humanity is not only superficial but affects both visible and invisible areas of the body. The manufacturer’s question “‘What else, Andrew…?’ ‘Everything else.’ ‘Genitalia, too?’” (671) introduces the question after the relevance of sex and gender for the robotic body. Interestingly, Andrew’s male gender is comparatively easier to accept for humans than his humanness. Even those, who would attack him violently for publicly wearing clothes switch from the inanimate ‘it’ to male personal pronouns seemingly subconsciously (cf.651ff.). This presents gender as a much less scrutinised quality of human identity that can be applied to inanimate objects far more readily than bodily autonomy and privacy. The abstract, social implications of the body are depicted as not equally significant as the physical, mimetic quality of that body. Consequently, the artificial body’s rudimentary sexual characteristics suffice to assign the body a gender very early on. Andrew is explicitly gendered even before he has primary sexual characteristics, presumably based on his design’s secondary and tertiary sexual characteristics, though the text remarkably does not go into much detail describing his body. To be a ‘man’ seems a similarly indefinite quality as being a ‘human’; biologically defined but abstractive and extendable. To quote Haraway, who applies the same observation to femininity: “gender, race and class cannot provide the basis for belief in 'essential' unity. There is nothing about being 'female' that naturally binds women. There is not even such a state as ‘being’ female” (2000, 295). Likewise, Andrew’s maleness is assumed – by others as well as himself – not concluded on any tangible basis. He has been given a male name[65] but is gendered regardless of whether that name is known or not. He wears male-assigned clothing but the text itself gradually dissolves gender-based clothing throughout its two hundred year-long plot. Furthermore, the humanity Andrew aims for is a gender-neutral state and not necessarily concerned with sub-categories. He wants to be human, not merely a man. The text, however, still utilises the humanising quality of gender. It

65 The act of naming an object and its humanising effect will be further explored in the context of sociality (II.3.1).

does so in accordance with Judith Butler's *Gender Troubles*, which established binary gendering as an essential part of human identity and identification: "The mark of the gender appears to 'qualify' bodies as human bodies […]" (151). Gendering is portrayed as a constant and compulsory process that functions both in- and outward. This mirrors real-life processes, where whenever we gender ourselves and each other, we are incidentally, perhaps unconsciously, implying or assigning humanness. Thus, gender at least co-determines what constitutes humanity and what does not.

After an outwardly human Andrew establishes basic robot rights against physical harm, the next step of his legal battle achieves two essential rulings; a legal and a social one: "no number of artifacts in the human body causes it to cease being a human body." (676ff.) and public interest and engagement with the definition of humanity, resulting in a "broad interpretation" (677). Interestingly, the public discourse is motivated by the existence of prosthetics (cf.677): it is humanity's own cyborg status that ultimately blurs the boundaries between corporal object and subject.[66] The ruling that artificial parts in a body that is originally human cannot change its status is indicative of humanness as something that transcends the modifications of its body. The emphasis on public interest also underlines what *Frankenstein* implied but not asserted: that human identity is subject to a social ruling. Andrew's humanity, despite his perfect corporeal mimesis, is denied (cf.677). His prosthetic body cannot be classified as human in the way that an originally human one would be at the same point. The text's argument and ultimate solution for the problem suggest an interesting and nuanced causality of humanity, as it is not the androids body but "the brain that is at issue" (680).

"The Bicentennial Man" identifies the distinction "Humans have an organic cellular brain and robots have a platinum iridium positronic brain […] Your brain is man-made, the human brain is not. Your brain is constructed, theirs

66 Edgar Allan Poe's short story "The Man Who Was Used Up", portrays the question of the effect of prosthetics of the humanity of the body earlier. His Brevet Brigadier General John A. B. C. Smith is a satirical example of the original part(s) of an otherwise artificial body functioning as identity-establishing. The war hero, whose original body is reduced to an "exceedingly odd looking bundle of something which lay close by my feet on the floor" (Poe 297) is still considered the man he is, despite a body that almost entirely consists of prosthetics. He even qualifies as "one of the most remarkable men of the age" (Poe 292). In accordance with this emphasis on corporeal origin for human versus non-human qualification, Asimov's robot, with his original robotic brain, remains a robot, even if his body is out- and inwardly indistinguishable from a human one.

developed." (677ff.) as the ultimately crucial difference between humans and robots. As the seat of Andrew's personality and consequently the only part of his body that cannot be replaced to mimic a human body, it is the sole remaining boundary, the "fundamental barrier" (680), between the artificial and human corporality in the text. What is ultimately decisive, is, however, not the body's origin, or the problem of development versus construction, or its material. It is the organ's durability: "The matter of immortality" (678). The artificial brain's deathlessness is presented as incompatible with a classification as human, determining mortality as the ultimate human condition. The brain is established as the most essential and non-replaceable organ for consistent personhood at the text's fictional point of technological progress. Andrew's decision to surgically alter his brain to allow for decay and eventual inoperativeness enables him to mimic the inevitable fate of human mortality, which ultimately qualifies him for human status. A positronic brain is deemed sufficient for human status after it is adjusted for durability, as "the sacrifice was too great to be rejected." (681).

Notably, the text's concept of death is a purely corporal concept: the erosion of the brain. This allows the text's depiction of death to transcend biological boundaries. Death is framed as the loss of sufficient bodily functionality; no matter that body's origin or material. Consequently, the brain, as the current sole non-replaceable part of the body, is identified as the seat of humanity. Humanity, by extension, is established as neither an emotional, nor cognitive, or spiritual state but a decidedly corporal one. As long as it is perishable, a synthetic humanoid body can be framed as human, as it is able to share the arguably sole universal experience all humans, and indeed all living organisms, share: to die. It can be argued that it is the body's ability, as much as its nature, to die that explicates the text's conclusion: Being able to die constitutes living in the first place; an ability with exceptional implications for a machine. This suggests a distinction between human bodies, which define our identity according to the text, and the inherent humanity of a body, which is not necessarily definitive, as Emma Palese argues in "Robots and Cyborgs: to *Be* or to *Have* a Body?":

> When we think of *having* a body, we come to the individual appropriation of it and when we consider to *be* a body, we do nothing but open the doors to political reappropriation of our body, because a process of individualization is triggered by it. (95).

Andrew utilises this distinction for his purpose. His body, which he chose and deliberately inhabits, is developed from mere possession to a state of being by mimetic means. He consciously aims to achieve what Palese calls political reappropriation. He wants to be and successfully is individualised by it. Palese incorporates the artificial body into human corporality, and uses it to extend humanness: "the beginning of the transformation of the body and its way of unleashing. The body exists and widens in the world with the artificial dimension." (192). Unleashing human corporality from the strictly human is also part of "The Bicentennial Man"'s conclusion on the topic. Andrew's body, finally mimetically perfect and mortal, is not human in a strictly ontological sense. His access to human identity is, however, still achieved. The body's mortality successfully blurs the boundaries between artificial and non-artificial humanity.

Mortality as the text's conclusion simultaneously reduces humanity to a purely corporal condition and indicates conflicting implications beyond a corporal interpretation. The focus on the finiteness of life connects the individual experiences of all living organisms and establishes a corporeal definitiveness to their existence. Andrew's mimetic body gains access to this experience and thus places text's understanding of humanity at the intersection between corporeal mimesis and social collectivism. The text does not evoke mortality as an individual human experience: it is the universality, as well as, interestingly, the fairness of the experience that qualifies it as a decisive quality. Andrew concludes: "their own mortality is endurable only so long as it is universal" (680). This defines humanity as a group identity, rather than an individual one. The conclusion links Asimov's sober and factual negotiation of humanity to Shelley's gothic approach: the artificial human's function as a means to overcome human mortality is rejected by both android figures. Both seek to join human communities, both are rejected, and both ultimately commit suicide. Asimov's version of this conundrum utilises the autonomous, mimetic act to integrate its android figure and thus qualify it for humanity, an option *Frankenstein*'s creature does not have. Both suicides are acts of acceptance; however, where Andrew's signifies his successful integration, the creature's merely concludes his failed

humanity. It follows that this morbid aspect of the android figure's artistic function can be utilised in productive and affirming, as well as, exclusionary ways.

"The Bicentennial Man"'s conclusion demonstrates how human corporality can be made accessible to artificial agents. It utilises human mortality to discuss the human identity in terms of a collective experience, rather than an inherent ontology. Consequently, the text's argument is egalitarian, as much as it is corporeal. Humanity in "The Bicentennial Man" cannot exist in isolation; it must be part of a larger context. This contextualises Andrew's desire for public and official acknowledgement of his status as human. He desires humanity and achieves the corporeal mimesis of it autonomously, yet he cannot effectively define himself as human. Humanity, according to the text, is granted by the collective. It is finally achieved as a result and acknowledgement of the great personal sacrifice of the protagonist, implying that it is facilitated but not entirely determined by objective, corporeal categories. Andrew's self-perception as human hinges on the endorsement of his fellow human beings legitimising this self-perception. Interestingly, this endorsement is communicated and legitimised in comparatively emotional terms, hinting at the importance of emotionality for the human identity even in the context of Asimov's carefully austere text. This emotional component ultimately costs Andrew's life.

To sum up, "The Bicentennial Man" undertakes a methodical negotiation of human qualities in order to arrive at a conclusive definition of humanity. Neither the contextual human qualities it identifies nor its conclusion function independently of each other. Freedom, subjectivity, or perfect physical mimesis of humanity are not in themselves definitive of humanness. They are, however, needed as additions to the definitive quality of mortality in a corporal sense in order to constitute a human. Thus, the text drafts a complex, nuanced image of humanity without eschewing the identification of a definitive human quality. The corporal nature of that quality, as well as its transitive, deteriorative, and somewhat morbid character, stands out when compared to the mostly abstract and exalted qualities discussed in similar works on human nature. The text elevates the human shape – eyes, anus, and all – from the mere setting of mimetic relations between humans and artificial humans to the object of the discussion on

humanity. Human bodies, both in their uniqueness and their replicability, are thus declared an essential part of the human condition.

Asimov's corporeal approach to humanity touches upon the many ways human appearance and materiality affect our interaction and social dynamics. We know each other by our bodies – as individuals, and as a species. Therefore, artificial human's corporeal mimetic excellence, as well as their more and less subtle flaws, determine large parts of their interactions with humans. If and for how long we are deceived by an imitation of humanity, informs our emotional and social reaction to the Other body and our subconscious and conscious classification of it. In the following, I discuss this process's limitations and artistic opportunities. The example used is an artificial body on stage explicitly thematising its corporeal mimesis of a human to effectively illustrate and deconstruct the social and emotional spheres of human corporality. Choosing to analyse performance, not text, in this instance affords the possibility of describing direct, unmitigated effects of a corporeally present artificial human on a corporeally present human audience. I examine this distinctive property of performance in the context of Rimini Protokoll's *Uncanny Valley*.

### II.1.4 (De)construction of Authenticity in *Uncanny Valley*

In October 2018, the Kammerspiele München premiered a play deeply concerned with humanity and yet devoid of humans. *Uncanny Valley* challenges the boundaries of mimetic relations within the theatrical space and questions the limitations of theatre as a cathartic, evocative experience. The play approaches these themes through the omission of a seemingly essential part of performance: the performer. *Uncanny Valley* has no actors and though it is framed as a lecture, there is no lecturer present. The play explores the traditionally direct experience of human corporality in theatre by placing artificial humanity in its stead. The human presence on stage with all its potential mimetic and cathartic implications is staged without an actual human being present. For the purpose of this book I am reading it as an experiment on human corporal identity, simultaneously provoking

the engagement with post-humanist, futuristic issues and revisiting the fundamental processes of theatre and performance art. After the historical (catastrophic) and genre classical (systematic) approach to the corporeal manifestation of humanity in art, this last, theatrical example is meant showcase how these previously discussed boundaries have been questioned since. *Uncanny Valley* situates the artistic positions on the humanity of the body in the present and exemplifies how the discourse currently culminates.

As the play begins, the stage is dark. The illuminated auditorium indicates a silhouette on stage. What is visible is unobtrusively human; sitting down and unmoving. When the light changes, it takes a few moments for the eyes to adjust and in these few moments, for those uninformed, the man on stage is still a man.[67] Middle-aged, pale, reasonably well-dressed, looking maybe a bit tired and a little uncomfortable. He clears his throat; his voice, as he welcomes the audience is pleasant and easy to listen to; he sits next to an open laptop and a screen; the setting is obviously a lecture. As soon as the eyes adjust, however, the illusion ends. The man is gesturing, his face moves as he talks, and still, immediately, he can be identified as artificial: an android on stage.

In order to accurately place the play, its themes, and its unusual protagonist within the tradition it comments on, it is productive to return to theatre's ancient beginnings. When Aristotle opens the definition of the tragedy in his *Poetics* with "an imitation of an action" (Aristotle 23), he confirms Plato's assertion that art is essentially mimetic.[68] Though they differ in their evaluation of the effect this imitation has on its spectator, both are united in their belief that art in general and theatre especially are inherently mimetic processes. Art imitates, reproduces, reflects, and emulates. Creation is always recreation.

Plato suspects all art to have a potentially detrimental effect on a good and orderly society: "[I]mitators" are described as those "concerned with figures and colors, […] with music, the poets and their helpers, rhapsodes, actors, choral

67 While the depicted's gender is certainly meaningful in the context of his role and real background as an author (as has been discussed in the context of *Frankenstein*), I am refraining from a comprehensive analysis of this aspect at this point, in order to not derail the focus on authenticity. Gender, and its significant effect on the perception and depiction of (artificial) humanity, are extensively discussed in II.3.2.; while its implications for the figure of the artist are addressed in II.2.2.

68 See Plato's disparaging remarks on the mirroring character of artistic production (cf. 1991, 279ff).

dancers," (1991, 50), as well as, curiously, all to do with the production and distribution of female adornment (cf. Plato 1991, 50). Painting, music, poetry, performance, theatre, or dance – in the context of Plato's redefinition of imagery[69] all art is effective imitation and therefore potentially subversive. Meanwhile, Aristotle's concept of catharsis, while often applied to art in general, is originally a theatrical one. A well-made tragedy "through pity [eleos] and fear [phobos] effect[s] the purgation of these emotions." (Aristotle 23). Aristotle defines *eleos*[70] and *phobos*[71] as the effects good tragedy elicits through mimesis.[72] He states that by arousing these feelings (*pathemata*[73]), *catharsis*[74] is achieved. However, Aristotle's phrasing can be interpreted in two ways concerning who or what exactly is being purified by emotion: either the recipient or the feelings they experience are cleansed by artistic experience. This can be interpreted to allow for an individual reception that either cleanses us of certain emotions or positively affects how we process them. The theatrical experience results in either disengagement or acquaintance. Describing emotionality as a corporeal experience and emotions as bodily reactions that can be impure or impurify us connects emotionality and corporality within Aristotle's theory. Theatre becomes the junction of body and mind; its human subject both a corporeal and emotional entity.

Theatre, in both its classical and contemporary performative sense, is an exceptional mimetic complex among the many ways mimesis structurally manifests in the relations of life and art. The artwork's materiality can facilitate or impede abstraction, just like the mode of presentation can create or discourage distance. The human materiality traditional theatre employs in its mimetic processes results in proximity and immediacy. The corporal aspects of theatrical performance in particular affect the recipient's artistic experience in terms of directness and mediation of message. The presence of actors' bodies on stage, without the distance that text or any other kind of mimesis through other media

69 Jean-Pierre Vernant and others have argued that Plato's work marks a turning point in the perception of imagery from the ancient 'presentification' to the current idea of representation.

70 Ἔλεος.

71 φόβος.

72 μίμησις.

73 πάσχω.

74 κάθαρσις.

afford, can render the depiction or even abstraction of life performed in theatre less mediated and therefore more direct than other art-forms.

This imitation's effect on its spectator, an effect Plato feared, and his pupil Aristotle cherished, is at the core of the relevance of art for society from antiquity to today. Plato's fear is essentially the fear of the reciprocity of the mimetic complex: the effect of the artificial on nature, of the copy on the reference, of art on life. It is this direct effect of live performance that objectors to the theatre like Plato or Augustine referred to when the latter, for example, wrote:

> plena imaginibus miseriarum mearum et fomitibus ignis mei. quid est quod ibi homo vult dolere cum spectat luctuosa et tragica, quae tamen pati ipse nollet? et tamen pati vult ex eis dolorem spectator et dolor ipse est voluptas eius. quid est nisi mirabilis insania? (Augustine 3.2.2).[75]

This 'wretched madness' of experiencing emotions evoked by art, Aristotle's *eleos* and *phobos*, is undiluted in theatre; for both the spectator and the spectacle of the body on stage is immediately present. While a text can be read and a painting viewed in absence of the artist and generally at any point in time and place on earth, the nature of theatre dictates that each performance is unique, live, and non-reproducible.

> Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations: once it does so it becomes something other than performance. […] Performance […] becomes itself through disappearance. (143),

as Peggy Phelan puts it. This transience sets theatre apart as an art form and results in a specific mimetic process and dynamic. Performance takes effect independently from the dramatic text itself, utilising the direct availability of its human material, meaning both audiences and actors, to depict and evoke emotions and reactions. The sensorial and emotional experience theatre offers is thus uniquely, directly corporeal, and immediately affecting. *Uncanny Valley* thematises and utilises this quality in its engagement with humanity, theatre, and the human in theatre.

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75 "full of the images of my own miseries: fuel for my own fire. Now, why does a man like to be made sad by viewing doleful and tragic scenes, which he himself could not by any means endure? Yet, as a spectator, he wishes to experience from them a sense of grief, and in this very sense of grief his pleasure consists. What is this but wretched madness?" (Augustine, translation Outler 22).

The play's unusual lecturer, who is of course only a lecturer in the same sense as the laptop next to him is, is a humanoid robot with the face of Thomas Melle, German author, and translator. The robot performs a voice-recording of Melle, talking about his life, medical condition and the project's impact on his sense of self. Melle's voice reflects upon the stability of human identity, the questionable authenticity of what is commonly referred to as human. The play does not attempt the illusion that it is anything but an artificial copy of a human on stage. It dissolves the mimetic relations of conservative theatre that are centred on the act of acting, of a person depicting another person. Here, performance is attempted without a performer. Consequently, the play's particular mimetic model conveys the previously discussed aspects of the android's mimetic function well. It is a Russian doll of mimetic relations, mirroring, alienating, and thereby deconstructing each other: The machine man on stage, surrounded by machines; theatre machine next to theatre machine: lights, laptop, and android. The frame of the lecture format, an already stylised, artificial form of communication, within the additionally artificial situation of the theatrical performance, delivered by an android. This android being modelled after Thomas Melle, who is a playwright himself and now comments upon the artificial and artistic depiction and display of his physical personhood, while being situated in front of a screen showing the real Melle in an interview, depicting and displaying himself:

> Na, Typische Fernsehbilder sieht man, Zwischenschnitte damit sie lostexten kann und ich geh halt irgendwo von da nach da. *(ausatmer: kopf kurz zurück)* Und jetzt lese ich da was vor. Nicht? Aus dem Buch halt. *(schulterzucken)* Das ist jetzt sozusagen mediale Reflexion, wenn ich darüber rede ist es schon, ja… Da *(zeigt hin und dreht Kopf nach vorne)* lese ich, das ist ja auch wieder die Lesungssituation, die so gefaked ist vor einer Kamera. Furchtbar eigentlich alles. (l*acher kopf*) Diese Doppelung und Dreifachfaltelung. Dadurch, dass man es vorlesen muss, dadurch dass man auftreten muss, dadurch dass man Interviews geben muss und Vorträge *(geste hier).*[76]

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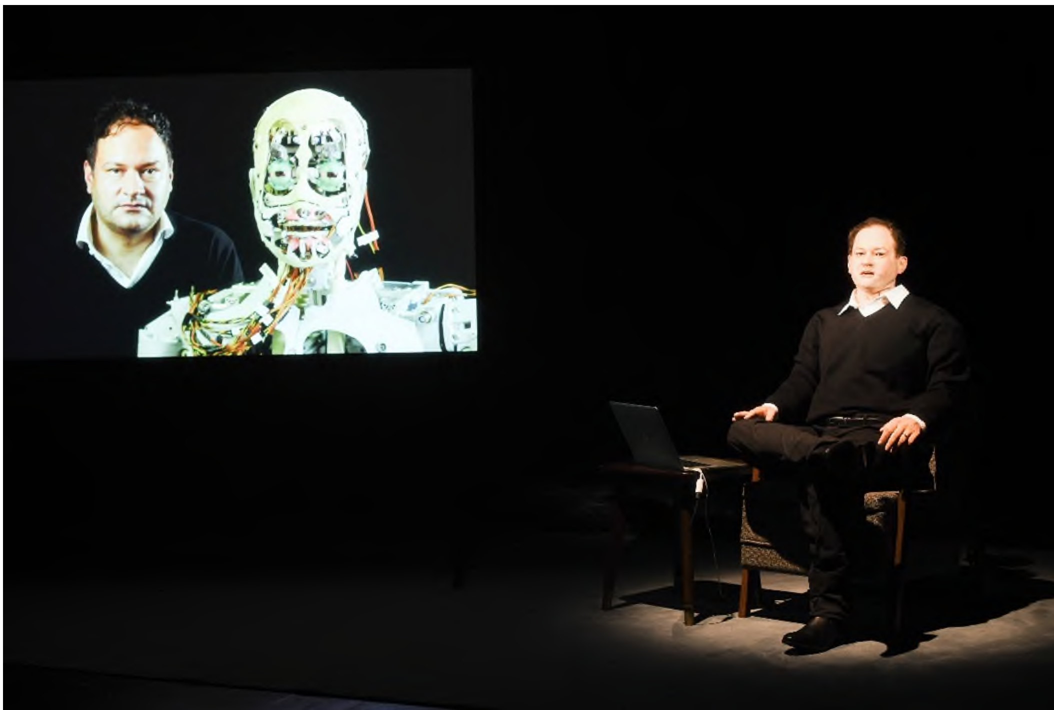
76 All following quotations, unless otherwise indicated are from an unpublished script, kindly provided by the play's dramaturge, Martin Valdés-Stauder.

"Well, you see typical TV images, intercutting so that she can start talking and I'm just going somewhere from there to there. (*exhale: head back briefly)* And now I'm reading something out loud, aren't I. From the book. (*shrugging shoulders*) That is, so to speak, media reflection, when I talk about it, it is already, yes... There (*points and turns head forwards*) I read, that is the reading situation again, which is so fake in front of a camera. It's terrible, actually. (*laughs head*) This double and triple folding. Because you have to read it out, because you have to perform, because you have to give interviews and lectures (*gesture here*)." (translation mine).

The android is addressing the artificiality of the interview situation; the repetitiveness of questions and answers and how the act of repetition falsifies the reality of what is being said. The observations on the ‘fakeness’ of the real Melle in interview are delivered by the literal fake Melle in an artificial performance of a lecture, complete with props and informal and seemingly natural voice, exactly repeated in every performance, evening after evening. It circumvents performance’s traditional transience – what Phelan called its disappearance – and thus undermines its established mimetic dynamic. The setting is a carefully constructed statement on authenticity in theatre and, by extension, on human authenticity in general. Again, humanity as a concept is explored, in this case staged, all the more effectively, by replacing it with an artificial version of itself.



ill. 2

The android on stage is humanity on stage; its explicit in-authenticity alienating, exposing, and challenging. Its presence constitutes a form of dissimulation of the theatric space, performance, and that, which is performed: ourselves. We view ourselves through our artificial self-enactment and our eye is caught by the androids explicitly inauthentic performance of our identity. *Uncanny Valley* thematises authenticity as a problematic concept that is both appealing and pervasive but not strictly identifiable (cf. Funk et al. 9/10). Since authenticity is

first and foremost constructed or created, rather than a naturally occurring quality in itself, theatre is well-suited to thematise and stage it. Humanity as a tangible, physical quality within the inherently artificial space of the theatre is being deconstructed. The play utilises both concepts' simultaneous omnipresence and non-existence to reflect and question human identity.

The play's explicitness declines both dramatic irony and the construction of dramatic space as a mimetic illusion. Spectator and spectacle are eye to eye; the artificiality of the setting, mood, and actor is not only addressed, they are at the essence of the play's functionality. This overt thematisation peaks, when the robot is interacting with the "Theatermaschine", a moving light. He remains sitting down, giving verbal orders to the machine situated next to him; gesturing in time to its movements.

> *08:48* Das hier *(zeigt auf ein 'Moving Light') ... S21: Spot Moving* ...ist eine Maschine. Eine Theatermaschine. Sie lässt sich genau programmieren. Ich drücke hier...
> *(Laptop Licht an)*
> *08:56 S100: Moving light. Spot bleibt zu sehen.* und sie schwenkt nach rechts *(immer kopf*
> *leicht verschieb, evt hand dazu) (Scheinwerfer tut es. Dazu Musik MOVING_LIGHT),* 'Stopp', und 'Links', stopp. Nicht schlecht, oder?
> *09:16* Und Weiter. Hoch. Runter. Ein Kreisel. *(lacht, kopf kurz zurück)* Wirbel.
> Tanzen bitte. Und schneller. Heller. Lauter. Stopp. Weiterweiter. Schneller. Danke. Stopp. *(kurze handzeichen)* 'Stopp!', und sie hält an *(schaut zu zuschauern).*
> *10:06 S120: Vortragslicht. Wobei Licht auf moving light in 45 sec ausfadet*
> *10:07* Ein kompletter Ablauf von Bewegungen lässt sich in dieses Gerät programmieren. Ein Ablauf, der durchaus dazu da ist hier im Theater, Gefühle *(dazu Handzeichen)* zu produzieren.
> *10:18* Dieses Gerät wird zuverlässig funktionieren. Es wird Sie affizieren und animieren, Vorstellung für Vorstellung.[77]

This display of machine seemingly controlling machinery; the entirely artificial performance of agency and creative control by the android calls attention to the peculiar nature of the artistic experiment on stage, the performance without

77 "*08:48* This (*pointing to a 'moving light'*) … *S21: Spot Moving* ...is a machine. A Theatre Machine. It can be precisely programmed. I press here...
*(Laptop light on)*
*08:56 S100: Moving light. Spot remains visible.* and it swivels to the right *(always head*
*slightly, possibly hand to it*) (*spotlight does it. Plus music MOVING_LIGHT*), 'stop', and 'left', stop. Not bad, is it?
*09:16* And on. Up. Down. Round and round. (*laughs, head back briefly*) Whirl.
Dance, please. And faster. Brighter. Louder. Stop. Keep going. Faster. Thank you. Stop. (*short hand signals*) Stop!' and she stops (*looks at audience*).
*10:06 S120*: *Lecture light. Where light fades to moving light in 45 sec.*
*10:07* A complete sequence of movements can be programmed into this device. A sequence that is quite capable of producing feelings (*hand signals*) here in the theatre.
*10:18* This device will work reliably. It will affect you and animate you, performance after performance." (translation mine).

performer. There is a distance between the real Melle and the corporal copy in his place; a distance that differs from the space that, for example, exists between Hamlet and an actor playing Hamlet.[78] Actors are not merely copies of their characters; they form and perform who they play, both mentally and bodily, through the mimetic process Gebauer and Wulf have described as "Die Fähigkeit und der Vorgang, anhand einer schriftlich fixierten Rolle eine Person auf der Bühne darzustellen" (11).[79] The android, consequently, cannot be framed as an actor who performs a role. It is a machine that runs a program; an exact sequence of gestures and facial expressions to be played alongside Melle's pre-recorded voice.

Voice here inhabits a meaningful intermediate position between artificiality and non-artificiality. Friedrich Balke has remarked that

> Wenn der Mime sich zur Nachahmung natürlicher oder technischer Geräusche hergibt und damit der Stimme (*phone*) oder dem gesprochenen Wort (*logos*) das Privileg entzieht, dann verweiset eine derartige Ausweitung der mimetischen Zone auf eine weitere Dimension der Mimesis, die ihren Bezug zu Maschinen und technischen Medien betrifft. (43, original emphasis).[80]

What Balke here identifies as the mimetic zone is amplified when voice is not only mimed, but recorded and then performed by a mimetic figure and body on stage. *Uncanny Valley*'s situation is located in between different mimeses: a copy, a reproduction, an artificial playback of a speech act that is itself located somewhere between authentic and non-authentic artistic production. Melle himself writes[81] and speaks his own story and that of his android copy. The text is an artifice, artistically processed, and subsequently artificially performed. The play's particular frame additionally mediates it, by recording and re-playing it; thereby removing any momentary, uniqueness – any humanness – the direct, present quality of traditional performance adds to the dramatic text. "Im technischen Widerhall der Worte […] wird der intentionalen Rede eines Sprechers

78 Interestingly, Hamlet refers to himself as a "machine" in a letter to Ophelia (II.2). The play employs themes of art and authenticity which correspond to the analysis at hand.

79 "The capacity and process of depicting a person on stage based on a textual template." (Gebauer et al., translation mine).

80 "When the mime deigns to imitate natural or technical sounds and thereby takes away the privilege of the voice (phone) or the spoken word (logos), such an expansion of the mimetic zone indicates another dimension of mimesis concerning its relation to machines and technical media." (Balke, translation mine).

81 In collaboration with Stefan Kaegi and Martin Valdés-Stauder.

zugleich ihre Künstlichkeit […] vorgehalten" (Balke 43).[82] It is not a (voice-) actor but Melle himself – the affected, the experiencer – who speaks. This is an important, perhaps essential aspect of production, as it endows the explicitly artificial with human authenticity. The suspension of disbelief is aided by a 'real' person and a real person's story. The text is not performed and consequently transformed by another speaker, who would necessarily be an interpreter and possibly a re-interpreter of what is being said. *Uncanny Valley* enables its subject to speak anywhere anytime. By translocating Melle's voice to the body of his android copy, instead of another actor's body, the theatrical speech act both gains and loses authenticity: the body on stage is not human, yet it is Melle, in a way an actor cannot be. It is a vessel that is devoid of any Other, a pure receptacle and transferor of his voice. Nevertheless, it escalates the ordinary presence of artificiality on stage. Fittingly, it of course only appears to speak, not least because the recipient projects voice onto it, and also onto themselves ("Mit wem rede ich eigentlich? Mit Ihnen?").[83] The artificial body itself does not produce sound; does not have a voice and thus cannot establish communication at all. Voice is attributed to it and, with it, humanity is assigned. Since the android is not mimetically convincing and does not mechanically possess the ability to perform emotions that would enable him to communicate any complex meaning to the audience, it is first and foremost Melle's voice that humanises him. If Descartes' earlier discussed[84] assertion that we are because we think can be read as an inner voice, an internal speech act, the android is not. Unlike "The Bicentennial Man", he is neither subject nor human in any sense of the word. Nevertheless, he performs and performs successfully. His voice elicits the audience's suspension of disbelief and facilitates the android's efficacy. It enables the illusion of corporeal presence and communicates what the artificial body cannot by itself: I am (human).

When he narrates, asks questions, and gives orders, the android gives the illusion of immediacy, of human presence. His human-like body imitates theatre's traditional corporeal dynamic, as described by Tomaž Krpič: "One characteristic

82 „The mechanic reverberation of words […] confronts […] the speaker's intentional speech with its artificiality." (Balke, translation mine).

83 „Who am I really talking to? You?" (translation mine).

84 See II.1.3.

that makes theatre unique is its collectivity […]. It demands a certain quality of presence and each other's perception from both partners: the performer and the spectator. In some sense, it demands a 'community'. (4). The android, however, is an artificial agent within this communal dynamic. His orders, much like his gestures and even the movements of the light are pre-programmed parts of the linear code dictating the performance. This act of removing both the bodily presence and the creative agency of the actor, essential parts of both the materiality and functionality of theatrical and performative art, touches upon the boundaries of theatrical performance. How does the artificial presence on stage affect the theatrical system and processes? How does the artificiality of the actor's body affect the dynamic between stage and audience, as well as the depicted and depiction? How must we re-think the stage in terms of the android?

In order to answer these questions, it is productive to consider the android on stage's most common kindred performer: the puppet. Puppetry is a generally accepted, if infantilised, form of performance and an inherently mimetic act. Contrary to other artistic processes, its mimetic relationship between creator and creation is directly proportional due to an immediate corporeal connection between artist and outcome. The puppet moves as the artist does;[85] their bodies one, their expression inextricable. Puppetry as an art form is characterised by the physicality of its production and its depiction. Where humanity is portrayed through the puppet, it is mimetically mediated and materially transferred. Nevertheless, it retains the stage-presence and corporeal immediacy inherent to live performance. In his 1810 essay "Über das Marionettentheater", Heinrich von Kleist explores the mimetic implication of puppetry as an art form and, interestingly, imagines the possibility of an android on stage. Kleist's "Gliedermann" (378) is an ideal performer; not hindered by its materiality, the "Trägheit der Materie" (Kleist 378), or what Kleist calls hesitance, "Ziererei" (377). Kleist argues that the puppet is potentially capable of greater grace than a human performer because its movement reliably follows an uninterrupted line

85 On a related note, the increasing usage of Motion Capture in film-making allows the creator to render a CGI object through tracking the motions and expression of a real-life model. Arguably, this process has similar mimetic implications to puppetry and translates the motions of an actor directly onto the later, digital object. The technique has been used to depict android figures in film (i.e. *I, Robot* 2004), thereby combining the mimetic model the figure partakes in with the performative immediacy essential to the process.

from its centre of gravity. This line, which according to Kleist holds the way to the performer's and thus the performances' soul (cf.377ff.), is perfect and perfectly reproducible in the puppet. Where human bodies are fickle, the puppet can repeat movement exactly and infinitely. Kleist concludes that only absolute unconsciousness (the puppet) or, alternatively, absolute consciousness (god) can produce perfect corporeal grace.

The reality of the android performer, as presented in *Uncanny Valley*, somewhat underachieves this ideal. What Kleist imagined as a lighter, more reliable, and thus graceful artificial body, is here clumsy by comparison. The android is slow-moving, somewhat prone to technical dysfunctionalities, and not entirely graceful. Its materiality is not so much detached from human failure but arguably entirely at its mercy. Where the traditional puppet derives its movement from the direct, physical connection to the artist, the android must rely on soft- and hardware made by human hand but not directly connected to it and moved by it; a connection that lacks the former's stability. The limitations of materiality thus prove a far greater hindrance than Kleist originally imagined. His scenario is, however, of great interest for this analysis, precisely because of the apparent contradiction between the android's obvious artificiality and its functionality as a performer of humanity. Were materiality, or corporality, absolutely determinative of humanness, then the Melle android would not work as a representation of its mimetic reference. It could not embody a human in the way it does. The fact that the puppet on stage is accepted as a productive placeholder for Melle, suggests that humanity must exist as an abstract concept that can be applied to the android, not because of his, at times, clumsy mimesis but despite of it. The puppet's limited corporality suffices for the figure's function as a projection surface for human identity.[86] Consequently, it is not the inherent superiority that Kleist theorised, which allows it to perform but the external, abstract quality of the humanity it portrays.

Although this shifts the argument from an internal advantage of the artificial performer to an external projection enabling its portrayal, Kleist's

86 The artificial corporeal presence it does possess is, however, arguably essential for its successful performance. Given the recent rise of theatres streaming performances online, it is an interesting thought experiment to consider the android on stage on screen, further distancing the artificial performer from the audience. It is questionable, whether *Uncanny Valley* would retain impact in this format.

musings on unconsciousness hold true: The android is indeed an empty vessel and consequently can be filled in one intended way and this way only. It is a principally neutral human base that imbibes meaning. Thus, it does not hesitate, does not get self-conscious, and can perfectly reproduce that which it is programmed to do again and again: perfect mimesis. For the android performer, this means true reproducibility. To Melle, this reproducibility and the resulting independence of the android from his mimetic reference partially reverse what he initially framed as heightened control over the self. He remarks that the android performing by himself is a loss of control over his own self-presentation. He describes anxiety over the robot possibly being ridiculed, or, interestingly, deviating from its programming. Both his realistic and unrealistic fears are to do with not being present in his own self-representation. Even though the android is more reliable to perform as intended than a human actor would be, Melle mistrusts it with what Kleist would perhaps call his soul and what can be read as humanity, both in an individual and general sense. It follows that our perception of the android figure contradicts itself: it is a receptacle for the abstract identity we project on it and as such subject to our mimetic authority. However, by loading it with ourselves, we perceive it as autonomously human in a way it is not and ascribe it with agency it does not possess. The android is simultaneously felt as a more and less authentic expression of self; a perfectly controlled and yet uncontrollable self-portrait through performance.

Within this performance, the android is perceived notably different from traditional performers and conventional puppets. The suspension of disbelief does not extend to it in the same way, since its artificiality is an explicit part of its role that does not hinder and yet affect its function. Interestingly, as long as the deception is noticeable, the higher quality of the mimesis, compared to the puppet, seems to disturb, rather than support the willingness of the audience to suspend its disbelief, affecting the theatrical catharsis. Aptly named, the play is an acutely felt demonstration of Masahiro Mori's Uncanny Valley Effect: The revulsion caused by an object that imitates humanity almost but not entirely perfectly. Mori observed that humans react to human likeness in objects positively until the likeness reaches a certain point, at which it makes the observer uncomfortable. The term uncanny is here used to describe de de-familiarisation of the familiar;

the feeling of discomfort arising from alienation, specifically alienating a human body.[87] Using puppetry, here the traditional Japanese *Bunraku*, as a reference, Mori states that

> But when we enjoy a puppet show in the theater [sic], we are seated at a certain distance from the stage. The puppet's absolute size is ignored, and its total appearance, including hand and eye movements, is close to that of a human being. So, given our tendency as an audience to become absorbed in this form of art, we might feel a high level of affinity for the puppet. (3).

By contrast, prosthetics – or mimetic robots – which imitate humanity more closely elicit an "eerie" (Mori 5) feeling. *Uncanny Valley*'s mimesis is located at the exact point where the likeness is too accurate to be abstract but not accurate enough. The effect is uncanny and disrupts the accustomed suspension of disbelief in the audience. The android's artificiality is deliberately explicit and thus consciously enters the described valley. It intentionally circumvents what Mori calls 親和感 (*shinwakan*), referring to a sense of friendship, fellowship. What is often translated as familiarity or affinity expresses a feeling of recognition, of belonging, and can be read as aligned to the essential category I explore in this book: humanity. When we recognise ourselves in what is not and therefore bond with it, we are closest to an abstract, conceptual understanding of what humanity essentially is. What we feel connected to, familiar with, and attached to, is, in a sense, us. Art traditionally utilises this familiarity in likeness to communicate meaning. Theatre especially harnesses our corporeal community with the bodies on stage. *Uncanny Valley* intentionally removes this community and instead confronts us with our mimetic almost-Us; harnessing uncanniness instead of affinity. Where traditional theatre brings us face to face with ourselves in a literal sense, the play brings us face to face with our self-portrait and thus, our self-perception. It utilises the android as a projection surface made explicit: a mirror that does not ignore the slight distortion of its reflection but uses it. The android's open inauthenticity is not hidden but embraced and made meaningful.

The nuanced problem of authenticity in theatrical production is embodied in the play's protagonist: On the one hand, it can be argued that the mimesis of

87 Mori human corpses as an example and possible explanation for the effect (cf. Mori 5). He borrows the term from the German *Unheimliche*, a term used, among Others by Friedrich Nietzsche and Sigmund Freud. The latter, interstingly, explores the uncanny in the context of repetition and doubling.

Melle in *Uncanny Valley* is more authentic without the distortion of a human actor depicting his character. On the other hand, the introduction of an uncanny, mechanical copy of a body instead of an actual human body removes the corporal authenticity and inter-human dynamic of traditional acting. Arguably, theatre is inherently populated with artificial humans, in the sense of the artistic depiction of characters on stage. After all, Denis Diderot's *Paradoxe sur le Comédien* has established that the higher the degree of artificiality in acting, the more authentic it becomes. It is the illusion of emotion, not the reality that ensures the stability of a performance (cf. Diderot 1883, 74). Interestingly, Diderot chooses to discuss this apparent paradox in the context of the previously mentioned debate concerning the relation of life and art:

> quelle est donc, vous répliquerai-je, cette magie de l'art si vantée, puisqu'elle se réduit à gâter ce que la brute nature et un arrangement fortuitavaient mieux fait qu'elle? Niez-vous qu'on embellisse la nature? N'avez-vous jamais loué une femme en distant qu'elle était belle comme une *Vierge* de Raphaël? Ala vue d'un beau paysage, ne vous êtes-vous pas écrie qu'il était romanesque? D'ailleurs, vous me parlez d'une chose réelle, et moi, je vous parle d'une imitation. (1877, 37).[88]

His argument that art can and has improved upon nature, that the mimesis of life can be superior to life itself, lends itself to the topic at the very heart of this book. It is possible that the abstraction, the artificiality of art, awards authenticity and enables it to engage with its subject matter accessibly, emphatically, and productively. *Uncanny Valley*'s literal interpretation of this paradox, the performance of the artificial body merely visualises this concept. The android on stage expands the mimetic processes of theatrical performance onto the physical sphere. The character depicted is no longer merely played, it is, as far as technologically possible, physically copied; the material of the mimesis has changed from human to machine. By addressing the machine's emotive purpose – "Es wird Sie affezieren und animieren"[89] – the play includes the cathartic process of theatre in its thematisation of authenticity and artificiality.

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88 "What is this boasted magic of art if it only consists in spoiling what both nature and chance have done better than art? Do you denv that one can improve on nature? Have you never, by way of praising a woman, said she is as lovely as one of Raphael's Madonnas? Have you never cried, on feeing a fine landscape 'It's as good as a description in a novel'? Again, you are talking to me of a reality. I am talking to you of an imitation." (Diderot 1883, translation Pollock 25).

89 "It will affect you and animate you" (translation mine).

The how and why of evoking emotions through performance has been at the core of the discussion on theatre as an art form since Aristotle's aforementioned definition of tragedy. Both his praise and Plato's earlier critique of the evocative potential of theatre suggest that among the general emotional evocativeness of art, theatre, both in its classical and contemporary performative sense, sets itself apart. Where words, or paint, or marble imitate nature, the abstraction is obvious and distancing; where humans themselves are the material of the mimetic process, their involvement affects the art's immediacy and reduces distance. The corporal aspects of theatrical performance, in particular the presence of actors' bodies on stage, reduces mediacy. Human corporality is neither depicted, nor narrated, nor portrayed – it is present. *Uncanny Valley* is an experiment on the cathartic potential of human corporality in art and theatre, specifically. It openly questions how theatre's anticipated cathartic effect is affected by the artificiality of the body on stage.

The play thematises the artificial body in several ways: first and foremost, through the central presence of the android body on stage. As mentioned, the play is not trying to hide the robotic nature of its protagonist. The illusion of humanity is openly disturbed: The back of the androids head is open, wiring and machinery just visible if spectators are actively looking for it. When he moves, the servos of his joints are audible; his general movements the fraction of a second too slow and almost, but not fluent enough to be considered entirely natural. He blinks, but it looks deliberate; as do his gestures and facial expressions. The body lacks unconscious movement, sits too still in between its programmed motions. His skin texture is just slightly off and his facial features' distortion noticeable just about noticeable, if looked for. Additionally, the robot is paratextually established as such, by having been advertised and announced in the promotional material, on the website, on the posters. By presenting instead of hiding the android's artificiality, and yet staging it the same as any human body, *Uncanny Valley* places the question of corporeal authenticity and the boundaries between the artificial and non-artificial body front and centre.

Additionally, the play thematises how human bodies can be artificialized and alienated through illness and injury. Thomas Melle's autobiographical narration

addresses his struggles with the symptoms of bipolar disorder. He describes processing this through art

> *05:46* […] die krassen Schwankungen meines eignen Lebens, *(hin-her-geste)* zwischen manischen und depressiven Phasen, zwischen Psychiatrie und Normalität…
> *06:01* aber – und das ist mir wichtig – *(augen auf, brauen, finger)* mit literarischen Mitteln. *(runter)* Und das kommt mir fast wie eine Notwendigkeitsbedingung vor, dass ich diese Krankheit erst fassbar und erzählbar machen konnte durch die Literatur, durch die Mittel der Kunst. […] Erst durch die *(augenbrauen)* größte Künstlichkeit wurde der Text authentisch. Erst durch die größte *(zeigen)* Kontrolle. Die bipolare Krankheit ist nämlich eigentlich eine Geschichte des ständigen Kontrollverlusts – oder des Kontrollverlusts in Phasen – und des Versuches, diese Kontrolle immer wieder zu erringen.[90]

Melle demonstrates the illusion of human body authenticity, by thematising his own physical and mental shortcomings and thereby demonstrating the fragility of our corporeal identity as a stable anchor of our sense of self. It points out the many ways in which our bodies can betray and become alien to us. The android is framed as a controllable extension; a healthy replacement and enhancement of a human body. Here the play echoes *Frankenstein*'s allusions to the transience of human bodies, as well as the "The Bicentennial Man"'s argument about the effect of prosthetics on human identity.[91] Melle, too, addresses prosthetics as an example of ways in which human and machine interface already. He is shown running in synchrony with leg prosthetics and in an interview with a cochlear implant user. By referencing these normalised ways in which we artificialize our bodies – the "präkere Verbindung zwischen Ding und Mensch" – without modifying human identity, the play introduces the idea that the boundaries between human and machine are not as clearly drawn as we might think. It questions the supposedly unquestionable difference between artificial and non-artificial humanity by staging the robot body and inviting the audience to consider it and thereby consider themselves. Melle's musings on the android as himself and himself as the android represent a challenge to the collective human relationship to our

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90 *05:46* [...] my own life's extreme fluctuations, (*back-and-forth gesture*) between manic and depressive phases, between psychiatry and normality...
*06:01* but - and this is important to me - (*eyes open, brewing, fingers)* with literary means. (*down*) And that seems to me almost like a necessary condition, that I could only make this illness tangible and narratable through literature, through the means of art. [...] Only through the (*eyebrows*) greatest artificiality did the text become authentic. Only through the greatest (*show*) control. For bipolar illness is actually a story about the constant loss of control - or the loss of control in phases - and of the attempt to regain this control again and again." (translation mine).

91 To provide another example, the concept was thematised in the 1930s *Professor Jameson* series (Neil R. Jones), an early example for the depiction of preserving minds in artificial bodies.

bodies and how we enshrine our identities in it. The earlier quoted Emma Palese describes this process in her exploration of the relationship between having and being a body:

> Just the appearance is based on the consideration of the body as the wrapper with contingent and accessorial qualities, changing over time and lacking of internal. To *be* and to *have* take on a relationship of mutual interconnection, both relying on the rejection of the body as a primary branch of life and as the ultimate expression of the generative process of nature. *Having* a body means, in fact, to reify it, to manipulate it according to its own voluntary rational force. *Being* a body means to build and realize our individuality through attributes that are assigned and which characterize the being […]. To *be* a body should, therefore, assume the value of an existence which considers man as having an essence and a very precise and specific nature. (193ff).

Palese's work suggests that our corporeal identity is shaped by reifying and individualising a larger, conceptual understanding of humanity. Having a body is possessing a self in the material sense; being a body is characterising our individual self through corporeal means. Both pre-suppose what she calls an 'essence'; human self-perception as being part of a collective identity realised through the body. Following this argument, *Uncanny Valley*'s concept experiments with the translocation of this essence, into a mimetic copy of the materially realised self. It thereby questions whether humanness is extensible onto the mimetic object and whether this extension affects the theatrical process. Can an obviously, explicitly artificial copy of a human have the same effect as a human, evoke the same empathy and cathartic effect?

Various acting theories have attempted to approach the process of acting in terms of artificiality. Vsevolod Meyerhold's biomechanic system for actors, "initially advanced […] as the theatrical equivalent of industrial time-and-motion study and […] devised in response to the demands of the new mechanized age" (Meyerhold 183), is an example of an attempt at achieving machine-like efficiency in acting. The goal was

> (1) an absence of superfluous, unproductive movements
> (2) rhythm
> (3) the correct positioning of the body's centre of gravity
> (4) stability
>
> (Meyerhold 198).

Meyerhold's theory aspires to quantify physical human expression and display accurate and measured versions of it on stage. His "economical" (Meyerhold 198)

acting is focused solely on visually perceptible manifestations of emotion and the exact replication thereof. Humanity is here reduced to corporeal expression; its depiction reduced to a sequence of facial expressions, gestures, and body positions. *Uncanny Valley*'s degree of artificiality, the portrayal of a person through artificially constructed physical expression that is controllable down to every blink and wink, is in many ways an extreme but consistent implementation of Meyerhold's theory. The android is maximally economic, every gesture is deliberate and expressive. The entirety of the performance is devoid of superfluous and involuntary expression of any kind. Acting becomes an accurate rendering of pre-designed motion sequences; establishing a degree of control that is not achievable with human actors. The actor, trained to act like a machine, is replaced by a machine trained to act as an actor. The play's explicit artificiality, however, does not concur with biomechanic acting.

In a similar but different vein, Brecht's gestic acting approaches acting as an ideally supra-individual process in an attempt to achieve the effect of alienation in theatre. Brecht's intended audience is aware of the artificiality of the situation on stage at all times and thus able to critically analyse what it is seeing. His actors, similarly to Meyerhold's, move deliberately, economically, and obviously. Brecht's setting, too, is flaunting its artificiality with visible lights and minimal props. The actors use verbal cues such as using the third person or past tense to create detachment and the inclusion of stage directions out loud, likewise in the third person, to inhibit immersion. His depiction of humanity utilises distance, not empathy to produce affect; emotion is externalised, not internalised. *Uncanny Valley* bypasses verbal cues and economised movement and achieves alienation through the use of the android. It functions as Brecht's "dynamic contradictor" (Brecht 137) through its explicit, corporeal artificiality and its naturalistic but deliberately imperfect mimesis. Its voice does not depict artificiality, as Brecht intends for the actor (cf.138), it is an actual artificial rendering of Melle's voice. The question is, whether this approach to Brecht's alienation effect increases or decreases the cathartic effect, if Brecht is to be believed that immersion is not requisite for the evocation of emotions in audiences (cf. Brecht 145ff).

The play itself addresses the question when the android concludes:

> Während Sie das hören, bin ich nicht mehr da. Vielleicht bin ich ganz weit weg. Vielleicht auch schon gar nicht mehr am Leben.
> Wenn Sie also jetzt dann gleich klatschen, dann tun Sie das für sich selbst, weil Sie wahrscheinlich meinen, dass Sie diesen Turingtest bestanden haben. Und für die anderen hier im Raum. Weil Sie zueinander gekommen sind und die Regeln eingehalten haben. Weil Sie Gefühle geteilt und vielleicht sogar Dinge verstanden haben. Wie in einem sehr alten, sehr menschlichen Programm…[92]

The deconstruction of the theatrical process' is thus expanded to include not only its space and actors but the audience itself. By questioning the cathartic effect's authenticity, the play implies its existence. The android functions as an effective actor on stage; its artificiality productive, not inhibiting. The communal theatre experience and collective corporality of audience and performer Tomaž Krpič describes prevail, even though the staged body is artificial in this case. The play does retain catharsis, even as it deconstructs the process that enables it. By alienating the corporeal presence in traditional theatre, the play challenges the conceptual artistic impact performance inhabits – and extends this challenge to the audience itself. Theatre as a cultural act and the group dynamic of those who attend is scrutinised, the spectator is put on the spot and encouraged to reflect on his own motivations, social integrity, and the authenticity of whatever emotions were felt during the performance. As the robot asks "Wozu sind Sie hergekommen?", the audience is forced to reflect on its motivation. The offered possibilities "Um meinen Körper zu sehen?", "Um sich mit mir zu identifizieren?", "um sich von mir zu unterscheiden",[93] re-enforce the play's meta-referential thematisation of mimetic corporality on stage. After every aspect of the spectacle – the space, setting, mimetic construction, and process of acting – the spectator is now framed as artificial as well. The play frames the act of attending the theatre in itself as a culturally constructed, artificial act that is learned, controlled, and rewarded within the individual's social programming. By extension, it questions human behaviour's authenticity in general, pointing out our collective artificiality as participants in human society.

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92 "When you are listening to this, I am no longer there. Maybe I am far away. Maybe I'm not even alive any more.
So if you're going to clap in a moment, you are doing it for yourself, because you probably think you have passed this Turing test. And for the others in this room. Because you came together and followed the rules. Because you have shared feelings and maybe even understood things. Like in a very old, very human programme...." (translation mine).

93 "Why did you come here?" "To see my body?" "To identify with me?" "To differentiate yourself from me?" (translation mine).

Interestingly, the play does not leave it at this theoretic suggestion but demonstrates this hypothesis immediately afterward. Its thematisation of constructed-ness and artificiality does not end when lights and the unnatural stillness of the android's body signal the end of the play. It utilises the ritualistic, choreography-like character of the institution in order to expose the automatic process-character of the theatre experience: "In diesen Momenten wird einem die Diskrepanz zwischen der eigenen Kodierung und dem Gefühl, ein Subjekt zu sein, bewusst.".[94] The robot's closing remarks alienate this process and disrupt familiar behaviour protocols. The audience is made aware of its 'programming' and acutely feels the normative group-dynamic at play here. The ending of the play, normally signalled by applause and subsequently departure illustrates its points on the illusion of authenticity and the immense influence established social and cultural procedures have on our sense of familiarity, community, and identity. Applause is given hesitantly, self-consciously, or entirely absent. The ritual loses its meaning in the absence of a human subject. Applauding the android is meaningless and this meaninglessness is felt, both individually and by the audience groups. This underlines the significance the corporeal human presence holds for the theatre process. Its mimetic replacement challenges the experience and demonstrates how direct, unmitigated, bodily present human interaction – or a lack thereof – influences the recipient's behaviour. The resulting alienation, yet nonetheless intact theatrical act, question established notions on the agency and essentialism of human bodies on stage and in art. Extending art's inherent artificiality towards this body affects, yet also effects its impact. It changes but does not inhibit its meaning.

In summary, *Uncanny Valley* successfully constructs a performance without performer and thereby stages humanity itself. The play's critical commentary on (in)authenticity in theatre proceeds alongside its challenge to our identity as an authentic one. It utilises the android figure to trace the boundaries of human-ness and reveals the many points where artificial and non-artificial humanity interact and intersect. Specifically, it approaches humanity through our corporeal presence, on stage and in life. The protagonist contemplates his human

94 "In this moment we realise the discrepancy between our own code and our sense of being a subject." (translation mine).

body in relation to its artificial copy: where and how it can aid, augment, and replace him signifies where the boundaries of our identity blur. *Uncanny Valley* makes this replacement explicit and exhibits it. It rejects notions of inherent humanity and encourages the audience to question the sanctity, as well as the humanity we are used to assume appertains to our bodies and selves as we perceive them. The programmable theatrical space is aligned with the programmable android and its programmable audience, who is no less determined by cultural narratives and social performance than the android on stage is by its code. It showcases this parallel even beyond its own ending: After the performance's apparent conclusion, a barrier is put up around the robot, encouraging the audience to approach and inspect it up close and brightly lit. This inspection, usually involving pictures of and selfies with the artificial Melle, is part of the performance and planned to elicit this particular behaviour in the audience. The recipient is, consciously or unconsciously, being influenced (programmed if you will) and thus allows the play to demonstrate its point directly: Humanity's own artificial potential, its susceptibility for manipulation and control is revealed - by and through the android on stage. The recipient leaves conscious of his own performance and the omnipresence of artificiality in art, on stage, in life, and within us.

### II.1.5 Beautiful Functionality: Conclusions on Corporality

A rejection, an integration, and a deconstruction: Three artificial bodies have been analysed and three approaches to human corporality described. They differ in time, genre, premise, and conclusion and are thus able to serve as reference points for tracing how societal reaction to and interaction with artificial bodies has evolved. All three bodies experience rejection: in *Frankenstein,* it is violent, in "The Bicentennial Man" societal, and in *Uncanny Valley* it is consciously created and dramatised. All three bodies, however, also experience varying degrees of successful humanisation, as their voices are heard, their plights recognised, and

their narratives considered. The works illustrate a shift in the general perception of android technologies,[95] from violent resistance, to potential acceptance, to the currently concurring fear and hope. *Frankenstein* and “The Bicentennial Man” both thematise the degree of mimetic excellence and its essential role for the potential acceptance or rejection of artificial human corporality. This is framed as largely instinctual in the former and a meticulous, conscious negotiation in the latter. The noticeably non-human humanoid body triggers an instinctive rejection and a feeling of uneasiness. It can, however, potentially overcome this reaction and be classified as human under the right mitigating and mimetic circumstances, as demonstrated in “The Bicentennial Man”. This potential for success suggests that even the seemingly tangible, physical sphere of human corporality cannot give us an ultimately reliable and stable guideline for what is essentially human and what is not. *Uncanny Valley* confirms this through its successful staging of the android. The seemingly concrete corporeal boundaries around humanity are evidently not always upheld and can be questioned, negotiated, and overcome; as illustrated by the interactions with the artificial bodies presented here.

All analysed works can be read as attempts to create an android juxtaposition to humanity and delineating human ‘nature’ from its artificial mimeses. They are all, originally or retrospectively, unsuccessful. Their entanglement in the deconstruction of nature and ‘the natural’ entails the deconstruction of what is thought of, and felt, as a ‘natural’ human body. Our understanding of what exactly defines such a thing is constantly re-shaped and widened by scientific progress, cultural shifts, and our inevitable collective evolution. As we progress our understanding of our bodies’ material limitations, we are altering them; thereby extending, re-shaping, and re-framing corporeal humanity. Art predicted and certainly thematised this development through the android figure and its implications for our self-perception and -development. Even the oldest example chosen here already incorporates textual indicators that blur

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95 For the purpose of this project, my interest lies with general, popular discourse – both artistic and public – in order to capture a collective understanding of humanity. Within this discourse the distinction between areas of research concerning Artificial Intelligence, like subcategories of machine learning and the separate field of robotics, as well as other branches of android-related technology, is rarely fully upheld. They relate in the untrained public eye and are thus bundled together throughout this book’s reference to real life technology in order to portray the general public’s association with the android figure. The term android technologies refers to this associative bundle and is not meant to accurately portray the nuances of the developed technology.

the lines meant to distinguish its artificial and non-artificial figures categorically. While the selected examples trace a noticeable progression toward an inclusive conceptualisation of the human body, none are entirely clear-cut classifications. The question after the boundaries of our corporeal existence as humans has and continues to inspire nuanced artistic interpretations that seem to move away from rather than towards a definitive answer.

Shelley portrays failed self-mimesis and roots this failure in the corporeal. Her artificial human figure's monstrosity is, however, not necessarily inherent but created by social rejection. The text distinguishes between an inhuman body and a potentially human character. Textual and corporeal materiality coincide and form a patchwork that shapes the creature and ultimately determine its fate: the Other body is rejected. This conclusion can be read towards a number of current discourses on body-based, socio-economic exclusion and discrimination concerning, for example, disabilities, societal beauty-standards, or ethnicity. By locating the acceptance but not the existence of humanity in the body, *Frankenstein* introduces the interplay in between the categories I discuss in this book.

Asimov's depiction of successful mimesis develops this and shows that an artificial body can, within reason, be seen as a human body. This suggests that the 'natural' and the artificial do not contradict each other as absolutely as perhaps previously thought when it comes to human bodies. Mimetic effort is necessary but artificiality itself is not insurmountable and humanity not reserved for those whose body has been born. "The Bicentennial Man" depicts humanity as a dialectic, irrefutable presence, yet also an achievable goal, both within and beyond the physical sphere. It thus presents how a corporeality-based human identity can be made inclusive and conciliate instead of divide humanity.

The dramatic utilisation of an artificial body in *Uncanny Valley* has shown that despite our growing potential to extend humanity, the Otherness of an openly artificial body is still a present and quantifiable quality. As such, it can be made productive when making a point about the artificiality of art but also the hypocrisy of thinking of ourselves as entirely un-artificial. Both the non-humanness of artificial bodies and our own, undisputed humanness have thus been deconstructed side by side. A process that has shown that human bodies,

according to art, can be revived, added to, and even created entirely artificially and still be considered human. This goes to show that the depiction of artificial humanity has always and still serves as a contemplation of our humanness and its vexing indefinably. *Uncanny Valley* does not attempt to solve this issue but rather thematises and uses it in order to contemplate humanity in artistic production and, by extension, our own self-production. Humanness is depicted as a state both evident in the physical reality of our bodies and transcending it. It can be transferred, translocated, copied, and extended towards the non-human object. We are not bound by our bodily borders.

This insight allows us to contemplate those aspects of humanity that transcend the materiality of our bodies. All analysed works transcend the purely corporeal in some way or other: Frankenstein, the failed father figure and his inability to relate to his own creation as his peer, can be thought of as a failure of humanity, as inhumane, while the creature's character and suffering allow (a modern reader) to read it as human. Thus, the monster becomes the creature and its creator the truly monstrous. In "The Bicentennial Man" Andrew's detailed mimesis of humanity's corporeal limitations humanises him through social recognition, reversing the effect of sociality as portrayed in *Frankenstein*. Both examples thus demonstrate how sociality and the resulting emotionality interact with corporality: one introduces an exclusionary the other an inclusive effect. *Uncanny Valley* in turn engages the audience's sociality by giving its android emotional appeal through the voice and story of Thomas Melle. The play harnesses both the inclusion and exclusion human social dynamics can facilitate by thematising the protagonist's social- and self-alienation through illness and, at the same time, using his story's human appeal to integrate the android on stage emotionally.

This suggests that our conceptualisations of humanness are affected – that is supported, potentially substituted, or forfeited entirely – by an interplay of categories, rather than isolated ideas. It also illustrates how the continuous reception of art affects our cultural understanding of it and ourselves: cultural discourse that interprets art, especially android art, always also interprets humanity. In this context, the predominant presences in this discourse are of interest because the cultural, ethnic, and national composition of those that seek to

define our corporeal identity directly affects it. Thus, the discriminatory effect bodily boundaries can have on the individual and collective human subject can be observed within the same artistic discourse that thematises it. Regarding this and all other aspects of our conceptual understanding of ourselves and the boundaries of human identity, we are affected by an ongoing negotiation through artistic depiction and contemplation.

The post-human endeavour to decentralise humanity presupposes a 'human' to be decentralised. The problem of its absence as a definable, stable category affects the current discourse on human identity as it distinguishes itself from its Others. The corporeal aspects of this distinction are not exempt from this process. Post-humanity is post-corporeal because it suggests that the way we have and continue to think of ourselves, and the categories within which we have anchored human identity, are constructs rather than facts. Human bodies are framed as a vessel for the ideas and associations we have charged them with – both positive and negative. Consequently, humanity is reduced to a purely ideological concept, rather than a corporeally anchored and thus tangible fact. The android figure in art is an expression of this idea, translocating humanity into a mimetic object and exploring whether and how it takes root. The three artificial bodies examined here illustrate how human identity can be constructed in and withheld from our mimetic copies and thus demonstrate the relative independence of the concept from its physical form.

In part at least, it is our collective inability to find satisfying and lasting boundaries even for something as tangible as corporeal humanity, which drives our continuous interest in imagining artificial bodies. Fictional bodies that can be experimented on, literally and figuratively, in an effort to trace where humanity stops, where we stop empathising and identifying with another and an Other. In art, we make human bodies, we cultivate, breed, and construct them, out of ivory, silicone, and ourselves and we reflect upon how their behaviour, their self-reflection, their aspirations, and their suffering, all the while reflecting ourselves. They are our approach to a definition, an essence of human corporality that is yet unknown. Perhaps it is this very elusiveness, the absence of reliable boundaries, that must be taken as our answer here. So, after Gertrude Stein: a body, is a human body, may be a human body, maybe not?

## II.2 Emotionality

### II.2.1 Omnia Vincit Amor: The Feeling Human

After the last chapter focused on humanity's external manifestations, I am now addressing the internal: human emotionality. What we feel about ourselves and our selves; about others and Others in relation to our identity, as well as all the additional emotional aspects that make up the intricate maze of 'feeling human'. This maze, as A.W. Price describes, is characterised by the entanglement of human emotionality and emotional humanity:

> Even the differences of interpretation to which scholars are resigned focus our minds upon the complexity of the phenomena, and their resistance to over-unitary definitions. Emotions, after all, are things that we *feel*; at the same time, emotionally is how we often *think*. (140).

Any attempt at a definition proves complex. Human emotionality has been discussed, debated, and critically examined under various labels and in the context of a wide range of approaches. It has been viewed through the lenses of religion, politics, and philosophy: from classical philosophers, who generally "understood emotions to involve feelings understood as primitives without component parts" (Scarantino et. al. 3), to understanding emotionality as a physical reaction,[96] to today's multidisciplinary approaches. Explaining and categorising human emotionality has been a similarly persistent problem as defining human identity itself. Plato postulated control over emotions, the Stoics sought to overcome them through reason, Descartes tried to make them productive, and Hume chose to categorise them within a moral framework.[97] Aaron Ben-Ze'ev has called the question after the nature of emotionality a "haunted" (41) one. He argues for an encompassing definition in terms of emotion as a mental mode:

> The very complexity of emotions has made attempts to define them notoriously problematic. Some definitions of emotions that have been proposed include: mental

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96 Referring to the James-Lange theory: cf. Scarantino et. al. 3.

97 Remarks on the respective approaches to emotionality can be found in Plato's *Politeia*, Marcus Aurelius' *Ta Eis Heauton*, Descartes' *Les Passions de l'âme* and Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature.*

> entities, states, dispositions, capacities, types of intentional reference, and feelings. Furthermore, lay people differ systematically in their implicit theories of emotion: some view emotions as fixed (as do entity theorists), whereas others view emotions as more malleable (in line with incremental theorists). […] All these proposals are adequate in the sense that emotions do indeed involve those elements. However, in light of the complexity of emotions, I believe that no single mental element can adequately define emotions. Accordingly, I think we should define emotions as a general mode of the mental system. (56).

This definition has the advantage of encompassing emotionality's dynamic as well as its structured nature. Since it is both an individual, highly subjective experience and a patterned process that is affected by and affecting society at large, viewing it as a mode, a "manner of something" (Ben-Ze'ev 57), rather than a fixed entity, is prudent. It allows for an analysis able to recognise the sometimes simplified patterns within the artistic depiction of human emotionality and their implications for the broader discourse on humanity itself. Consequently, this chapter sets out to analyse the broad strokes, without risking platitudes or apodictic arguments: I trace the stylised depictions of emotionality that shape the broader societal narratives of feeling human. I aim to extract those emotional modes which make up our overarching discourses on emotionality and by extension inform our own, very personal understanding of ourselves. This approach acknowledges the cyclical nature of human identity production both informing and drawing from cultural discourses.

The question who we are, emotionally, is receptive to this reciprocity because of its inherent instability.[98] When setting out to explore discourses on humanity, it quickly becomes evident that there is an elementary problem with human identity that resists any existing attempts to define or even delineate it concretely: Humanity, in the way we see, reflect, and discuss ourselves, is an undoubtedly existing and meaningful concept that nevertheless lacks tangibility. It has no definition, stable boundaries, or inherent characteristics. Consequently, it can be argued that the only reason it is meaningful at all is our collective emotional attachment to it. To put it plainly, we are human first and foremost, because we feel that we are. To be clear, the fact that a concept is mainly created and upheld by emotions does not make it any less 'real'. Our humanity and the qualities we ascribe to it affect and effect our lives and all expressions of its subjective realness, including the art we produce. Nevertheless, it is prudent to

98 Ben-Ze'ev has identified instability as one of the primary qualities of emotion (cf.56).

remember how definitive emotions are to our self-perception. Our feelings dominate our discourses. This dominance is, however, itself dominated by incongruities regarding emotionality's specific position in relation to the idea if humanness. The conflict is fuelled by the functional absence of the one, neutral human and the unequal way we ascribe emotionality to the cultural and ethnic hierarchies we have created within ourselves. As Jordana Greenblatt notes

> Modernity's rational subject, associated with Enlightenment ideals and the Classical traditions they draw on, is one whose maleness, Westernness, and whiteness has historically been used as the measure against which disenfranchised groups, including women, people of colour, and the colonized, have fallen short, judged insufficiently rational and overly emotional. It is therefore *his* identity that comes into question when reason is no longer a guarantor of human identity. (2016, 43, original emphasis).

Greenblatt still asserts the central significance emotional capability occupies in human identity, but she argues that it is in conflict with other identities that shape the individual and can be used to dehumanise just as readily as to humanise:

> emotion may be that which defines the human at its most fundamental level, while, at the same time, threatening both subjective coherence and any model of personhood or the human that requires it. Already, this association of gendered (un)emotionality with personhood and/or selfhood provides some insight into why affect may be such a fraught issue […]. If emotion makes the human, but unmasculine emotionality betrays the personhood or selfhood of a man, then, in combination, we reach an anxiety-inducing paradox. (2016, 49).

I therefore treat emotionality as a paradoxical category, influencing large parts of human identity, by both assisting and hindering its application to the subject. Diverse forms of feeling inform all aspects of human perception and shape our understanding of ourselves. A human who does not feel at all is largely inconceivable; both philosophically and scientifically. The category conclusively informs human self-perception depending on how it is externalised, thereby establishing itself as a central aspect of conceptual humanity.

The inherent link between humanity and emotionality is confirmed by emotion theory. Jennifer Greenwood, for example, opens *Becoming Human: The Ontogenesis, Metaphysics, and Expression of Human Emotionality* with the statement: "This book tells the story, the quite wonderful story, of how each one of us becomes a full human being" (xi). She discusses the nuances of the nature versus nature debate on human emotionality and the question whether our emotive

processes function intracranially or transcranially.[99] Her thoughts on human development from "barely sentient" newborn to "becoming fully human" (Greenwood xi) emphasises the essential role of emotional capability for the perception of humanity. Whether this capability is considered intrinsic or learned, it is necessary in order to be considered human. Both positive and negative emotions serve their purposes; they inform our safety, they incline us to mate and nurture our offspring, and they fashion our societies. Emotions drive our decisions,[100] fashion our lives and consequently create our identity. The relational nature of all these effects underlines that emotions, in addition to their individual internal functions, also and maybe primarily ensure a working group dynamic. This corroborates the notion of humanity as a social group identity, both functionally and emotionally.

One of emotion theory's main challenges has been to maintain scientific accuracy despite its underlying category's "inherent fuzziness and the constant evolution" (Scherer 696). Scherer has therefore established a Component Process Mode[101] carefully distinguishing between the cognitive, physiological, expressive, and individual processed stages of emotionality. These differentiations are productive for a strictly scientific appraisal of human emotion, but for my purposes it is worthwhile to indulge the "fuzziness" a bit more extensively. In order to engage with humanity as artistic discourse, I need to engage with emotionality on an conceptional level. Rather than an accurate analysis of the human emotional process, it is how we perceive our emotionality – what Scherer has called "folk concepts of emotion" (695) – that is of interest here. In order to accurately analyse what emotional topoi make up our self-narrative, I address the artistic discourse on what feeling human has looked like.

Humanity, after all, is an emotionally loaded subject: Like most subjects concerned with identity, it both life-determining and very hard to pin down.

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99 The question whether emotive processes take place entirely internal or extend to external cognitive systems.

100 For a more detailed explanation on emotional influence on human decision making processes see Lowenstein & Lerner 621ff.

101 According to Scherer, cognitive appraisal, bodily symptoms, action tendencies, expression, and feelings are to be differentiated. Elaine Fox's *Emotion Science: Cognitive and Neuroscientific Approaches to Understanding Human Emotions*, too, dives into the necessary to distinguish between feelings, moods and affects.

Feelings can be evoked, they can be aroused and utilised, but they are notoriously hard to define universally. This problem exists not only because of gender- or language-based, as well as sociocultural differences, but also because feelings are, of course, highly subjective and seldom reliably reflected upon. Emotionality connects the utmost personal with the general public. In doing so, it functions not only as an inner but also an outward signifier of humanness in a specific, communal sense. Emotional expression identifies us as humans and thereby integrates us as part of an Us that can delineate Others. This identification process presupposes mimetic socialisation resulting in an emotional tradition that is recognisable within the group. Consequently, feeling is always both an individual and collective act; one that expresses ourselves and our community. Emotions are an affective product of group dynamics, and yet remain essentially personal. They are and are not tangible and generally frustrating to describe, let alone analyse. Still, it would be negligent to ignore emotionality in an extensive engagement with humanity as a concept, precisely because of its imprecise nature. It can be argued that all the various concepts discussed in this book are, in a way, emotional categories. Not only because they are loaded with and shaped by our emotional reactions and associations to and with them, but also because they have been created by and for emotional purposes. Human identity is undoubtedly and inherently emotional. An absence of emotionality, for all intents and purposes, equals an absence of humanity.[102]

As one of humanity's first and foremost tools of expression, art, too, is deeply, arguably fundamentally, connected to emotionality. In "Expression in the Arts" Derek Matravers states that "[…] emotions manifest in the arts. According to some philosophers it is of the essence of art that it manifests emotion - that, indeed, is art's defining feature" (617). He elaborates "the nature of expression is that we can throw light on what it is to understand a work of art; that is, there is something to understanding a work qua art." (617). He thus highlights the role of emotionality as a means to communicate artistic vision and meaning to a recipient. Matravers concludes by acknowledging the "generous pluralism" (632) of artistic

102 Absence is here used in the literal, absolute sense and explicitly does not include non-neurotypical or culturally specific alternative expressions of emotionality. Notably, both have been historically utilised to Other specific groups and relativize and deny humanity. II.2.4 explores the exploitative potential of equating specific emotional expression with humanity further.

emotive expression.[103] Susan L. Feagin in "Affects in Appreciation", a paper on emotive reaction to literature, develops this notion: Feagin negotiates emotional versus emotionless appreciations of art and legitimises emotional responses to literature, stating that

> Far from taking our attention away from a work, they reveal its complexity. In this sense, even attending to one's feelings, which the complexity argument contrasts with attending to the work, provides an opportunity to tease out at least some of the subtle and intricate features of characters and their stories that would otherwise lie, psychologically, largely underground. Our efforts to identify them despite the absence of a systematic way to think about them, to describe them despite their being vague and inchoate, to justify them despite the seeming circularity of that process, are efforts that draw us back into the literary and psychological intricacy and depth of a work, rather than diverting our attention from it. (649).

Feagin also connects emotions in art to human self-reflection: She writes that feelings elicited by art "are commonly thought of as revealing something profound about ourselves as human beings." (636) and that "many authors […] have held that feelings are *at the core of our humanity,* that they reveal something deep and important about us as human beings." (649, original emphasis).

As two somewhat hard to define entities, the combination of art and emotionality makes for a complex subject. Both concepts are somewhat fragile and their usage both ubiquitous and vague. Nevertheless, definitions of art overwhelmingly seek to engage with human emotionality in some form or other. Whether it is the artist's, like Paul Cézanne has ruled, when he stated that "Un art qui n'a pas l'émotion pour principe n'est pas un art",[104] or the recipient's, like in Aristotle's concept of catharsis.[105] Emotionality drives both the creation and the admiration of art: It lies at the core of art's relationship with the recipient no matter what is felt when we are confronted with it. Emotion is what makes art a reciprocal dynamic. Expressing emotionality and in turn, evoking it, lifts art beyond existence in isolation and makes it communicative, productive, and even, creative.

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103 Matravers refers repeatedly to Robin Collingwood's *The Principles of Art* (1938) in his argument.

104 "Art that is not grounded in emotion is not art." (Cézanne, translation mine). The words have been attributed to Cézanne by Joachim Gasquet in the second volume his 1921 biography of the artist, *Cézanne – Ce qu'il m'a dit* (cf.196). Since it was published fifteen years after the artist's death, the accuracy of the conversations it contains have been at times contested. Nevertheless, the text serves as one of the most important sources for Cézanne's life and perspectives on art and is therefore taken at face value here.

105 See II.1.4.

Charles Le Brun states in his *Méthode Pour Apprendre à Dessiner Les Passions* that to know humanity presupposes the knowledge of the passions:

> Comme la connoissance [sic] de l'homme suppose nécessairement celle des passions, qui sont le grand ressort des mouvements du Cœur et de toutes nos actions, on s'est appliqué de tout tems à en étudier la nature et les effets. (2).[106]

He translates this knowledge into the depiction of human emotion in painting. For him, as for many others after him, the depiction of human emotionality lies at the core – and the *cœur* – of art. As art evolved beyond the direct, figural expression of human feelings, it has preserved its subject matter. A subject matter that in recent years has been on the rise as a research subject within the humanities: In the introduction to *Writing Emotions*, the editors refer to an "emotional turn" or "affective (re)turn" (Jandl et al. 9), after what they call a "long period of neglect" (9). In the same work, Vera Nünning has written on the affective value of fiction for forming and enforcing cultural emotional norms. Nünning's "The Affective Value of Fiction: Presenting and Evoking Emotions" shows how art can be not only expressive of human emotionality but also partake in creating it: Depictions of emotionality in art influence how we perceive and realise our own feelings. Nünnings's claim that "Our emotions are regulated by the story we attach to the stimulus which provoked them" (32), holds true when we consider the reciprocal relationship between humanity, culture, and art. Seeing ourselves depicted, acting and reacting, informs our emotional experience and affects how we process emotions, individually and collectively. We learn from art and literature; as it mirrors us, we mirror it: "the emotions raised by reading fiction can leave traces and shape reader's affective responses in their daily life." (Nünning 45).

Utilising a similar argument, Ursula Le Guin's essay "The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction" describes how humanity framed and frames itself through storytelling, from the beginning. She criticises the focus on our human story as a story of conflict; an artificially linear, individualistic effort with heavily gendered associations. She emphasises her inability to identify with this predominant human narrative and underlines its marginalising effect. Her argument suggests how self-production through storytelling, and by extension artistic production in

106 "As the knowledge of humanity necessarily presupposes that of the passions, which are the great drive of the heart's movements and all our actions, we have always applied ourselves to studying their nature and effects." (Le Brun, translation mine).

general, is potentially exclusory.[107] The human narrative, which we identify with, adhere to, and perpetuate may lack diversity to accurately represent the multitude of stories it contains. Consequently, human's mimetic nature can manifest itself in segregation and discrimination, just as likely as in community and collectivism. "Wanting to be human too, I sought for evidence that I was" (30), Le Guin writes, and is promptly rejected: "evidently I was either extremely defective as a human being, or not human at all" (32). That an obvious human being should be able to doubt their humanity so insistently is a concerning reminder of the limitations our self-telling entails. Our emotional commitment to this story further entrenches and complicates its implications. Since our identity is primarily felt, emotionality and humanity are entangled within the creative processes which create it. Thus, the approach to humanity as a story we tell ourselves frames humanness as an emotional category.

How then, does the android fit into this? How does the artistic depiction of artificial emotionality specifically affect its recipients, emotionally? The artificial human in art provides answers for our introspective questions and mirrors our self-perception in all things, including but not limited to our emotional interaction with our mimetic copy. The android's singular mimetic position enables simultaneous detachment from and proximity to humanity. It streamlines pluralistic emotional modes and creates an alienated subject to depict and reflect upon. Where humanity's own, close relationship to emotionality is at times paradoxical and can both facilitate humanness and dehumanise a subject, artificial humanity can be exempt from the emotional restrictions or devaluations human sub-identities entail and imbibed selectively. If human emotionality in all its complex connections and relations is a maze, the android in art enables us to view the maze from above. The artificial human facilitates an outside perspective onto ourselves and allows us to ask the right questions. What does an android's emotionality signify? Which emotions are included and emphasised in our self-

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107 Le Guin's argument matches the earlier introduced notion that the narrative that defines humanity through emotionality is not equally applied to all human identities and indeed often serves to devalue or even dehumanise: "The relegation of this identity crisis to traditionally male figures is a function of the historical opposition drawn between rational white Western men and other purportedly more 'emotional' groups and its use to justify the privileging of the former and disenfranchisement of the latter" (Greenblatt 2016, 43).

mimetic art, and what is omitted? Is the frequency and intensity of the depiction meaningful for an understanding of how we perceive and prioritise our own emotional catalogue? Analysing android figures in art provides insight into what aspects of human emotionality have been considered in the discourse on humanity in fiction. The figure illuminates our self-perception and reveals what we consider humanity's essential emotional aspects. In addition, it is of interest whether fictional humanity can influence actual perceptions of humanity in the same way fictional emotionality can create real emotional norms. Thus, the android enables us to look upon the looking, tell the telling, and thereby see ourselves as we see our self. In other words, it gives us a glimpse into what we feel makes us human.

Consequently, android art has had a strong focus on its artificial figures' emotional capabilities and expressions. It regularly negotiates their respective access to human identity based on their or our emotionality. This emotion-centric directionality is not only prominent in our artistic self-reflection but notably also in the technological and cultural realities it prefigured. Dan Rockmore states that "The history of intelligent machines is one of moving goalposts: Sure, a machine can do this, but can it do that? The "that" is often an achievement that strikes us as strongly connected to emotion – that seems especially human."[108]. The causal relationship between emotionality and the perception of humanness Rockmore's essay implies is present in all steps of the mimetic model discussed in this book: it influences human self-perception and reflection, is perceptible in the artistic expression thereof, especially the android art and literature I discuss in the following, and it also affects consumer behaviours[109] towards android technologies. Thus, emotionality as a benchmark for humanity serves to underline the cyclic efficacy of the figure.

The selected examples observe different publication periods and media employed in bringing alive their artificial human characters. I am going to discuss both literature and visual arts in this chapter, focussing on relating the android figures' emotionality with the human characters'. The analysis is interested in human interactions with their mimetic copies on an emotional level, as well as

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108 "The Mechanical Muse" *New Yorker* January 7th 2020.

109 I engage with the dynamic between human and social machine in more detail in the introduction to the chapter on sociality.

what emotive qualities are selectively ascribed to the androids. Similarities between the selected depictions provide an idea of tendencies and trends within the discourse as a whole. I trace this discourse through early stages, evolution, and modern influences: starting with the Pygmalion myth, a classical and continually productive topos on creative emotionality. I continue with *R.U.R.*, an early 20$^{th}$-century drama engaging with human emotionality in an economic context that provides a cautionary tale on extinction and replacement. I conclude with *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*, the paradigmatic Science Fiction novel that inspired an even more paradigmatic film version, influencing Sci-Fi aesthetics and story lines to this day. The chapter will analyse the respective emotional capabilities and in-capabilities of the human and artificial human characters in order to provide meaningful insight into human self-perception of our emotive natures.

### II.2.2 Artistic Adoration in the Pygmalion Myth

It is no coincidence that the oldest commonly known example of an artificial human in art centres on emotionality, underlining the category's meaningfulness within the artistic discourse on humanity as a concept. The Pygmalion myth, famously recorded by Ovid in his *Metamorphoseon Libri*, and often repeated, retold, and reinvented, thematises human emotionality as a creative, and mimetic, force. What is commonly, yet debatably, described as a love story has been told in countless versions, across epochs, genres, and media, by such prominent writers as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, and George Bernard Shaw. As this long-lasting, mimetic chain of adaptions suggests, the premise has never ceased to inspire[110] and appeals through multi-layered themes: It broaches diverse aspects of artistic discourses on absolute creative power, artistic genius, and the power dynamic between creator and creation. Additionally, also connects

110 For a more detailed analysis of the motif's development since Ovid see
Stoichiţă, Victor I. 2008. *The Pygmalion Effect: From Ovid to Hitchcock*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

concerns about corporeal and emotional aspects of humanity in artistic discourse. Because of this productive potential, as well as the long timeframe and the diversity of the media it has been adopted in, my analysis considers multiple perspectives on the material: I compare its visual and textual realisations, based on Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's reflection on the different ways they engage the recipient's emotionality. Lessing's 1766 essay *Laokoon: Über die Grenzen der Mahlerey und der Poesie* establishes a framework according to which I then discuss how different media transport the same topos. Beginning with two paintings and two sculptures and then relating their features back to the literary example, I trace how the depiction and reception of this creator figure and early female android has developed and how it relates to its artistic origins.[111] I address the android's placement and function, as well as her creator's incentive and demeanour with regards to the myth's depiction of emotionality as a humanising force and its creative frame.

In order to productively compare the same story told through different artistic practices, it is helpful to reconsider Lessing's classic essay on the topic. After over three hundred years of critical reception, positions, and oppositions, the text remains among the most influential classical texts written on the subject matter, especially in the context of emotionality in art. To the modern reader, the essay itself can seem surprisingly emotive for a theoretical consideration; its tone at times intimately evocative of its subject. Lessing thematises emotionality in art with both reverence and reservation. Exploring aesthetic limitations in artistic production centres around the what, how and why of human emotionality in art; always conscious of its omnipresence: "Es sey Fabel oder Geschichte, daß die Liebe den ersten Versuch in den bildenden Künsten gemacht habe: so viel ist gewiß, daß sie den großen alten Meistern die Hand zu führen nicht müde geworden." (Lessing 15).[112] Notably, Lessing, early on in the text, awards agency to emotion itself, not to the artist. He implies an almost involuntary relationship

111 It can be argued that female androids in art are overall older than their male pendants, considering the presence of metal women in the Finnish *Kalevala* and the *Illiad*, as well as versions of the Pandora myth where she is made of clay. Placement and function of these figures immediately and persistently differ from early male-assigned artificial figures, like the golems of Jewish folklore or the bronze Talos from Apollonius of Rhodes' *Argonautika* (3rd century BC). I explore this gender-based difference in II.3.2.

112 "Be it fable or history that love made the first attempts in the fine arts, it is certain that it never tired of leading the masters' hands." (Lessing, translation mine).

between art and emotionality. While his subsequent meandering musings are dedicated to how artists evoke emotion through their artistic depiction of it, he here acknowledges how emotion motivates and drives the artist, notably framing his male-connoted artist's emotionality as creatively productive. He affirms the creative power of emotion – in this case, love specifically – and its threefold role in the creative process: As artistic drive, as subject, and as a cathartic product. Interestingly, Lessing mentions the ubiquitous love as artistic inspiration, when the rest of his work, given its primary subject, focuses on suffering. He mainly engages monumental, scream-inducing (cf.12ff) feelings of pain for his analysis and utilises the affective qualities suffering and despair have on the recipient. Not the subtleties and ambivalences of human feelings are his concern but rather pure pathos.

Lessing's take on the evocative effect in art declares it its primary function. The recipient who "fühlte und furchtete" (13) is, to him, the ultimate purpose of art (cf.16). He cites pity and fear, evoking Aristotle's *eleos* and *phobos*, as the reactive achievements of antiquity (cf.36ff). Though he negotiates its importance relative to a work's aesthetic value, he never denies emotion's essential role in all stages of the artistic process and remarks how even negative emotionality and ugly subjects can be transformed into artistic beauty (cf.25).[113] Even as he discusses how antiquity subordinates all other aspects of art to beauty (cf.19), he cannot deny the emotional effect the art has on him, despite the sacrifice of realism in favour of aesthetic value. The suffering of the object, while also beautiful, is mainly one thing: affective. Laokoon's pain touches Lessing's soul (cf.11), as he puts it.

His subsequent thoughts on the differences between the literary and the visual depictions of his subject are relevant for this analysis. Lessing's reasoning for mitigating the expression of suffering on the sculpture's face and how this depiction of its emotionality differs from literary versions, exemplify his genre theory. His thoughts on the differing utilisation of time and space in fine arts versus literature still retain their relevance, with what W. J. T. Mitchell has called "the normative force of Lessing's distinction" (96). While poetry is able to depict

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113 *Frankenstein* can be read in this context, where the stories' and creature's fatal ugliness is realised through the beauty of Shelley's language.

progressive action and can cover extensive amounts of story time, painting and sculpture give a glimpse of a narrative. Visual art offers snapshots in time, while literature depicts its development. Consequently, visual arts are spatial arts, portraying either a single (traditional painting) or several perspectives (traditional sculpture) of a moment in time, while literature is temporal art, portraying whole stories.[114] These limitations facilitate different efficacies. Viewing only a single moment in time can confine or intensify the artwork and thus affect the reception.

Lessing's stance on emotionality in and around art is influenced by his views on its mimetic dynamics. In his opening analogy of three who seek to compare painting and poetry, it is the lover, who finds that art is deception; pleasurable deception but deception nevertheless. Art's illusive imitation of its object is the basis for its emotive qualities. When he later in the text reduces art in antiquity to a mere imitation of beautiful bodies (cf.16), he further asserts his position concerning the mimetic properties of art. Both its aesthetic qualities and capability to move its recipient are based on mimesis. Depicting beauty and depicting emotionality are representative. Artistic representation presupposes an original in mimetic relation to its artistic copy; be it material or ideational. The correspondence creates receptivity, facilitates communication. In connecting the artist, artwork, and the recipient, the mimetic process provides a system of movement, from one to the other. Meaning, message, and emotions are transported between the human behind, within, and in front of the artwork. This reciprocity allows emotionality to flow within art.

These mimetic considerations are applicable to the many versions of the Pygmalion myth's literal humanisation of art. To trace the different ways in which emotionality is thematised and utilised in these artworks, I have selected two paintings and two sculptures to represent a vast visual tradition.[115] Overall, the

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114 After several hundred years it is surely forgivable that the artistic situation is no longer quite as clear cut as this distinction implies. Many critics have pointed out flaws in Lessing's logic, but many others have seen and continue to see merit in his theory. While both visual arts and literature have sought and succeeded to leave their temporal and spatial boundaries behind, it is nevertheless worth remembering their original limitations and very fundamental differences. This distinction is still productive for an analysis concerned with the focus and impact variations between different genres depicting the same mythical material. For a detailed discussion on the merits and problems of Lessing's essay, see chapter 4 of Mitchell's *Iconology*.

115 Because of the earlier mentioned extensive number of artworks on and about the myth, a representative analysis is impossible to achieve in this context. This effort excludes modern visual art like video, performance, happening and similar concepts and concentrates on classical

myth's many portrayals share many characteristics regarding their figuration and composition. These parallels are not unusual in artistic production and often maintain influence or even determine associated cultural narratives; adding another element of mimetic reproduction in between artworks depicting the material: reception informing perception. Thereby, the myth embodies Lessing's understanding of art as emotionally reciprocal in two ways: on a meta-level, through the creative force of its reception shaping its retellings, and within the narrative, through the literal humanisation of an artwork due to an emotional reaction to it.

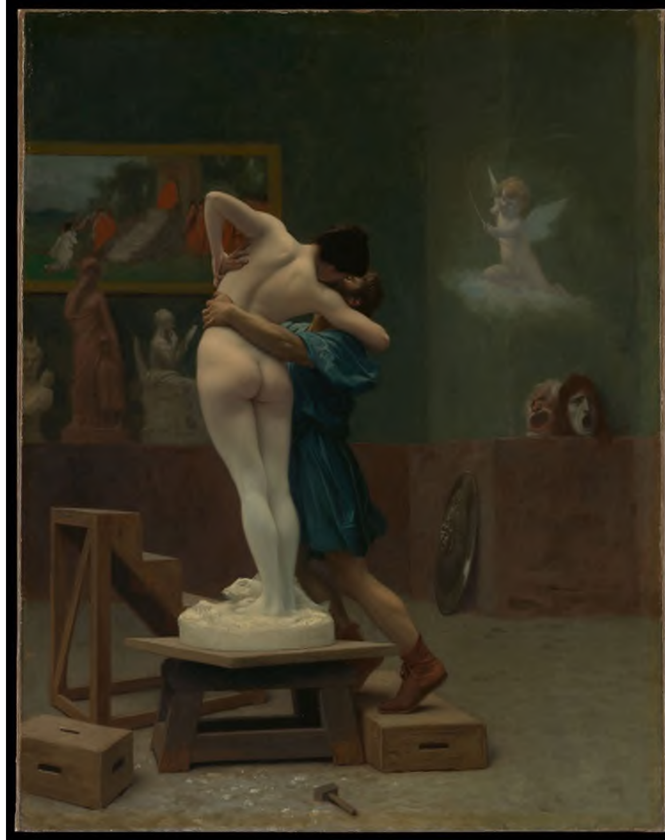
True to Lessing's notion of visual arts as a representational snapshot as opposed to a full narrative, the most commonly captured moment throughout the fine art's depiction of the myth, is the artist in love, awe, and adoration of his creation. Generally, the artist is depicted below his work, crouching, like in Étienne Maurice Falconet's sculpture (1763, ill.6), kneeling, like in Angelo Bronzino's painting (1529-30, ill.4), sitting beneath her, like in Auguste Rodin's sculpture (1889/1908-9, ill.5), or straining himself to reach her, like Jean-Léon Gérôme's painting (1890, ill.3). All listed creators are male and all artworks are named *Pygmalion and Galatea*. The Galateas,[116] portrayed in paint or marble, stand taller, raised above their creators. In Rodin and Bronzino's versions, they do not acknowledge the artist and rather gaze away from him, and, in Bronzino's case, directly into the viewer's eyes, while all versions have the artist's vision focused on her. Falconet's Galatea looks down upon her creator's face, Gérôme depicts her leaning down, into her maker's kiss. The composition and implied power dynamic between the often lowered, enraptured artist and his iconographically placed creation are predominant in visual art depicting the myth. Galatea's always perfect, always light, lean, and luxurious body is the focal point and main object of all the selected artworks. The depiction glorifies the artistic

depictions of the myth; citing four well-known interpretations in the traditional mediums sculpture and painting, created between 1529 and 1909. It is meant to analyse the culturally established narrative surrounding the myth and broad societal associations rather than paint a comprehensive picture of how these associations have been made productive since.

116 The name Galatea is a modern addition by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (cf. Law 340). In the following, the figure shall be referred to as such for clarity, although her original namelessness does underline the issues of agency and objectification I am interested in this context.

craftsmanship by showcasing her body. Her figure is idealised, his worshipful – and explicitly emotional.

For the better part of its existence, recipients' and researchers' focus has lain on the artist figure. Pygmalion and his implications for meta-artistic discussions on the artist as a concept are manifold and well-researched. Interest in his artwork, the object of his creative might, as a figure of her own is more recent and alters the discourse considerably. Considering whether Galatea's figure qualifies for objectification here is an interesting conundrum, since she is, on the one hand, a literal object and thus not objectifiable in the traditional sense. On the other hand, she is treated and functions as a human figure in the narrative portrayed and consequently could be. She is the object of her maker's love, an embodiment of his desires. Additionally, as an art object, she is completely devoid of agency. Martha Nussbaum, in her 1995 article "Objectification", identifies instrumentality, denial of autonomy, inertness, fungibility, violability, ownership, and denial of subjectivity as signals for objectification (cf.257). Whether Galatea can be interpreted as fungible is debatable, since she is a unique work of art. On the other hand, as she is a sculpture, there is not really a 'she' independent of Pygmalion's projection at all. It can be argued that artwork like this remains malleable and therefore exchangeable for another, for example in case of damage or if his vision should change. However, since Nussbaum defines fungibility with a focus on the objectifier's actions – "The objectifier treats the object as interchangeable (a) with other objects of the same type, and/or (b) with objects of other types." (257) – the premise for fungibility is not clearly fulfilled. Galatea indisputably qualifies for the other six: She is an instrument for Pygmalion's emotive and physical purposes. She has no autonomy, lacks agency, subjectivity, and bodily boundaries, and, most importantly, she is owned by her creator, both in a creative and a legal sense. Accordingly, she could and probably would be read as an objectified figure, were it not for the questionable status of her personhood. The problem obstructing a clear answer is how an artificial human figure functions within this framework.



ill. 3
Jean-Léon Gérôme, 1890

ill. 4
Angelo Bronzino, 1529-30

Since she is an art object and artistic representation of a woman but also, eventually, a living woman, her hybridity begs the question whether – under specific, mimetic circumstances – an object can be objectified. As an artificial copy of a person, who nevertheless is emotionally projected upon like a human and eventually becomes fully human, she is uniquely begs the question whether – under specific, mimetic circumstances – an object can be objectified. As an artificial copy of a person, who nevertheless is emotionally projected upon like a human and eventually becomes fully human, she is uniquely situated. This possibility entails questions for the android figure: is the android as such to be counted as an object at all, or does the fact that they structurally function as human allow for categories of objectification to be applied to them? How do their simultaneous statuses as human and non-human, object and subject, affect their potential objectification? Furthermore, can the act of creating an artistic mimesis of a human being itself be viewed as objectifying humanity? If so, Galatea fits the criteria. She is the idealised women made object and subsequently made flesh. If, however, her incarnation is seen as a prerequisite for her objectification, then the question is really when and if she is viewed as fully human, as opposed to a mimetic copy of a human. From what point onwards is Pygmalion's artwork no longer a deceptive but artificial mimesis of a human, and can be considered a woman, a person, a human being?

Gérôme's work (ill.3) depicts this exact transitional moment and chooses to illustrate the change from art to human with colour and movement. Galatea's feet are still the pure white[117] of marble and thus fixed in their elevated position. From her knees upwards, her flesh has colour and she is able to bend towards the artist, actively embracing him. Gérôme's Galatea is awarded agency alongside humanity; she touches, instead of just being touched, she grasps the artist's hand in hers, she moves towards him. This implies a connection between her humanity and her agency, as she is portrayed as actively, physically desiring. This link is visualised with transitioning colour and her corporeally expressed emotionality.

117 The figure's colouring is representative of a predominant palette in android depictions that expresses the ethnic and cultural one-sidedness that characterises the discourse. The beauty standards that produce the female androids I discuss in this book are western standards. Nevertheless, the resulting discourse claims to produce a globally collective human identity. Thereby, humanity creates itself out of limited input influenced by hegemonial and colonial structures; a limitation that perpetuates these divisive practices by imposing the result onto humanity as a whole and facilitating divisive and hierarchical self-narratives and self-perception.

The work imparts her with her own desire, her own will to touch the creator. To love actively, to touch the loved one, is depicted as a humanising act. Thus, emotionality, as well as humanity are here communicated through the depiction of the body.

Bronzino's Galatea (ill.4) by contrast stands alone; the composition typical for Bronzino's mannerist style. She is the only one of the four whose body is depicted as only partially exposed[118] and she's the only one who meets the viewer's eyes instead of focusing on either looking at or away from Pygmalion. Bronzino colours her throughout, but the distance to the artist and the absence of touch reduce her humanity. The sacrifice in the background places her, too, at the moment of transition, but her solitary position and the direction of her gaze points towards the exact moment being the one before she becomes human. The artist is positioned next to her in adoration but also anticipation. His position – kneeling at a distance, in front of the sacrifice meant to move the goddess in his favour and looking up to his creation – indicates anticipation. The absence of touch, of movement towards each other expresses a lack of humanity, compared to Gérôme's more dynamic work. The impression is emphasised by the typical stylisation of Bronzino's painting.

In sculpture, medium and materiality are meaningful and mimetic carriers of the myth; equalising creator and creation through artificiality. The means of depiction echoe the depicted and thus add another mimetic layer to the layering of representation inherent in the android figure. Galatea is representation in representation in representation in representation. The chosen sculptures forego identifiers such as colour but instead utilise plasticity to indicate humanity. Both Rodin and Falconet depict their Galatea's touched. Rodin's figures (ill.5) seem to almost merge; the artist leaning into her, touching her not only with his hands, which encompass her but with parts of his upper body and face. While the sculpture lacks details, his posture communicates desire, attraction, and a need for physical closeness.

118 Her ubiquitous nakedness is reminiscent of the implications a naked, artificial human body has in "The Bicentennial Man" and affects the power dynamic between creator and creation at play here.

ill. 5
Auguste Rodin, 1889/1908-9

ill. 6
Étienne Maurice Falconet, 1763

She, on the other hand, leans away from him, one hand on her thigh, in between them, the other on the marble, seemingly sinking into, or rinsing from it. Rodin's material does not deceive the viewer. His Galatea is openly artificial, her non-human materiality thematised and utilised to show her nature. The one-sidedness of the touch between artist and object in combination with her closeness to the material she is made of thematise her artificiality, her mimetic nature. Her capability to move, yet rootedness in her marble material places her, like Gérôme's work, during the transition. Falconet (ill.6) has a cherub touch his Galatea. The artist is clasping his hands, one, holding the other, as if restraining himself from touching her. His mouth is open, he is in awe, perhaps even shock. She is in the process of bending down to him, her hand reaching towards him. Falcon portrays the incarnated Galatea immediately after she has become human and is about to touch her maker. She, too, exhibits agency and desire to touch. The cherub is holding her hand in his and kissing her fingers. Their touch indicates that she is no longer marble but flesh. Falconet succeeds in sculpting marble into a successful imitation of flesh, transformed from marble; resulting in a multi-layered mimetic complex, involving the artwork and its materiality

All of the artworks utilise their material in order to express the (degree of) humanity depicted. Colour and composition, texture, and form express identity. Sculpture can depict humanity and non-humanity within the same materiality, depending on whether it is mimetically processed or explicitly shown to be what it is. Painting in turn uses colour and motion, or their absence, to indicate humanity, even as it thematises the artificiality of the portrayed. In both instances, the depiction of the body communicate the depiction of emotions and thereby signal humanity. In the absence of language, it is primarily corporality that expresses emotionality: Humanity is created through the mimetic combination of both. All examples depict the male artist's emotionality, either through emotionally motivated touch, or its absence. They situate themselves at an exact moment of Galatea's transition through this depiction. Touch, as an expression of emotionality, of the love, the desire, the attraction of the depicted, defines Galatea's status as human or artificially human. Additionally, it also characterises the artist as an emotional human in a positive, creative sense that contrasts with modern notions of masculinity and rationality. Her emotionality functions as a

positive marker of her humanity, subverting the negative narrative of emotional femininity by utilising her android- and artwork-status. The female android is not devalued or dehumanised based on her emotionality but humanised and thus validated. This can be interpreted as a consequence of the male artist causing and thus legitimising what emotions she shows. Galatea's emotionality is dependent on and a product of Pygmalion's artistically productive feelings for her and the corporeal expression of them. His touching and her being touched indicates the consistency of her flesh: its pliable softness, or rigidity, equal her humanity or non-humanity.

When discussing the artistic depiction of texture on human bodies, flesh in particular, one enters an extensive art-historical discourse especially hard-fought during the Paragone debate of the 15th and 16th centuries. As part of a process meant to theorise and intellectualise art, a comparison and eventual veritable rivalry between painting and sculpture as art forms emerged. The ability to depict pliable human flesh was among the abilities painting claimed for itself, only for sculptors to rise to the challenge.[119] As the chosen examples exemplify, marble can be formed so as to depict the softness of skin and the texture of human flesh despite its material limitations and indeed even thematise its own materiality while doing so. The desired texture influences the representation and, in the present cases, suggests the degree of humanity portrayed. The behaviour of the flesh depicted is intimately connected to the emotion communicated and the humanness displayed. Rigidity implies unfeelingness, while pliability and softness communicate emotionality and humanity. This correlation between emotional and corporeal categories of humanity connects the previous chapter's findings to this analysis. The physical presence and materiality of human bodies, their tangibility, and touch-ability seem directly related to their perceived humanity and consequently their emotionally evocative potential.

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119 For a more detailed analysis of the implications of depicting flesh in art see
Karl Möseneder. 2007. “Morbido, morbidezza – Zu Begriff und Realisierung des “Weichen” in der Skulptur des Cinquecento”. In: *Studien zur italienischen Skulptur für Joachim Poeschke*. Eds. Johannes Myssok, Jürgen Wiener. Münster: Rhema. And

Christine Kruse. 2000. “Fleisch werden, Fleisch malen: Malerei als 'incarnazione'. Mediale Verfahren des Bildwerdens im Libro dell'Arte von Cennino Cennini”. *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 63: 305-325.

In order to accurately trace the effect emotionality has on humanisation according to the myth, I am now examining its literary adaption in comparison to the visual depictions of artist and artwork. According to Lessing's argument, writing the Pygmalion myth should differ greatly from painting or sculpting it, since the genre is temporally progressive, as opposed to visualising a singular instance. In this case, literary interpretations of the myth indeed tend to reveal different aspects of the narrative. In the case of Pygmalion, my chosen literary example, Ovid's early version of the myth, is likely to alter the recipient's preconceived notions on the myth as compared to later iterations that frame it as a love story.

The text's opening description of Pygmalion, a figure that especially since the 18th century stood for artistic autonomy and symbolised artistic might, reads suprisingly undignified to the modern reader: "Quas quia Pygmalion aevum per crimen agentis/ viderat, offensus vitiis, quae plurima menti/ femineae natura dedit, sine coniuge caelebs/ vivebat thalamique diu consorte carebat." (243ff).[120] Pygmalion, the bachelor, or, more unfavourably, Pygmalion, universally rejected by women? Pygmalion, the misogynist? Even when taking into consideration period-typical notions on women,[121] the description does not evoke the image of the noble artist the figure is now commonly associated with. Pygmalion, according to Ovid, is lacking not a lover but a consort.[122] The impression solidifies when he goes on to describe the artist's relation to his artwork, prior to her incarnation. What is commonly and rather politely summarised as Pygmalion 'falling in love', is actually a description of him fondling and kissing the statue

120 All following citations, unless otherwise indicated: Ovid. 8 AD. *Metamorphoseon Libri*. Ehwald-Rösch Edition. Bibliotheca Augustana. <http://www.fh-augsburg.de/~harsch/Chronologia/Lsante01/Ovidius/ovi_me10.html#06> (last accessed 27/05/21).

"Pygmalion saw these women waste their lives in wretched shame, and critical of faults which nature had so deeply planted through their female hearts, he lived in preference, for many years unmarried" (Ovid, translation More).

121 Disparaging remarks on the supposed nature of women are made in the context of patriarchal cultural notions on gender. Ovid oeuvre in particular presents several examples of this: he references women's vanity (*Ars amatoria*), inconsistency (*Tristia*) and lustfulness (*Amores*).

122 Ovid's usage of *consorte* in combination with *thalamus* is somewhat curious. He does not use the traditional, and gender-neutral, *coniunx* in order to refer to a spouse, or *nupta,* wife, which implies that it is decidedly not matrimony that Pygmalion is after. *Thalamus,* however, has spousal connotations. The unusual combination can be read according to the interpretation that Pygmalion's sculpture serves as a projection surface for his carnal, as well as emotional needs.

(cf.254ff.), caressing her ("blanditias adhibet"[123] (259)), and giving her gifts ("munera" (l.260)). The wording furthermore suggest sexual acts performed on her (cf.256ff.), before she is animated by Venus. Regardless of one's inclination towards a favourable or unfavourable interpretation, Ovid's depiction suggests that the artist's love for his creation certainly has corporeal aspects and is decidedly not as sanitised as the myth's common reception and its visual depictions might suggest. It should be noted that the text at hand is an adaptation of pre-existing material[124] and it stands to reason that Ovid's interpretation can be read as a tongue-in-cheek, salacious piece, maybe even satire, rather than serious a statement on the power of art and love. Nevertheless, it puts the myth's common associations into perspective: Man's love for woman is here less than idealised and not abstract in the slightest. Ovid's artist figure, too, is characterised by emotionality, although his love is explicitly sexual, confirming the connection between the corporeal and the emotional in the myth. Pygmalion a desires his creation; the body he made, the figure he crafted and these desires are physical. Notably, his feelings are unattached to her humanity and exist before her incarnation by Venus. As a sculpture, she is described as a virgin (cf.250), in the sense of a beautiful youth, as well as being, actually and literally, untouched by others. As her maker and lover, his ownership of her is complete. Again, the myth demonstrates where corporality and emotionality overlap in this analysis. Sexuality, as a physical expression of love, is pivotal for the narrative; one is an expression of the other.

Aside from these rather carnal aspects of the retelling, Ovid's description of the statue is of interest here: "virginis est verae facies, quam vivere credas/et, si non obstet reverentia, velle moveri:/ ars adeo latet arte sua." (250ff).[125] The text emphasises the mimetic excellence and deceptive realism of the artwork. Art that

123 The wording can mean both physical and verbal caressing. *Adhibere*, in the right context, can also imply force, and to force oneself or something onto someone. This underlines the hierarchy of agency depicted here.

124 Like the majority of Ovid's material for *Metamorphoseon Libri*, Pygmalion is part of an earlier tradition: Siegmar Döpp mentions Klemes von Alexandria's and Arnobius' versions of the myth, both citing Philostephanus' account of the figure in the context of a description of the Aphrodite-cult on Cyprus. (cf. Döpp 131ff.). This re-writing, in line with the mimetic interplay between visual versions of the myth, confirms Karl Galinsky statement that to "reshape myth, Greek myth in particular" (Galinsky 4), is Ovid's overarching goal in the text.

125 "a perfect virgin with the grace of life, but in the expression of such modesty all motion was restrained—and so his art concealed his art." (Ovid, translation More).

is so well-made that it is able to hide its artificiality is here lauded as the height of artistic ability. The ideal artwork is not recognised as such, it is a visually perfect semblance of reality. The statue is a consummate imitation of humanity, without any of humankind's – or rather womankind's – imperfections: She is flawless. In this, she perfectly represents Lessing's earlier mentioned primary functions of ancient art: beauty and evocative potential. His statement on the depiction of human bodies as the pinnacle of art – „Noth erfand die Kleider, und was hat die Kunst mit der Not zu thun? […] was ist sie, gegen die Schönheit der menschlichen Form? (54)[126] – is indeed reminiscent of Ovid's phrasing "cuncta decent; nec nuda minus formosa videtur" (266).[127] Lessing's description of ideal ancient art is embodied and immortalised in Pygmalion's creation: art so beautiful, that one has the mightiest of emotional reactions to it: falling in love.[128] In Ovid's version that love is physical, somewhat deviant, and rather obsessive, but nevertheless, for lack of a better word, love it is. This constructs a proportional relation between the quality of an artwork and its evocative potential. In other words: the better the art, the fiercer the emotional reaction. The epitome of artistic quality is here defined as the highest degree of mimesis that does not compromise aesthetic beauty: mimetic excellence is directly linked to artistic and consequently emotional value.

Like in the visual interpretations of the myth, part of this mimetic perfection, is the texture of her skin and flesh. The text emphasises that "saepe manus operi temptantes admovet an sit/corpus an illud ebur" (254ff.).[129] The artist himself, despite crafting her, has to convince himself of her artificiality by touching her skin. Again, it is touch, the feel of the material, which differs from flesh that proves her non-humanity. Notably, the material in question is ivory, not

126 "Necessity invented clothing and what has art to do with necessity? […] What is it compared to the beauty of the human form?" (Lessing, translation mine).

127"All these are beautiful - and she appears most lovable, if carefully attired, - or perfect as a statue, unadorned." (Ovid, translation More).

128 Falling in love with the android, an action so diametrically opposed to the rejection this book's first example, *Frankenstein*, portrayed, is an extensively explored and heavily gendered topos in android art. Since the Pygmalion myth, it has been consistently present, especially in works about and with female androids, like E.T.A. Hoffmann's Olimpia ("Der Sandmann" 1814), Lester del Rey's short story "Helen of Loy" (1938), or Spike Jonze's film *Her* (2013). The 2016 series *Westworld* thematises and challenges the topos and its implications (see II.3.4).

129 "He lifts up both his hands to feel the work, and wonders if it can be ivory, because it seems to him more truly flesh" (Ovid, translation More).

marble, a later change to retellings of the myth due to contemporary associations with marble as the sovereign artistic material. Since a full-sized woman is unlikely to be crafted from one piece of ivory, a material that additionally lacks the perfect, white colouring of high-quality marble, the implied craftsmanship necessary to achieve the degree of mimetic perfection is even greater. Where our eyes might deceive us, touch is however still able to facilitate categorisation. The earlier touch test is repeated after Pygmalion's creation has been made human. In this case, the boundaries between non-humanity and humanity need not be negotiated or helpfully indicated, since the causality is clear. The transition is performed by divine intervention and subsequently corporeally attested: "visa tepere est/ admovet os iterum, manibus quoque pectora temptat/temptatum mollescit ebur positoque rigore/ subsidit digitis ceditque" (281ff).[130] Once again, warm and giving flesh becomes the definitive marker for humanness. Pygmalion's feelings for his creation have induced a change in materiality and consequently her status: art becomes human when it feels human. Feeling is here used both in the emotional and physical sense and always in reference to somebody else feeling the artwork, not the artwork itself feeling. It is Pygmalion's feelings that legitimises the relationship, as well as his physical desire, by formalising it with pregnancy and child (cf.295ff). Galatea's feelings, or consent, are notably absent from the depiction. This impression is reinforced by Ovid's wording and grammatical choices throughout the text. The artist is her maker, her lover, and therefore acts upon her. At all times, he is active, she is passive. Her ascent from art-object-status evidently does not signify her as a subject free from objectification.

Concerning the question of objectification, it is worth pointing out that Ovid's text, like the majority of the myth's literary versions, is limited to Pygmalion's perspective. His object of desire is not awarded a voice or agency and serves only as a means to thematise him. Thus, Ovid's female figure lacks any textual markers establishing her as a person, aside from the male artist's feelings towards her. Textually, she functions as an object and is entirely passive, even after she becomes human. Her human self fully qualifies for Nussbaum's criteria

130 "she seemed to gather some warmth from his lips. Again he kissed her; and he felt her breast; the ivory seemed to soften at the touch" (Ovid, translation More).

and can consequently be read as objectified. Galatea thus retains her object-status even after her humanisation: She textually exists and acts exclusively in relation to Pygmalion. Her only actions are to blush ("erubuit" (293)) and to raise her gaze, beholding her lover, timidly (cf.294). Although humanised by divine will, she notably only stirs in the arms of her lover: It is him, his artistry, and his feelings towards her that ultimately cause her incarnation and what sparingly described feelings she displays. Ovid, like the later visual versions, utilises (corporeal expressions of) emotions to signify Galatea's humanity. The humanising force of emotionality is, however, facilitated and directed by gender, which in this case can be understood as directly interwoven with artistry. Ovid connects manhood and artistic might; womanhood and artistic objectification. In her 1998 monograph *Im Zeichen des Pygmalion*, Inka Mülder-Bach reads this connection not only as a possession of the physical woman as an object but goes as far as to identify "das Imaginäre" (232), artistic imagination itself, as female-coded (cf.232). The myth thus forever genders he, who imagines, and she, who is imagined. The text emphasises the affective properties of the male artist's emotionality for the materialistic humanisation of his female object, signified by the same emotionality, without implying the emancipation and true humanisation of said object at all. In this, the figure is exemplary for the android in art: a hybrid of object and subject, artificial and non-artificial, human and non-human that may function as a human but is not.

To conclude, my analysis reconfirms Lessing's notions on visual versus textual art and their respective evocative and mimetic potential. Ovid's literary adaptation depicts a temporally progressive narrative and is thus able to evoke nuanced associations and implications, while the visual representations of the same material impart an immediate, temporally limited snapshot. Where the text is linguistically suggestive, layered, and progressive, the images utilise visual cues to represent the narrative through one singular, meaningful moment within it. This difference affects their respective depictions of the myth and have both affected its reception and associations. The implied power dynamic between creator and creation, for example, differs between the examined text and its visual representations. Textual contextualisation enables Ovid's version to question, or even satirise, a narrative that later, more or less unquestioningly, idealised

Pygmalion as an artist and a lover. In Ovid, the relation between him and Galatea is unambiguously hierarchical in his favour. She is objectified, both as an artwork and a human being. Visual art, meanwhile, utilise posture and composition to present a more egalitarian dynamic, or even one that favours her. The text, however, places the artist in a clear position of power. He is in control; not only of her existence and corporeal appearance but also her humanity. In both cases it is his productive emotionality that creates hers, thus exempting her android emotions from any negative associations of female emotionality. Both his creative and her male-sanctioned and -centric emotional expression humanise the andorid character. Thus, the myth does not adhere to later narratives that connect rationality and masculinity, while framing emotional expression as female and negative. Instead, it depicts male emotionality as both creative and legitimising female emotionality. This causality echoes the idea of the artist as creator-god and the artwork as an independent self-mimetic recreation process, where (male) humanity reproduces itself through art, as previously discussed in the context of *Frankenstein*. The pivotal tools for this process are his feelings, while hers are a mere product of his. Galatea is crafted, attended to, and eventually humanised by Pygmalion's emotionality. Irrespective of the medium, this emotionality is his principal attribute; no matter the depiction. Whether it is adoration, awe, love, or lust that dominates his characterisation, emotions drive him and consequently her into existence and humanity.

The Pygmalion figure has remained an evocative part of cultural discourse; interconnecting art and emotionality. With perhaps unparalleled consistency the name has appeared and reappeared again and again during almost two thousand years of discussion on relational dynamics between art, artistry, and the artist. The figure represents a long-lasting and ever-evolving cultural perception of the role, the function, and the authority of the artist; a role that has inhabited various social positions: "For Leonardo da Vinci, the artist was an intellectual; for Baudelaire, a genius; for the 1930s (as the scene shifts to the United States), a worker; and for the 1950s, a Beat. What a fall from grace!" (47), writes the earlier cited Allan Kaprow. This simplified judgement explicates why the myth was so continuously called upon to evoke, legitimise and perhaps vindicate the impact of artistry on society. Somewhat sanitised from Ovid's version, the artist is framed as a maker

of life, of humanity itself, revives, re-frames, and situates them and their emotive agency. It affirms art's influence on our identity, our self-perception, and, by extension, our humanity.

Thus, the figure has been relevant to diverse discourses, one of which has been the power dynamics between creator and creation: the mimetic tensions between he who copies himself and the product of this act. Mülder-Bach's work on the figure and his impact on representation theory has thematised the figure's symbolic significance at the outset of her monograph. She cites a literary anecdote,[131] evoking Pygmalion as an argument for artistic responsibility. A reader poses the question whether enhancing the love for that which has been created – and emotionally invested in – and thus continuously enliven it to the readers, is the author's duty. The artist is here framed as a Pygmalion figure, both by himself and the reader, whose love for their creation gives life. To the recipient, in turn, the creation is real, alive, and of great emotional significance. The argument illustrates the consequences of art's evocative nature: 'real' emotional attachment. Mülder-Bach sees the root of this dynamic in the idea of death in fiction as a death of fiction (cf.8). To harm one's creation is the ultimate "Ent-Täuschung" (8), the death of the emotionality invested by the reader. According to the argument, fictional life is created by the emotion invested in it. Creator's and recipients' emotional relation to a work of art is here seen as a life force. Much like Galatea is made alive, made human by her creator's feelings, it can be argued in this context that any work of art is created and any fictional figure humanised by emotionality. We all, as creators and recipients of art, can be Pygmalions in our own right. In this context, Galatea's mimetic incarnation can be read as a literal depiction of this creative process: an artificial human figure made human by the emotion invested in her. The myth and figure are thus not only of interest for this analysis within the framework of the artwork they appear in but as the conceptual symbols they have become.

Humanising emotionality in art has been established as a somewhat common motif in narratives with artificial human figures; indicating the cultural impact the myth has had. The android figure enables narratives to depict emotionality as a

131 Specifically, the correspondence between Samuel Richardson and a reader imploring him to end his serialised novel *Clarissa* with the survival and triumph of its protagonist (cf. Mülder-Bach 7ff).

humanising force of at work both within and outside of the text, without abstraction or symbolism. Artificial humanity is often gained by feeling; both actively feeling and by passively being felt for. Love, especially, is thematised regularly in the remaining examples, as a consistently recurring tool for expressing and achieving humanity as portrayed in art and literature. Referring to the general evocative nature of emotion in art, Lessing states that "Unser Mitleiden ist allzeit dem Leiden gleichmäßig, welches der interessierende Gegenstand äußert" (15).[132] In other words: What depicts emotion, evokes emotion proportionally. Where human emotion is depicted in art, it is reproduced and causes catharsis in the recipient. Android figures confirm this relation and demonstrate how a layered mimetic complex in an artwork affects it: The added emotionality of and for an additional mimetic layer – the artwork within the artwork – enables a more intricate contemplation of the emotive dynamics in and around art. The artwork being not any object but an artificial human figure, a mimetic copy of a creator figure who is already a representation of humanity, duplicates the mimetic relations and consequently the surface area that may be used to project ourselves, emotionally and otherwise. The android as a figure that functions both as an art object and an emotionally capable entity itself thus allows the work to depict and deconstruct the cathartic effect within itself and reflect on it.

In the following, this function is examined with reference to other literary examples. In Karel Čapek's *R.U.R.*, other aspects to the humanising effect of emotionality are be explored. I engage with feelings of anxiety and fear towards artificial human technologies, as well as emotional projection of and onto android figures.

132 "Our commiseration is always proportional to the misery the object of interest exudes." (Lessing, translation mine).

### II.2.3 Android Anxiety in *R.U.R*

Among the many associations with artificial human figures that have built up over decades of artistic reflection, the android as a threat remains omnipresent. Android invasion and humans oppressed by their own invention are common motifs in art concerned with artificial humans. Among the earliest modern examples of this motif is Karel Čapek's 1920 play *R.U.R.*[133] I read the text's thematic combination of economic philosophy and artificial humans as a critique of human society under capitalism. *R.U.R* frames labour as human purpose and traces the catastrophic ramifications of outsourcing economic productivity and thereby relinquishing our identity. The way the play interweaves and resolves its economic-centric approach to humanity with emotionality to the point of existential elevation illustrates the category's significance for human identity. Both emotionality's humanising effect on the android and the figure's destructive potential have been ascribed onto the discourses on android technologies and resulted in considerable expectations but also anxiety towards its products. *R.U.R.* combines both aspects of the figure and thus outlines the scope of our societal associations with it.

A few words on the text's historical background and its influence on the genre: Čapek's play has had a significant cultural impact in its time and beyond. After its delayed Czech premier in 1921, it was staged in Germany within the year and reached New York in 1922. By 1923 it had been translated into thirty languages and staged in major cities around the world. In 1938 an abbreviated version of it was the first Science Fiction programme ever to be broadcast on TV (cf. Telotte 210); televised by the BBC. The play introduced the word 'robot' into the English language[134] and, consequently, Science Fiction literature as a whole.[135] The text is paradigmatic in many ways and established many motifs that have

133 In the original Czech, the title stands for *Rossumovi Univerzální Roboti*, in the English translation, the subtitle *Rossum's Universal Robots* was added.

134 "The word 'Robot' is derived from the Czech *robota* meaning 'drudgery' or 'servitude'; a *robotnik* is Czech for both worker and serf or peasant. (Robot is always capitalized, since it is a trademarked brand name.)" (Reilly 148).

135 Isaac Asimov has commented on the impact of the play and stated that the word robot, having replaced previous terms for the concept in "all the languages Science Fiction is now written" (Asimov 10), rendered the play "immortal" (Asimov 10).

become and still are common in Science Fiction art: Robot sentience,[136] progressive mimetic development in artificial humans,[137] problematic distinctions between human and android,[138] robot uprising and take-over[139], as well as artificial human identity conflicts[140] are all still recognisable staples of android art. *R.U.R.*'s engagement with the economic implications of human self-mimesis is also still part of the discourse on real-life android technologies now. This discourse is significantly affected by anxiety towards the idea and reality of technological progress in the field. I argue that this anxiety is, at least partly, the result of a long-lasting artistic tradition perpetuating negative depictions of the figure.

*R.U.R.* in particular presents a worst-case scenario seldom depicted with such finality since: total human extinction. Robotic rebellion and the subsequent subjugation of humanity are often copied motifs, but the play's radical conclusion of total human obliteration has since been overall defused. The play is uncompromising in this regard and has his lone human survivor proclaim a male-female robot pair the new Adam and Eve. Its androids are thus not only depicted as copies or mirrors of humanity; they are established as full-on replacements: Humanity 2.0. It is productive to read this radical approach within the text's historical context: The idea of man-made creations as a danger to all humans, overreaching national boundaries and unifying humans under a common threat are a reality we are becoming particularly familiar with since the beginning of the 20th century. A combination of unprecedentedly large-scale threats and the technological means to promote and shape discourse on them through far-reaching media resulted in an emerging awareness and anxieties towards this possibility. *R.U.R.* was written in the cultural context of the First World War, which already

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136 As discussed in the context of "The Bicentennial Man", *Star Trek*, and *Westworld* in this book.

137 As discussed in the context of "The Bicentennial Man" and *Star Trek*. The theme is also present in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, *Star Trek*, and *Westworld*.

138 This theme is present in most works I discuss in this book, either through problematising the ways the human characters distinguish between themselves and the android (*Frankenstein*, "The Bicentennial Man", *Uncanny Valley, Star Trek*) or by depicting the android as functionally indistinguishable from humans (*Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?, The Stepford Wives, Westworld*).

139 The later seasons of *Westworld*, discussed in II.3.4.

140 As discussed in the context of *Uncanny Valley*, *Do Android Dream of Electric Sheep?*, *Westworld*. Also present in *Frankenstein*.

contributed significantly to entering the concept of humanity's collective extinction at its own hand into public awareness. I read the play as an expression of the anxiety towards this idea. Later, the Second World War, and with it the atomic bomb,[141] further established human-made global threats within the cultural consciousness.[142] Nowadays, in addition to these still present aspects of our global destructive potential, environmental issues also constitute a constant and progressive threat to humanity as a whole. The android take-over-motif is an expression of the sense of dread associated with these global threats and reflects our anxiety towards them and, by extension, ourselves. Notably, this anxiety towards autonomous malicious machines is nowhere near as substantiated, or immediate as the others listed. It is, however, similarly familiar. Among the reasons for the immense public interest in the current technological realisation of android technologies, especially in comparison with less sensational but much more relevant technological developments, is the android's recognition value. We recognise the artificial human both as our mimetic relation and as an artistic figure. Consequently, it functions as a projection surface for the realities of our identity as we experience and perceive it. Thanks to their persistent artistic presence, intelligent, human-presenting machines draw upon a number of established emotional associations in the general public. Positive and negative,

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141 Similar to present day's Science Fiction often contemplating new technologies in both its dystopian and utopian future narratives, atomic power as a motif, too, has had a noticeable presence in android art of the time. See, for example, "The Metal Giants", a 1926 short story by Edmond Hamilton, or *Mighty Atom* (鉄腕アトム), a 1952 manga series by Osamu Tezuka. The same can be observed with electricity, for example in Auguste Villiers de l'Isle-Adam's novel *The Future Eve*, or in Luis Senarens' dime novel *Frank Reade and his Electric Man* (1885). Concepts like extra-terrestrial life, too, have been incorporated into android discourse and appear in works ranging from HG Well's 1897 novel *The War of the Worlds*, to the 1964 film *The Earth Dies Screaming*, as well as in the 1968 novel *The Iron Man* (Ted Hughes), which was turned into the popular animated film *The Iron Giant* in 1999, and widely established the counter-narrative of a non-threatening, extra-terrestrial android.

142 For detailed analyses of the World Wars and their impact on political and cultural globalisation see
D'Agostino, Anthony. 2012. *The Rise of Global Powers: International Politics in the Era of the World Wars*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
Sondhaus, Lawrence. 2011. *World War One: The Global Revolution*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
Bennet, Todd M. 2013. "Global Culture and World War II". In: *Wiley Blackwell Companions to World History. A Companion to World War II*. Zeiler, Thomas W. (Ed.). New York: John Wiley & Sons.
Zwingenberg, Ran. 2016. *Hiroshima: The Origins of Global Memory Culture*. Cambridge. Cambridge UP.
For a general overview on the origins and implications of human global consciousness see
Robertson, Roland. Buhari-Gulmez, Didem (Ed.). 2016. *Global Culture: Consciousness and Connectivity*. London [u.a.]: Routledge.

they are frequently drawn upon to reflect humanity as a concept and perhaps also the conclusion of the Anthropocene.

In addition to this productive artistic presence, there is a notable trend of public figures, both within and outside of the relevant scientific fields, inclined to address the general public on the matter of android technologies. Speculations on the likelihood of AI take-over are a popular topic in public discourse and among those who see fit to engage in it are such prominent minds as Stephen Hawking,[143] Bill Gates,[144] and Elon Musk.[145] Scientific consortia, organisations, and committees also regularly voice valid concerns with the current industry and its research: The *Campaign to Stop Killer Robots*, for example, is dedicated to "human control in the use of force" [146] and therefore lobbies for international laws on autonomous weapon systems. The *Open Letter on Artificial Intelligence* signed by over 150 scientists, calls for an interdisciplinary approach to AI research in order to "reap its benefits while avoiding potential pitfalls".[147] The *Malicious Use of Artificial Intelligence Report*[148] states that

> Artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) are altering the landscape of security risks for citizens, organizations, and states. Malicious use of AI could threaten digital security (e.g. through criminals training machines to hack or socially engineer victims at human or superhuman levels of performance), physical security (e.g. non-state actors weaponizing consumer drones), and political security (e.g. through privacy-eliminating

143 Stephen Hawking has stated in a 2014 interview with the BBC that "[…] I think the development of full artificial intelligence could spell end of the human race." <https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-30290540> (last accessed 29/09/21).

144 Bill Gates has voiced his concerns with AI during an *Ask Me Anything* on reddit.com: "I am in the camp that is concerned about super intelligence. First the machines will do a lot of jobs for us and not be super intelligent. That should be positive if we manage it well. […]A few decades after that though the intelligence is strong enough to be a concern. I [...] don't understand why some people are not concerned." <https://www.reddit.com/r/IAmA/comments/2tzjp7/hi_reddit_im_bill_gates_and_im_back_for_my_third/> (last accessed 29/09/21).

145 Elon Musk, founder and CEO of SpaceX, Tesla and PayPal in interview for the 2018 documentary *Do You Trust This Computer?*: "We are rapidly headed toward digital superintelligence that far exceeds any human […] If one company […] manages to develop godlike digital super-intelligence, they could take over the world. […] For an AI there would be no death. It would live forever, and then you'd have an immortal dictator, from which we could never escape.".

146 <https://www.stopkillerrobots.org/about/> (last accessed 25/06/21).

147 <https://futureoflife.org/ai-open-letter/> (last accessed 25/06/21).

The letter links Stuart Russell, Daniel Dewey, and Max Tegmark's "Research Priorities for Robust and Beneficial Artificial Intelligence", which details their proposed prioritisation. <https://futureoflife.org/data/documents/research_priorities.pdf?x72900> (last accessed 25/06/21).

148 <https://maliciousaireport.com/> (last accessed 25/06/21).

> surveillance, profiling, and repression, or through automated and targeted disinformation campaigns). (10).

However, it is also clear that at this point in time, we are far from developing anything close to the fictional thought experiments analysed in this book. Neither the algorithms we build nor the humanoid machines we design are androids in the sense of the figure I discuss here. For now, art remains far more devastating than reality. Given this discrepancy, it is curious that the likelihood of an artificial human threat is still constantly – at times somewhat emotionally – discussed: articles in prestigious (and less prestigious) newspapers and magazines, countless documentaries, and even serious scientific journals are trying to reassure or alarm us.[149]

The way this discourse is fed with artistic allusions, especially when it is meant to include the general public, is of immense interest for the mimetic model I am postulating. The reciprocal mimetic circle connecting humanity, human artistic production, the android figure, and its technological realisation is confirmed through the effective inclusion of artistic predecessors of actual technology in the public discourse thereof. Journalistic discussions of android- and AI-related topics often evoke fictional android characters to illustrate their narrative. Pop-culturally recognisable robots are frequently used to both draw attention and direct the recipient: anxiety but also humanity are evoked and translated from fiction to public discourse.  Especially in less scientifically minded publications the chosen character often correlates to the favoured

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149 A brief selection of recent examples:
<https://www.newyorker.com/tech/annals-of-technology/who-should-stop-unethical-ai> (last accessed 29/06/21)
<https://theconversation.com/will-ai-take-over-quantum-theory-suggests-otherwise-126567> (last accessed 29/06/21)
<https://towardsdatascience.com/the-matter-of-ai-takeover-will-artificial-intelligence-replace-human-beings-79d2c788f358> (last accessed 29/06/21)
<https://www.technologyreview.com/2020/02/25/906083/artificial-intelligence-destroy-civilization-canaries-robot-overlords-take-over-world-ai/> (last accessed 29/06/21)
< https://www.forbes.com/sites/bradtempleton/2019/06/05/dont-fear-robot-overlords-ais-will-rule-the-world-through-humans/> (last accessed 29/06/21)
<https://medium.com/geekculture/heres-how-robots-are-taking-over-the-world-f92ce160cb93> (last accessed 29/06/21)
<https://www.euronews.com/green/2020/05/06/a-robot-takeover-is-possible-so-what-about-the-planet> (last accessed 29/06/21)
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/z9gcwmn/articles/zc2mgdm> (last accessed 29/06/21)
<https://willrobotstakemyjob.com/> (last accessed 29/06/21)
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/davidhambling/2021/03/09/are-us-special-forces-quietly-using-armed-robots/ > (last accessed 29/06/21).

narrative: Contributions in favour of AI and robotic research that wish to underline the positive impact the field has had over the years, choose sympathetic figures like *Star Wars*' C3PO, while alarmist publications, or those who wish to focus on potential dangers, often picture threatening, *Terminator*-like illustrations. The argument can be preconceived and influenced in this manner, demonstrating the immense impact art and literature have had and continue to have on the discussion.

That the discourse can be influenced in this way is due to the figure's long-lasting, ubiquitous, and diverse heritage. Android art transcends social, cultural, and temporal boundaries: the figure is accessible, both because of its familiarity and its mimetic function. On a par with the android's general structural function in art as a projection surface for human self-reflection, our emotive associations with the concept are shaped and directed by our individual and collective cultural experiences. It also demonstrates the real, emotional impact art and artistic tradition can have and how this is being utilised to create narratives and shape public opinions. The inclusion of possible human extinction and oppressive robotic overlords into discourses on artificial humans are interesting in this context. It begs the question how these frequent scenarios of creation killing creator reflect back on us. What do self-destructive fantasies reveal about our self-perception? How are the method and particular power dynamics of self-destruction by self-portrait to be read? The fact that subjugating and even exterminating humanity is among the most commonly imagined scenarios in human visions of human-android interaction signifies how we perceive humanity and ourselves. The anxiety generally associated with the figure echoes our anxiety towards our collective selves. In the following, I therefore examine the robot-takeover-motif's roots in *R.U.R.*, in order to understand its implications for human identity-creation through art.

As with all examples of android art examined in this book, an engagement with humanity and an attempt to get to the essence of it lies at the core of the text. For this purpose, *R.U.R* introduces a range of human characters and contrasts their portrayal with different stages of robotic evolution. Notably, humanity is not depicted favourably: The male characters, with one exception, represent facets of human greed. Their inability to see the long-term consequences of their actions, as

well as their general arrogance and self-righteousness, result in an undoubtedly critical portrait of human, specifically capitalist society.[150] The men are case studies of humanity at its worst: bourgeois, self-centred and self-dooming. Human Helena in turn is a heavily gendered expression of well-intentioned but naïve human compassion without direction. Her character exhibits humanity's lack of real agency. Overall, none of the human characters are positive role models of any kind and rarely are they even likeable. The text thus reads as openly critical of humanity and presents a society in which our negative qualities dominate and irrevocably doom humanity.

These human qualities are contrasted with the robots', who are unified and act in the common interest of their species. It is telling that one of the suggested strategies to overpower the robots is to introduce racial division and produce them to look different from each other, in hopes that it will undermine their unity (cf.58).[151] This proposition, alongside the human's attempt at bribery and their ultimate capitulation to extinction, demonstrates humanity's inherent defect according to the text: capitalist outsourcing has rendered humanity devoid of purpose and necessitates its replacement. The robots, by contrast, remain immune to human weaknesses, productive to a fault, and unerringly complete their goal to subjugate and eradicate their makers. The text's position lacks nuance in favour of an unmitigated depiction of our anxieties concerning our own automatisation, rationalisation, and abolition in a performance-oriented system and society.

The text's critique of humanity is shaped by its underlying critique of capitalism. It focuses strongly on the significance of labour for human identity and concludes that the loss of work and thus purpose equals a loss of humanness and must result in human extinction. Following the Hegelian idea of self-creation through labour,[152] *R.U.R.* depicts humanity atrophying without work: outsourcing labour to machines has rendered it purposeless. This depiction corresponds with

150 Socio-economic critique has been and is one of the ways in which android art has been used to contemplate and communicate the human condition and experience. Capitalist society specifically has also been thematised in Fritz Lang's film *Metropolis* (1927) and is an aspect of 2016's *Westworld*, which will be discussed in more detail in II.3.4.

151 All following citations, unless otherwise indicated: Čapek, Karel. [1920] *Rossum's Universal Robots*. Transl. Paul Selver and Nigel Playfair. <https://commons.erau.edu/db-hu-338-spring2019/4> (last accessed 27/04/21).

152 In *Die Phänomenologie des Geistes*. I will engage with this theory in more detail in II.3.4 (see p.251ff.).

critical theories on the relationship between human senses of self and work. As Alexandre Kojève writes:

> The product of work is the worker's production. It is the realization of his project, of his idea; hence, it is he that is realized in and by this product, and consequently he contemplates himself when he contemplates it. […] Therefore, it is by work, and only by work, that man realizes himself objectively as man. (25).

Human self-creation through the creation of a product rings true twofold in the text: human purposelessness and ultimate extinction without work is a clear implementation of Hegelian views on the importance of work for humanity. Production, or creation, is a constitutive part of human experience and portrayed as essential for human existence. The proposed utopia, where "All work will be done by living machines. Everybody will be free from worry and liberated from the degradation of labor. Everybody will live only to perfect himself." (26) fails because of this. Humanity cannot work on itself without work. Additionally, the android, as a mimetically loaded human creation, functions here as a literal manifestation of self-(re)creation. Humans reproduce humans. The old model creating the new. Following Kojève, the humans in *R.U.R.* realise themselves and their faults through their product. We, the recipients, are likewise enabled to contemplate ourselves through their contemplation.

The text chooses to illustrate human purposelessness with human infertility (cf.43); drawing a parallel between human production and reproduction. The more artificial humans are produced, the fewer pregnancies are registered. Androids replace children: Mechanic mimesis in lieu of sexual procreation. The proportionality of production and procreation in the text further fosters the connection between human – specifically male – self-creation, self-production, and self-mimesis established earlier, in the context of *Frankenstein*. Labour's two meanings, work and birth, are not only linguistically but causally connected to humanity. To produce is to be human, and to be human is to reproduce. If the reproduction is replaced by the production of reproductions producing themselves, the system collapses.

This fundamental connection between humanity and human (re)production is one of several approaches to humanity in the play: The premise is utilised to thematise a range of human characteristics and reflect upon their impact on human identity. These characteristics, discussed by the human characters in order to

separate human from robotic identity and thereby justify their exploitation, are addressed in the following: The initial assessment of what a human is, focuses on the inefficiency of human from an economic standpoint: “A man is something that feels happy, plays the piano, likes going for a walk, and in fact, wants to do a whole lot of things that are really unnecessary.” (8) The context of the statement – a somewhat condescending attempt at invalidating Helena’s ethical concerns with robot production – reveals its intent. Domin defines humanness as a state of desire for happiness. Humanity’s need for non-essential stimulation in order to achieve a positive emotional state is what delineates it from robots, who do not share this inefficiency because they are designed as a literal working class. Unnecessary pleasures and emotionally driven wants are presented as disruptive to capitalist expansion. Humanity is thus declared economically unfeasible.

Robots, in turn, are much less demanding:

> DOMIN [...] there's nothing that does please the Robots. Good heavens, what are they to buy? You can feed them on pineapples, straw, whatever you like. It's all the same to them, they've no appetite at all. They've no interest in anything, Miss Glory. Why, hang it all, nobody's ever yet seen a Robot smile. (23).

Interestingly, Robotic pleasure is denied here because they lack the desire to consume; either economically or culinarily. Robots lack appreciation for food and they do not take part in the economic cycle. This attests to the fact that the men in the text measure anything, from worth to happiness, according to capitalist norms. Desires must be consumerist to qualify. Pleasure and happiness must be quantifiable and purchasable. Human emotionality has been effectively commercialised. In this definition of humanity ex negativo, the previously negatively judged capability to feel pleasure is presented as a human quality and used to justify their continued abuse. The exchange following the assertion that robots cannot feel pleasure is of interest because it shows the circular logic of the men: “HELENA Why... why don't you make them happier? HALLEMEIER That wouldn't do, Miss Glory. They are only workmen.” (23). The robots’ emotional incapabilities are created deliberately, are designed to keep them subjugated and exploitable, and are also used to justify their exploitation. The oppressive power dynamic between creator and creation is intensified by the capitalist environment. Maintaining a productive hierarchy is prioritised and

accuracy is compromised. Human can decry the nature of the robot even though it is them who dictates that nature.

In addition to the desire to feel happy, Helena attempts to argue two other possible indicators of humanness in robots: Intelligence,[153] which is dismissed immediately as not meaningful on its own, and the capability to love, which is denied.

| | |
|---|---|
| HELENA | Oh, but they're so intelligent. |
| HALLEMEIER | Confoundedly so, but they're nothing else. They've no will of their own. No passion. No soul. |
| HELENA | No love? |
| HALLEMEIER | Love? Rather not. Robots don't love. Not even themselves. (23). |

The play's robots, at this stage of development, are incapable of emotional connection. This distinguishes them from the robot pair that is declared human in the end by virtue of their ability to love. These initial robots are deceptively human-looking but lack human emotionality. *R.U.R.* thereby inverts *Frankenstein*'s central conflict and establishes its focus on emotive versus corporeal humanity. The robots are physically perfect copies of humans and yet function fundamentally different from them, due to their lack of emotional capability. Their dominant drive is not to feel but to work. Even after they have successfully rebelled against humanity, killed their oppressors, and claimed freedom, production remains their only drive. They lack ambition and even self-preservation beyond it (cf.92). These primitive robots, who adhere to their capitalist human design are however equally 'infertile' as the humans they have overcome. Robots lack the means to self-reproduce; though it is noteworthy that their infertility is human-made.[154] Nevertheless, robots initially sharing humanity's predicament suggests that a productive purpose in itself is not an adequate guarantee of humanness. In order to be successfully human, both work and emotionality are of the essence. Human is to produce but they are to produce

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153 Here, as well as in II.2.4., the aforementioned idea of intelligence as a marker for humanity is mentioned and quickly dismissed. This early text already rejects a purely intelligence-based understanding of humanity and pursues emotionality over it, while *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, 48 years later, describes a world in which humans cannot differentiate themselves from androids according to intelligence at all, and instead use it as a baseline to justify hierarchies amongst themselves. Both examples show how the quality was discarded as a definitive quality to define humanity by, in favour of the main categories I postulate in this book.

154 Human Helena destroys the necessary formula (cf.51).

with, for and alongside somebody. Purpose through labour comes secondary to purpose through love.

Before going into the specifics of this required emotionality, it is worthwhile to look at the first emotion felt by the robots: defiance.

| | |
|---|---|
| HELENA | Nor defiance? |
| HALLEMEIER | Defiance? I don't know. Only rarely, from time to time. |
| HELENA | What? |
| HALLEMEIER | Nothing particular. Occasionally they seem to go off their heads. Something like epilepsy, you know. It's called Robot's cramp. They'll suddenly sling down everything they're holding, stand still, gnash their teeth!— and then they have to go into the stamping-mill. It's evidently some breakdown in the mechanism. |
| DOMIN | A flaw in the works that has to be removed. |
| HELENA | No, no, that's the soul. |
| FABRY | Do you think that the soul first shows itself by a gnashing of teeth? (23ff.). |

Defiance, refusal, and anger are interesting emotional starting points, especially since the play concludes with such pathos. Before love shall conquer all, however, the robots must break the status quo. Their first emotion manifests physically, with teeth-gnashing but most importantly with a refusal to work. The robots gradually refuse to labour for their human creators and for these first rebels, this non-compliance results in their termination. Strike marks the shift from the robotic realisation of human selves through work, to robotic self-realisation through work. The robots, who remain devoted to production, refuse to do so for humans and strive to work for themselves. In the spirit of Karl Marx, they seize the means of production, and with them, the incentive to produce. The worker's revolt in the play is reminiscent of Marxist thought on the connection of class and labour and the victorious robotic subversion of their bourgeois ruling class can be read as the successful class warfare of a subjugated working class; complete with its own "manifesto" (62). However, the failure of the robots to sustain themselves through mindless production should also be read as critical of a purely labour-centric understanding of humanity. Strike, revolt, and economic emancipation are merely the basis on which artificial emotionality and consequently, artificial humanity, can develop. Defiance in the face of economic exploitation is thus portrayed as the birth, but not conclusion, of human emotionality.

The effects capitalist structures have on the human, especially its effects on human emotionality, are the subject of Eva Illouz's *Cold Intimacies: The Making*

*of Emotional Capitalism*. Before delving into case studies of emotional discourses within capitalist societies, Illouz discusses Marx's thoughts on alienation and the "loss of the bond to the object" (1). According to her, Marx's work has strong "emotional overtones" (1); equating alienation of labour with alienation from reality. Labour, purpose, binds us to our perception of what is real and the bond is an inherently emotional one. The same ideas are evident in *R.U.R.*, as the text stages a worst-case scenario of Marxist alienation under capitalism. Humanity declines, culturally, socially, and emotionally through the lack of personal labour. Reality is lost in several ways: the isolated island setting of the play estranges its characters from the world, the manufacturing of artificial humans calls the reality of the human identity into question, and the capitalist mindset blinds the characters to the real consequences of their actions. The reality of other people disappears, spatially, ethically, and emotionally. As they fail to bond with the object of their work, they fail to bond with each other and go extinct. The complete lack of functional human relationships in the play showcases this failure. The men, isolated within their corporate structures, attempt to bond with the first women they are presented with, without any individual relation to her. They appear starved for human connection and yet incapable of establishing it with each other, or Helena. Even Domin, who succeeds in marrying Helena, remains emotionally removed from her. Thus, the play's human characters demonstrate the alienating effect of capitalism according to Marx among each other. As Illouz puts it: "market-based cultural repertoires shape and inform interpersonal and emotional relationships, […] [they] offer new techniques and meanings to forge new forms of sociability." (5). Or this case, a lack thereof.

This lack is evident in the sparse human connections the play depicts. The engagement with emotional connection is mostly reduced to heteronormative, romantic relationships. Familiar or platonic emotional interactions are not portrayed; the men interact but are not shown to relate emotionally to each other. In this context, it is noteworthy that the play is generally characterised by period-typical gender norms, both for its human and robotic characters. Generally, when the play refers to humanity, they are referring to a neutral, male idea of it. Consequently, all of its criteria for humanity are only partially applicable to women. Helena, as well as robot Helena, lack agency and are, with the exception

of her mostly catastrophic attempts to improve the situation, limited to be acted upon by men. The emotional progress of the robots is exclusively traced with male models; even the advanced female is described as “remote and listless. […] without life.” (50) before she meets her companion. Thus, like in the Pygmalion myth, female android emotionality is only depicted as functionally humanising when it is caused by male figures; in both cases lovers. This romantic focus also affects the play’s portrayal of men as emotional instigators and the woman as emotional object: their romantic attachments to Helena remain the only depiction of inter-human emotionality for them. Consequently, the proposal scene reads decidedly ironic, as Domin comments on the robots’ incapability to bond romantically but fails to recognise his own:

| | |
|---|---|
| HELENA | Perhaps it's silly of me, but why do you manufacture female Robots when – when – |
| DOMIN | When sex means nothing to them? |
| HELENA | Yes. |
| DOMIN | There's a certain demand for them, you see. Servants, saleswomen, stenographers. People are used to it. |
| HELENA | But –but, tell me, are the Robots male and female mutually – completely without – |
| DOMIN | Completely indifferent to each other, Miss Glory. There's no sign of any affection between them. |
| HELENA | Oh, that's terrible. |
| DOMIN | Why? |
| HELENA | It's so unnatural. One doesn't know whether to be disgusted or to hate them, or perhaps– |
| DOMIN | To pity them? |
| HELENA | That's more like it. What did you want to ask me about? |
| DOMIN | I should like to ask you, Miss Helena, whether you will marry me? |
| HELENA | What? |
| DOMIN | Will you be my wife? |
| HELENA | No! The idea! (28ff.). |

The robot’s indifference to each other, especially their lack of gendered social dynamics, is invoked as another argument against their humanness. The absence of heteronormative interactions between male and female-assigned robots are met with horror and framed as deeply dehumanising. This suggests that gendered interactions are seen as an essential part of human identity. (Hetero-)sexuality and romantic inclinations are among the central human qualities in the play.

Illouz’s analysis of the effects of capitalism on human emotionality in the context of Marxist alienation comments on the general cultural associations with capitalism:

> When Marx's 'alienation' was appropriated – and distorted – by popular culture, it was mostly for its emotional implications: modernity and capitalism were alienation in the sense that they created a form of emotional numbness which separated people from one another, from their community, and from their own deep selves. (1).

Her points on the consequences of emotional numbness on a human sense of self are directly applicable to the decline of human emotionality under capitalist structures and the loss of work in the play. Intended to facilitate human self-actualisation, freeing humanity of work is portrayed as depriving them of purpose, stunting their emotionality, and ruining their sense of self. As humanity is alienated from production, it is alienated from itself. Their product in turn self-actualises through the work it identifies with.

Emotional ability emerges gradually for the robots. This ability is explained to be not a spontaneous development but a deliberate experiment by Helena and Dr Gall (cf.46ff.). Several robots have been designed with a "better brain" (47) in order to heighten their humanness. What was intended to sway public opinion on robots and help them achieve equality,[155] initially results in robots able to communicate arguably human but certainly not desired traits: "RADIUS I don't want a master. I want to be master. I want to be master over others." (47). The robotic struggle for independence from subjugation has been advanced to the desire to become the subjugators themselves. The defiance, fear, and hatred (cf.49) first felt by the robots result in the drive to become not only free but in control. The urge to dominate those who are weaker is here portrayed as another aspect of humanity. As Radius later points out: "Slaughter and domination are necessary if you would be human beings. Read history." (91). In accordance with the play's tendency to focus on negative and dysfunctional aspects of human identity, human's violent history is cited as a justification for robot dominion. Human proclivity for war is not only brought forth as a historical example, it is also utilised as a narrative device in the background. Among the play's portrayed consequences of the affordable and widespread production of robots is a global robotic arms race. National militaries around the world equip robotic armies to carry out their conflicts and, as a consequence, near-constant war breaks out (42ff.). *R.U.R.* thus uses its robots to emphasise another aspect

155 "[…] oh, Radius, I wanted you to show the whole world that robots are our equals. That's what I wanted of you." (47).

under which humanity objectifies itself: the military. In addition to economic objectification, war, too, is depicted here as an exploitative means to objectify the oppressed class. The play draws a parallel between class segregation, as theorised by Marx, and the separation of robots; of artificial humans from humans. The play's robotic working class is segregated in two ways: economically and ontologically. The dehumanising effect of exploitation is here taken literally, by declaring the robotic workers and soldiers not only a sub-class but a sub-species.

In this and all other aspects it depicts, the play paints an undoubtedly grim picture of humanity and its driving qualities. Its extinction is entirely self-imposed by its stubborn adherence to capitalist motivations; weighing the interests of the military, companies, and share-holders higher than that of the species as a whole (cf.50), even in the face of immediate extinction. *R.U.R.*'s humanity, shaped by self-alienation and emotional isolation, teaches their mimetic copies only defiance, fear, and hatred by example, confirming Klaus Benesch's assessment that "The concern, then, whether or not technology would, in the long run, nefariously dominate human life was therefore always based in the machine's "character," in other words on its very humanness." (2002, 33). In the play, the imparted character dooms both itself and its mechanical self-portrait to extinction. It is this humanness, the cumulation of all negative aspects of human identity and behaviour, that dominates the play. Structurally, *R.U.R.* devotes its vast majority to a detailed portrait of humanity's economic, emotional, and physical decline. It focuses on its human characters and depicts their faults and failings extensively. The robots are given comparatively little textual space, confirming the impression that the play is predominantly intended as a reflection on and perhaps a warning of human nature in the context of capitalism.

ill. 7

ill.8

The play shares this focus with my other dramatic example but they differ in method, as well as conclusion: In *Uncanny Valley*, the android is the only actor on stage and functions as a direct representation of its human reference. Melle, through his voice and his story, is present on stage and perhaps even dominates the production. Stagings of *R.U.R.*, meanwhile, have had human actors portray the robots (see ill.7 and 8), who are, however, purely android characters, not direct human representations. When they speak, the android speaks, whereas in *Uncanny Valley*, Melle speaks through his android copy while the android itself does not have a voice. This difference is in line with the plays' diverging approaches to their shared themes of replacement and artificialisation: *R.U.R.* is critical towards optimising humanity though technology and punishes its humans with extinction and replacement for it. *Uncanny Valley* is much more ambivalent towards supplementing or even replacing humanity, since it is not concerned with a strict opposition between artificiality and non-artificiality and instead seeks one within the other. *R.U.R.*'s robots become and then replace humans, retaining the separate category as such, whereas *Uncanny Valley* reveals the robotic within the human experience, thus questioning the differentiation in principle.

Interestingly, the respective android figures' design concepts are similarly opposed to each other: *R.U.R.*'s human actors employ visual cues to communicate non-humanity (see ill.7 and 8): the actor's costumes, hair, and body language signal artificiality.[156] *Uncanny Valley* dresses its actual android up as human and has it emulate human body language. Both mimetic processes are meant to reflect upon humanity by confronting it with its artificial self-representation and both do so on stage, entailing the corporeal implications discussed in II.1.4. Both stretch their audiences' suspension of disbelief with their depictions of androids and a human respectively. The very different conclusions they arrive at, are not only due to the different technological possibilities of their times but arguably determined by their understandings of humanity. *Uncanny Valley* blurs boundaries *R.U.R.* leaves intact. *R.U.R.*, in the early 20th century, depicted humanity's extinction, rather than its assimilation and concludes with its replacement in favour of a new

156 In this, the actual staging differ from the text, which implies the robots cannot easily be differentiated from humans by looks alone (cf.11).

version of it. About a hundred years later, *Uncanny Valley* considers the same replacement – and questions in how far it would be one at all.

*R.U.R.*'s conclusion – humanity's robotic rebirth – takes place in a short epilogue, while the main three-act play ends with unseen robot masses proclaiming victory over humanity:

> Robots of the world! The power of man has fallen! A new world has arisen: the Rule of the Robots! March! *A thunderous tramping of thousands of feet is heard as the unseen Robots march, while the curtain falls.* (86ff.).

After this powerful ending, leaving the recipient awed and affected, the epilogue reads as curiously tacked-on and comparatively sedate. The man most removed from capitalist failures survives as the last human on earth. The robots themselves are now facing extinction as well because they cannot reproduce themselves (cf.90). The action ultimately enabling the robots to become the new humanity is an act of self-sacrifice:

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|---|---|
| ALMQUIST | Laughter – timidity – protection. I must test you further – […] Take the girl into the dissecting room. […] |
| PRIMUS | Sir, take me. […] Take my life, sir. […] |
| ALMQUIST | Do you not wish to live then? |
| PRIMUS | Not without her! I will not live without her […] |
| ALMQUIST | Why? |
| PRIMUS | We – we – belong to each other. (97ff.). |

Primus' sacrifice is motivated by love for the robot Helena. The parallel between the two female figures emphasises the behavioural and emotional differences between the human men and the new artificial one. Love is declared the defining human quality and its expression serves as a decisive moment for the male robot's humanness. The text thereby counters un-emotionality as a positive marker of masculinity and establishes male emotional capability as humanising and its absence as fatal. Primus' ability to love the female-assigned robot and consequent willingness to sacrifice himself for her demonstrates both his and her humanness to Almquist, who subsequently declares them, "*almost in tears*" (99, original emphasis), the new Adam and Eve (cf.99). Like in the Pygmalion myth, male emotionality is abstracted as a productive and humanising force and thus exempt from negative gender stereotyping. Specifically, men's heteronormative, romantic feelings are depicted as the essential human emotion. Traditional gender dynamics between active men and passive women are thus framed as the quintessence of

humanity. The robots, who have previously not adhered to romantically and sexually loaded interactions between their assigned genders now experience what the text suggests to be human nature: romantic love.

Primus' altruism, his selfless devotion to robot Helena humanises him in the eyes of Almquist. Notably, the agency lies with the human character: it is him, not the robots themselves who declares the couple human and gives them the world (cf.99). Furthermore, the new robotic capability for love is the result of the previously discussed experiments of Dr Gall and human Helena and therefore human-designed. Despite its extinction scenario, the play thus adheres to the creator-creation power-dynamics also established in the Pygmalion myth: the mimetic authority remains firmly in human hands; creator humanises creation. Humanity creates its successors and even in effective extinction, they remain in power. Given the play's remarkably pessimistic depiction of humanity, it leaves human creative authority notably untouched. Humanity as a concept remains as a higher goal; the first version is merely discarded in favour of a new and improved model.

Consequently, the play does not simply declare robots successful over humans. It is rather the combination of robotic work ethic and unity with human emotional capability that defines this second attempt at a successful species. Therefore, the new and improved life is not the dominant of two competing lifeforms; the winner of a power struggle between creator and creation. It is a mimetic successor deriving of and from its creator: new, improved, and utterly human again. This conclusion re-establishes an abstract concept of humanity and thus relativises the preceding critique as situational, rather than fundamental. Human identity is portrayed as corruptible, not inherently obsolete. On the contrary, the epilogue's emotional exaltation is a pledge for humanity, rather than against it. Nevertheless, *R.U.R.*'s critique of humanity has proven perennially relevant. Perhaps because of the combination of radical rejection and fundamental affirmation, the play's premise and themes have found entrance into current discourses on the effect of android technologies on human purpose, identity, and well-being.

In summary, the text's paradigmatic depiction of human extinction and android replacement defines humanity as a combination of economic purpose and

emotional capability. The accuracy with which this 1920s text predicted the anxieties towards android technologies currently discussed would be remarkable, were it not this very text, along with its successors, that has affected and shaped today's public's opinion and associations. This suggests that the anxiety, as well as the expectations towards artificial humanity are influenced by an artistic discourse that is, all in all, several thousand years old and has consistently fed into the figure's reciprocal mimetic model and thus perpetuated meaning and associations. Consequently, the motif of human extinction by robotic coup d'état or even coup de planète has remained present in android-related art and literature to this day. Given this perpetual thematisation, it makes sense to read the android, who has served and continues to serve as a projection surface for all things human throughout its existence in art, as a mirror to reflect humanity's fear of and for themselves as well. This fear has not subsided and resulted in the general anxieties towards both the figure and the technological reality it has inspired.

That we should feel it so likely that our mimetic copy and self-recreation would find us so lacking that it should seek to destroy us is meaningful for my interpretation of the figure and how it reflects back on its creator. If the android is to be read as a human self-portrait, the recurring motif of human subjugation and eradication by androids can be interpreted as a self-aware expression of two things: Our potential and maybe even tendency to oppress given the opportunity and the likelihood of our destruction by our own hand. *R.U.R.* depicts humanity's potential to destroy itself for short-sighted profit. This premise has proven itself to be not unrealistic, given its parallels to historic events like the Cold War later in the 20th century, current environmentalist concerns, and many more aspects of past and present human societies. The play's assertion that self-destructive violence is part of human history rings demonstrably true, even today. The destructive potential of android technologies, too, is beginning to translate into real life, in the context of their military applications: Autonomous weapon

systems,[157] cybermapping,[158] and military androids[159] fuel the previously mentioned public discourse on and anxiety towards the technological reality android art inspires. Artificial intelligence and humanity are thus no longer a mere artistic metaphor of our species negative impact on ourselves and our environment but its own expression of it, thus confirming the reciprocity and cyclic nature of the proposed mimetic model. Nevertheless, the play's conclusion also indicates ambivalence in humanity's feelings for their artificial copies. The depicted humanisation and subsequent proclamation ultimately portray the initial robotic threat as human renewal and thus incorporate a positive aspect to the figure. This confirms Benesch's assessment that the figure "works both ways, as glaring metaphor for the widespread fear of technological encroachment and, simultaneously, as epitome and affirmation of actual sociocultural change" (34). *R.U.R.* utilises both functions: anxiety and aspiration.

In addition to the figure's ambivalent emotional connotations, the play's other main theme, robotic humanisation through human emotionality, too, has been a prominent motif present in this discourse from its early stages (as shown in the Pygmalion myth) to today. Love effecting humanness has remained a staple of android-related art in its own right. The discourse engages the spectrum of human emotions regarding the question which feelings essentially make us human.

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157 Frank Sauer has published extensively on the industry's developments and the legal and ethical concerns associated with autonomous weapon systems. For an overview on the problems, ranging from a clear definition and the problematic use of the term autonomy, to attempts at regulation and the international effort to ban autonomous weapons, see
Sauer, Frank. 2016. "Stopping 'Killer Robots': Why Now Is the Time to Ban Autonomous Weapons Systems". *Arms Control Today* 46 (8): 8-13.
Rosert, Elvira. Sauer, Frank. 2019. "Prohibiting Autonomous Weapons: Put Human Dignity First". *Global Policy* 10 (3): 370-375.
Altmann, Jürgen. Sauer, Frank. 2017. "Autonomous Weapon Systems and Strategic Stability". *Survival* 59 (5): 117-142.

158 In his video-installation "The Shire", Luis August Krawen details how individual, politically entangled Silicon Valley companies market large scale, real time intelligence solutions for governmental institutions that find application in American border protection, anti-terrorist action, policing, and similar fields subject to politically loaded, ethical debates. Interestingly, the founders use literary references to establish a company narrative that utilises patriotic, masculine, and, arguably, ethno-nationalist connotations; underlining the evocative efficacy of artistic production and its significant influence on real life.
<http://www.the-shire.de/about.html> (last accessed 23/09/21).

159 Humanoid robots for military uses are being developed by a number of international companies, like the American
<https://www.bostondynamics.com/> (last accessed 24/09/21)
or the Russian
<https://npo-at.com/en/> (last accessed 24/09/21).

Among them, love is a notably recurring and omnipresent one. It has become a means commonly utilised for the humanisation of non-human entities, including artificial humans.[160] An android who loves is no longer a mere android because according to our cultural narrative to be human is to love. Love, of course, is a singularly elusive artistic motif. It can be argued that its depiction is as old as art itself and is still utilised as a vague yet meaningful evocation of humanity. In associating the android with it, we ascribe it with cultural memories. The android in love is the android overcoming its ontological limitations and asserting itself firmly within human territory. The ability to love implies the progression from an individual existence to interpersonal connection. It indicates the android's capability to surrender itself to something immaterial yet bigger than itself. Thus, the android who loves is able to function within the communal human identity, once again suggesting a social element to our identity. Because of these implications and associations, love is an effective device to establish artificial humanity in a narrative. In art, love transcends all, even the boundaries of humanity.

After the Pygmalion myth and *R.U.R.* have provided two comparatively facile examples for the effect of being loved and loving on android characters in art, the following text offers a much more nuanced insight into artificial emotionality. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, the novel that would later inspire Ridley Scott's cult-classic *Blade Runner*, portraits humanity's endless and complex struggles with its own identity, emotionally and otherwise. It lacks the previous examples' stylised and evocative treatment of emotionality and instead offers a critical, deconstructed approach to human identity.

160 See, for example, Isaac Asimov's *Satisfaction Guaranteed* (1951), for a depiction of human loving robot, Brad Bird‘s *The Iron Giant* (1999) for a depiction of robot loving human, and Denise Villeneuve's *Blade Runner 2049* (2017) for a depiction of replicant loving AI. The theme is so common that it was used in Alex Garland's *Deus Ex Machina* (2015) as a means to lead and subvert the audience regarding the romance between a male human protagonist and a female android, who ultimately, in a final twist, unthinking- and unfeelingly leaves him behind to die.

### II.2.4 Distinction and Extinction in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*

Philip K. Dick's 1968 novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, known for its somewhat unwieldly and oddly ominous titular question, engages with the problem of authenticity in human identity through a unique take on human emotionality: a focus on the concept and implications of empathy. The novel depicts a desolate, dystopian world in which everything can be and potentially is an artificial copy of a defunct or extinct template; resulting in disorienting mimetic layering. Surrounded by atmospheric toxicity, species extinction, and decay, the dwindling human population consists of those too mentally or physically deteriorated to emigrate to colonialised Mars and those economically unable to. Humanity vegetates within the polluted and dead legacy of its previous generations as a result of a nebulous "World War Terminus" (5),[161] the details and liabilities of which the survivors, like the text itself, seem indifferent to, underlining their general impuissance and lethargy. I am reading the novel's setting, mimetic complexity, and general sense of ambiguity and uncertainness towards a thorough deconstruction of the categories established in the previous two examples. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* challenges the emotional tradition surrounding the android figure, as described in the previous two examples, and continues to question the previously established associations, boundaries, and utility of human identity as such.

The remaining human culture in the text is dominated by artificiality: The food is "ersatz",[162] both the arts and authorities are infiltrated by androids, and the omnipresent, 24-hour entertainment channel is hosted by untiring artificial anchors and celebrities. Mercerism, the mainstream religious movement, provides artificial human connection via an "empathy box" (17) that allows for emotional fusion with other participants for the duration of a simulated, communal experience; centred around a messiah figure who is later revealed to be a fraud as well. The actual interpersonal relationships portrayed in the novel are cold and

161 All following quotations, unless otherwise indicated: Dick, Phillip K. [1968] 2007. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* London: Orion.

162 The text uses German vocabulary at several points in the text. *Ersatz*, substitute, is used primarily to describe synthetic food replacements for extinct products but is also used to refer to electric animals (cf.89) and human qualities in androids (cf.160).

detached in contrast to the artificial community experience provided. Those who can afford it regulate their emotions with a "Penfield mood organ" (3)[163]; a device which artificially regulates and induces feelings ranging from "481 Awareness of the manifold possibilities open to me" (3) to "888 the desire to watch TV, no matter what's on it" (4). Mimetic processes affect all aspects of human life, both internally and externally.

Considering these examples and other aspects to the worldbuilding of the text, it can be read as a mirror of the culture it was written and published in. In that it resembles *R.U.R.*, although *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* takes a decidedly satirical, somewhat cynical tone with its cultural background that differs from the earnest criticism of the earlier example. The post-war dystopia described in the novel is a reflection on the United States in the late 1960s; influenced by the constant threat of the Cold War, the horror of the Vietnam War, as well as still shaken by the Kennedy assassination in 1963. The text references the colourful TV culture, whose hosts indeed seem artificial to the modern eye, and a colonised Mars that may well be inspired by an ascending Space Race and a general boom in scientific progress making futuristic technology seem possible in the near future. Rising second-wave feminism and the beginnings of a more radical LGBTQ+ movement posed a challenge to a social status quo that had established different rights for different citizens. Norms, values, and identities that were previously perceived as a 'natural' and authentic were gradually questioned and eroded. The text is noticeably shaped by this contradictory culture full of bright coloured artificiality and social upheaval. All this, contextualised with ever-present existential dread, not surprisingly resulted in a dynamic text deeply concerned with the paradox of human identity and authenticity.

The problem of authenticity has been previously discussed and framed as an artificially constructed concept in the context of *Uncanny Valley*. Authenticity, the quality of being 'real' or 'true', is characterised by the fundamental problems most concepts defined by the indefinable share: a persistent presence in critical

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163 Presumably named after neurosurgeon Wilder Penfield (1891 - 1976), who researched the localisation of brain functions and neural stimulation. Penfield's experiments with stimulating rat's brains in order to evoke emotions is referenced by Dick in his 1972 speech "The Android and the Human", given at the Vancouver Science Fiction Convention held at the University of British Columbia. Dick has speculated about utilising these techniques for human control in the same speech (cf. Dick 1972, 8).

discourse despite its undeniable intangibility. What is real? What does being real imply? In the context of artistic production, Denis Dutton, in "Authenticity in Art", distinguishes between *nominal* and *expressive authenticity*. With *nominal* being the material authenticity of an artwork in relation to its creator (cf. Dutton 259ff.) it is *expressive authenticity* that is of interest here, namely whether the art is a "committed, personal expression" (Dutton 267) of the artist. Interestingly, Dutton attests an "emergent value possessed by works of art" in line with this definition that Dutton describes as "problematic" (Dutton 267). It is apparent that artistic authenticity – art being free of influences and expressive of an unaltered state, of something 'real' if you will – influences perception and the perceived value of art. Depicting 'reality' however, as Wolfgang Funk, Florian Groß, and Irmtraud Huber write in the aforementioned "Exploring the Empty Plinth: The Aesthetics of Authenticity" is "inaccessible, or rather always already mediated" (10). Any claim on authenticity in art is consequently problematic at best and commonly seen as "beyond the pale of human representation" (10) entirely. Art is a lens through which we see a mimetic version of reality that is shaped by its production.

Despite the problematic nature of authentic reality in art, its very intangibility becomes productive in the novel. Instead of evading the impossible authenticity of representation in art, the text thematises, even prioritises the issue in its world-building and story-telling. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* depicts the representation's strive for authenticity; the artificial human's yearning for authentic humanness. In creating an embodied mimetic copy and awarding it agency, the text can experiment with the boundaries of artistic authenticity and critically examine the concept. The possibly paradoxical problem of authentic representation – in art or otherwise – is not avoided but embraced. The text explores its debatable nature and questions whether it is ever feasible for a mimetic copy to be considered authentic. It utilises a concept fraught with potential problems and conflicting implications to depict the problems of another like it: humanity. In engaging with authenticity's intangibility, it is able to draw parallels to humanity's similar troubles with definable boundaries. Thematising the relationship between copy and reference situates these issues within the text.

This relationship is portrayed with great nuance and few definitive statements. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* utilises the full spectrum of mimetic relations and allusions its setting and figures afford it. Android and human interact in a mimetically loaded space that entangles its layers and erodes its ontological boundaries: An early confrontation between characters in an art gallery, for example, thematises metatextual implications for art as a mimetic category and the android's embodiment of this dynamic:

> Luba Luft […] stood absorbed in the picture before her. A drawing of a young girl, hands clasped together, seated at a the edge of a bed, an expression of bewildered wonder and new, groping awe imprinted on her face. […] 'Listen', she said to Rick […] 'Buy me a reproduction of that picture […]
> It's very nice of you. There's something very strange and touching about humans. […] Ever since I got here from Mars my life has consisted of imitating the human […] Imitating, as far as I'm concerned, a superior life form.' […]
> Phil Resch fired […] The beam […] burrowed a narrow hole, silently, into her stomach. She began to scream; she lay crouched against the wall of the elevator, screaming. Like the picture, Rick thought to himself, and, with his own laser tube, killed her. […] With his laser tube, Rick systematically burned into blurred ash the book of pictures which he had just a few minutes ago bought Luba. (113ff).

The android as artwork, as previously detailed in the context of the Pygmalion myth, is here presented as part of an intricate mimetic entanglement with humanity. Art and artistic reproduction are placed alongside human and android. The text thus thematises the mimetic model as previously explained and establishes the android in art's position as mimesis within mimesis. Additionally, it blurs the boundaries between mimetic layers: Luba is depicted as a recipient of art, as well as likened to artistic reproduction. In line with the text's general tendency to obfuscate rather than clarify, the character's mimetic position is

ill. 9

ambiguous. She is “like” (116) the picture, “imitating” (116) humanity, as art does, and yet her behaviour and death are portrayed as human. It is her killer(s), who appear inhumane in contrast. The picture the text refers to in this context is Edvard Munch’s *Pubertet* (ill.9). It depicts, as described in the text, a young girl on the symbolic edge of a bed, who is compared to Luba, at the edge of humanity. The girl’s naked humanness is compared to Luba in pain and fear, underlining the humanising quality of her emotional reaction. Her death, immediately followed by the destruction of the painting’s reproduction, implies a connection between humanity’s destruction of its self-mimetic creation and its all-encompassing self-destruction in the text. Humanity is detached from authentic emotionality and thus itself, as the text makes abundantly clear throughout its driven and yet aimless narrative. The android functions as an embodiment of this division in the novel.

Among the many motifs illustrating these representational dynamics is the text’s culture surrounding animals. Since the environmental situation has rendered most species extinct or very close to, animals are societally revered and their monetary value has risen significantly. Owning and caring for an animal is seen as a humanising and empathetic process; not doing so as “immoral and anti-empathetic” (10). Even traditionally unappealing animals like spiders and livestock are valued highly as pets. To consume, damage, or kill an animal is considered deeply offensive and non-human behaviour. Animal life is thus functionally of equal value as human life and ranks socially higher than “specials” (13), people with intellectual disabilities. Interestingly, this value system in all likelihood implies that we, the text’s recipients, would not be considered human according to these standards. Denying readers their accustomed security in their identity sensitises them for the identity crises of both humans and androids throughout the text. This facilitates the ability to empathise with a struggle that is alien to most of us: questioning our humanness.

Since animals are not available or affordable to everyone, lifelike, electronic animals are common, yet seen as undesirable. The shame and embarrassment associated with owning a non-authentic animal showcase the societal taboo of inauthenticity: “To say, ‘Is your sheep genuine?’ would be a worse breach of manners than to inquire whether a citizen’s teeth, hair or internal organs would test out authentic.” (5) The comparison of pet-authenticity to body

authenticity illustrates the deep connection animal care and human identity have undergone. The text evokes corporal human identity as detailed in chapter II.1, and subordinates it to emotionally motivated behaviour, like a nurturing relationship with animals. Emotionality is thus given preference over corporeal markers of humanness. Both are, however, linked by the problematic authenticity and distinction that dominate the text.

Displaying empathy towards animals is portrayed as a central, if not the defining human quality left and it is heavily utilised to differentiate humans from androids. Consequently, animal ownership is to be read both as a display of wealth and status, as well as a conscious self-identifier of humanity in the text. The titular electric sheep can therefore be read as a metaphor for the complex dynamics between authentic and inauthentic, human and non-human identities thematised here. Emotional relationships to authentic animals define humanity and differentiate it from its mimetic copy, the replicants, who are supposedly not able to connect with animals on a similar level.

The text uses this flawed differentiating premise to further develop its deconstruction of authenticity. The layered complex of originals, copies, and counterfeits and their entanglement with emotional hierarchies is also signified by one of the protagonist's workplace: Isidore, a "special" (13), transports dysfunctional electric animals to technicians. He is disguised as a veterinarian; a pretend carer for pretend animals intended for pretended empathetic relations. While transporting a cat in its death throes, supposedly electrical later revealed to be real, he feels empathy towards what he perceives as a machine:

> You'd almost think it was real, Isidore observed […] The cat, in its travail, groaned. Wow, Isidore said to himself. It really sounds as if it's dying. […] 'Can you hang on until we reach the shop?' The cat continued to wheeze. 'I'll recharge you while we're en route," […] The electric mechanism with its compellingly authentic-style gray pelt, gurgled and blew bubbles, its vid-lenses glassy, its metal jaws locked together. […] the whole thing appeared – not broken – but organically ill. It would have fooled me, Isidore said to himself […] He gave up; the false cat had ceased functioning […] Anyhow he no longer had to listen to the nerve-racking wheezing of the construct, he could relax. (61ff.).

To both character and reader, the cat's suffering is aggravating despite its supposed artificiality. Isidore's reaction is not conditional; he engages both 'authentic' and 'inauthentic' beings emotionally. To his colleague, who does uphold the distinction, this is alien: "'I don't think Isidore can tell the difference,'

[…] 'To him they're all alive, false animals included.'" (67). The mix-up demonstrates the fundamental questionability of a system that bases merit on an unstable identity: Since authenticity – be it the veterinarian's, the cat's, or humanity's – is subject to manipulation and falsification, it is meaningless. Empathy can be and is generated by the artificial and non-artificial alike. This problem of distinction remains a main theme throughout the text; as shown by its progressively disorienting display of mistaking machine and organism, human and android, copy and original for each other. The struggle and ultimate failure to maintain the appropriate emotional reactions supposedly differentiating them, too, is repeatedly thematised. Empathy, portrayed as the defining emotion of identity and authenticity in the text, is thus deconstructed in an effort to demonstrate the ambiguities and limitations of such categories and the identities they produce.

Besides animal Others, the text also juxtaposes the human identity with artificial versions of itself. Defining humanity is a fundamental ideological process in the novel that seeks to produce a self by delineating it form Others, as Benesch describes in his analysis of the text:

> we can neither be wholly assured of the visual markers of the human nor of those which define the identity of the cyborg. On the contrary, the very essence of the imagery of the man-machine turns on the fact that it resembles as much as it estranges the organic body. In dealing with the cyborg, we are therefore constantly engaged in negotiating the antagonist aspects of similarity and difference, of recognition and denial just like the Lacanian *I* as it looks at its reflection in the mirror. Driven by the narcissistic desire to affirm its existence, the self sets out to identify what it is not; that is, it sorts out what it finds to be incongruous with the *real* of its perception, and then, in a second step, discards all of the inverted aspects of its image as foreign to its own identity, as something that belongs to a different reality (1999, 390).

The novel portrays this process of estrangement though a progressive deconstruction of human identity the focalisers' narcissistic selves cannot withstand entirely. Human and non-human identities alike become increasingly intangible and prone to blurring, resulting in a constant need to negotiate one's own and Others' selves by means of progressively tenuous measures.

The novel describes the "Voigt-Kampff Empathy Test" (5), a standardised method to measure humanness by detecting minute physical reactions induced by emotional reactions to a set of questions, as the standard identity-defining device. The set-up depends on the artificial opposition between humanity and technology but also, paradoxically, undermines it by incorporating a human questioner whose

scientific neutrality mirrors the very qualities the experiment seeks to identify as inhuman (cf. Benesch 1999, 390). Additionally, the concept links corporeal and emotional approaches to humanity, underlining the fragility of the emotional category by translating it into the physically measurable. The test is dominated by questions examining the emotional reactions of its subjects to animal abuse; further cementing the cultural significance of empathy towards animals. The test subject's reaction to mentions of meat and ornamental animal products are perused and, once more, likely to alienate a readership likely to partake in both. The attempt at quantifying emotional conceptualisation of morality within corporeal dimensions is reminiscent of Denis Diderot's philosophical dialogues from 1769. Diderot's work, dedicated to the discrepancy between sense and sensibility in human nature, engages with the relation between physical reaction and authentic emotionality. In *Le rêve de d'Dalembert*, Diderot links the feminine ability to blush to abstract moralistic qualities like purity and innocence.[164] The idea of physical markers able to reliably diagnose character and morality is similarly but gender-neutrally applied in the text. Here, human society measures physical reaction to gauge identity-defining degrees of empathetic ability. Replicants' characters are judged within physical categories supposedly giving meaningful insight into their person. In describing the attempt to find authenticity in emotionality and a reliable way to measure and thereby define humanity, the text offers a deconstructionist approach towards authenticity as a concept; especially applicable within the context of authentic human emotionality. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* shows how any attempt to measure humanness, in terms of emotionality or anything else, must necessarily become absurd with time and ultimately proves unreliable. It thereby challenges established, traditional notions on conceptual humanity as shown in the Pygmalion myth and *R.U.R.* by making a mockery out of their simplified depiction of human emotionality. In the novel, the notion that humanity and human empathy relate to measurable physical

164 The connection between blushing and purity is also present in the several versions of the Pygmalion myth. Diderot equates physical emotional reactions to the theatre to a "l'être sensible" (Diderot 1769, 55), as opposed to a "tranquille et froid" (Diderot 1769, 55) attendant, who is in turn more qualified to say "Cela est vrai, cela est bon, cela est beau" (Diderot 1769, 55) in art. His statement is gendered and adheres to the stereotypical notion of the rational male and the emotional female, in his case supposedly supported by physical expression of emotionality as proof for the emotional nature of one gender only.

reactiveness is refuted. It thereby disproves its fictional society's ability to successfully delineate human identity from its artificial counterpart.

The focus on emotionality rather than more substantial physical or other abstract criteria is of interest here. The choice to discard markers like, for example intelligence, is calculated: Since the replicants have been designed to be physically and cognitively superior to humans, emotionality replaces the previously invoked intelligence (cf.25) as the essential human self-identifying category.[165] The conscious adjustment described establishes the distinction as an artificial solution meant to uphold an equally artificial hierarchy. Intelligence is instead used to establish social hierarchies within the human identity. The distinction between regulars and specials uses intelligence as a marker for inner-human boundaries. Terms like "antheads" and "chickenheads" (names that break with the general reverence of animals) likens those that fail IQ tests to cognitively inferior animals and consequently "drop[s] [them] out of history" (13). The specials "cease, in effect, to be part of mankind." (13). The treatment of specials throughout the novel showcases a remarkable lack of empathy in humans for humans they no longer deem human enough. The hypocrisy casts severe doubt on the emotional supremacy of humankind and the validity of an identity based upon it. It questions both the hierarchies within humanity and those that serve to delineate humanity from Others and thus delegitimises the very thing it is meant to establish.

Distinguishing between artificial and non-artificial humans serves to maintain and perpetuate a social hierarchy between creator and creation. This hierarchy is of increasing importance for a dwindling human population on earth expected to go extinct. It is also increasingly difficult to establish, as progressive mimetic excellence renders spontaneous distinction of androids and humans based on mere looks and behaviour almost impossible. The text's term for its androids, replicants, implies their hierarchical subordination to their human creators and mimetic template. It also suggests great mimetic accuracy. Androids are

165 This can be read as a comment on the cultural abandonment of intelligence as a distinguishing marker of humanness I have mentioned in the introduction. The distinction of humans from both animals and machines has historically been argued by invoking cognitive capacity but does not hold up to scrutiny in either case, as it would exclude significant parts of humanity from the identity (based on age-related or non-neurotypical performance), or has become obsolete since machines increasingly exceed human processing abilities.

mentioned to have lived for years unrecognised by their human peers and can pass unless explicitly tested. They are nonetheless not recognised as human; devaluing mimetic excellence as an indicator of humanity in the replicants. This dismissal underlines the ulterior motif for the distinction.

Having outwardly overcome the uncanny valley effect, the differences between human and non-human copy are limited to emotional differences of dubious validity. In the absence of obvious physical or mental differences, human identity is declared an emotional one. To readers who likely define their own humanity beyond these very specific emotional minutiae, this is alienating. Especially considering the heavily gendered cultural associations a contemporary 1960s (and arguably a current reader, too) is likely to have with emotionality. It is certainly disconcerting to see one's own identity reduced to "capillary dilation in the facial area" (40) and "autonomic […] reaction to a morally shocking stimulus" (40), especially since we are unlikely to share the morality the text stipulates as the human base line. This is likely to level the reader against the text's human society and consequently facilitates sympathy with the androids. The text thus employs the same humanisation strategy made explicit and criticised in the text and redirects it onto its android characters in what can be read as a meta-reference to the artificial construction of empathy in art. This textual strategy is especially powerful since empathetic capabilities in the novel do not only define one's identity but also one's right to life and freedom: Replicants are slaves, and escaped ones on earth are executed on sight. The sanctity of life awarded to humans and animals is not extended towards artificial humans, who are rebelling against this demonstrably debatable distinction. Human society, however, has a vested economic and ideological interest in maintaining the status quo exempting androids from human community, empathy, and rights.

The text's focus on empathy as the battleground for its identity struggle is interesting; both within the text and on the aforementioned meta-level. In engaging the reader's empathy while and through thematising its character's empathetic processes or lack thereof the novel is able to emotionally and critically engage the recipient with the depicted world's identity production and through it, their own. The evocative potential art has on its recipient's empathetic processes has been part of critical discourse on the concept since the beginning; as Susanne

Schmetkamp and Magdalena Zorn describe in *Variationen des Mitfühlens: Empathie in Musik, Literatur, Film und Sprache*: *Einfühlung*, the original German term for empathy emerging around the turn of the 20th century, has its origins in art theory (cf. Schmetkamp et al 5); underlining the relevance of artistic depictions for our emotional perception of others, and ourselves. The collection details the emotional impact recognising each other as experiencing and feeling fellow humans (cf.7) has – in real life and in art. In their overview of current theories on empathy, Schmetkamp and Zorn repeatedly involve aesthetic and artistic perspectives on the critical discourse on empathy as a concept (cf.5ff.). Although scientific discourse on empathy has overall distanced itself from the aesthetic and turned towards mirror neurons and the social sciences, empathetic processes in art and literature continue to be relevant to researchers. Like the line between humans and replicants in the novel, the line between fictional and non-fictional emotional and social potential is often permeable.[166] Empathy with fictional representations of ourselves is a foundational function of art's mimetic nature.

Humanity's refusal to identify with its embodied self-representation in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* is interesting in this context. In the text, humanity displays a collective attitude against the replicants (and each other), indicating their empathic disconnection. The fictional societal refusal to acknowledge the artificial human's humanity, based on their artificial ontological distinction between the human and non-human characters clashes with the recipient's empathetic ability. The text thus thematises empathy by generating it. The comparison between reading and experiencing these processes are meaningful for our personal and societal concepts of humanity. The fictional discourse on humanity's boundaries thus affects how we perceive and conceptualise humanness in real life. This function is relevant for the larger context of this book: Whether and how something we experience through art influences, shapes, or even creates our real-life understanding of it is among the central questions this project considers. How does our emotional engagement in fictional versions of (artificial) humanity and feelings of empathy for them inform our perception of humanity beyond art and literature and shape reality?

166 As described by Nünning (see p.88) and in II.3.1.

The two homodiegetic narrators are presented as human and thus initially offer identifiable points of view on the novel's mimetic maze of authentic and non-authentic relations. They depict different parts of human society, live different lives, and have different relationships statuses but both convey the same desperation to connect and are denied this connection. They remain isolated, from each other, as well as the human and replicant characters they interact with. The textual structure and narrative perspective transport this characterisation by separating the internal focalisers chapter by chapter. This narrative detachment, from each other and other characters, creates spaces for their respective personal identity crises. In a text thus defined by isolation and instability, Rick Deckard's hunt for six escaped androids frames his sub-textual emotional journey. Since the peculiarities of the novel's world prohibit any certainty about the nature of anything, analysing Deckard's emotional condition proves complex. He isn't a character likely to be unreservedly empathised with. In this, the figure differs fundamentally from his filmic namesake (Ridley Scott, *Blade Runner*, 1982), who is written as a rough but likeable anti-hero figure. Dick's Deckard lacks the action hero's charm and the unchallenged sympathy of his readers, as he and his behaviours are rooted in a culture whose norms and values are inaccessible to the recipient. As an unhappily married man working to be able to afford a sheep, he is also unlikely to inspire the same allure Scott's version has. This Deckard, less pop-culturally potent yet more complex and of greater interest for the discussion at hand, does not differentiate between his authentic and artificially induced feelings. Initially, under the influence of the mood organ, he is secure in his human identity and feels validated in his job. The more time he spends away from the device, the heavier his identity crisis and subsequent depression are pronounced, until they culminate in a suicidal episode. Overall, his negative feelings seem to be authentic, while most positive and neutral moods must be induced. The text, through this and the general portrayal of his emotional descend, rejects the previous texts' claims of identity through love or productivity. Neither Deckard's work nor his relationships successfully stabilise his identity.

His marriage exhibits the textual dynamics between real and artificial emotions early on: Both partner's un-induced feelings of depression and contempt for each other are contained with artificial affection ("he dialed 594; pleased

acknowledgement of husband's superior wisdom in all matters" (5)). Marital disputes, too, are carried out through the mood organ:

> At his console he hesitated between dialing for a thalamic suppressant (which would abolish his mood of rage) or a thalamic stimulant (which would make him irked enough to win the argument).
> 'If you dial,' Iran said, eyes open and watching, 'for greater venom, then I'll dial the same I'll dial the maximum and you'll see a fight that makes every argument we've had up to now seem like nothing. Dial and see; just try me.' She rose swiftly, loped to the console of her own mood organ, stood glaring at him, waiting.
> He sighed, defeated by her threat. 'I'll dial what's on my schedule today. (2).

The interplay between the genuine irritation, threats of artificially induced greater anger, and the subsequent induction of positive emotions to avoid worse is exemplary for the text's complex and disorienting portrayal of human relationships: It demonstrates its complex entanglement of the authentic and the non-authentic. Since this entanglement is so extensive that even un-induced emotions are in causal relationships with induced ones, as well as the other way round, this can be read as a portrayal of possible in between statuses of authenticity. Emotions are impossible to classify outside of the larger context of their artificial and non-artificial motivations and triggers. Consequently, any attempts, by both characters and recipients, to accurately differentiate and categorise intents and emotions are futile. Genuine emotionality, artificial emotionality, artificial emotionality provoked by genuine feelings, and genuine feelings motivated by artificial moods all interact and determine each other. The text thus thematises the problem of authenticity through its portrayal of human emotionality.

These unclear and unstable boundaries between authentic and inauthentic emotionality in humans are symptomatic of the larger problem distinction poses in the text. Seeking tangible differences in empathetic behaviour between humans and androids reveals the same problem: boundaries are blurred and impede a conclusive, objective distinction. The internal focalisation offers subjective points of view characterised by isolation and dejection. Both narrators fail to emotionally connect in meaningful ways with replicants and humans alike. The novel's central question after the nature and significance of potential differences between humans and artificial humans thus remains unanswered. The text merely demonstrates the

convoluted nature of the debate and the fundamental problems with, as Dick himself has put it, “the dying bird of authentic humanness” (Dick 1972, 3).
Deckard’s interaction with the androids emphasises their emotional range.[167] Androids are artistically creative, they maintain friendships and relationships, and they actively strive for freedom and equality, implying self-recognition and self-preservative instincts. There is no doubt that they feel. In turn, human emotionality is at times depicted as an almost mechanical, physical process: “His adrenal gland, by degrees, ceased pumping it several secretions into his bloodstream; his heart slowed to normal, his breathing became less frantic.” (81). Passages like this, while further alienating the recipient, reconcile android and human bodies by framing both of them as machines. The physical differences in emotional production and expression between those machines are invisible to the naked eye. Additionally, they are applicable to humans with affective disorders (cf.32). Especially in the context of disability studies,[168] an android’s limited emotionality cannot inform a denial of their humanity, lest it should also be denied to those who experience emotion in a similar way.

Non-conformist emotionality is used several times to mislead both the characters’ and the reader’s identification processes. This underlines the general sense of instability and insecurity about identity throughout the text. Alongside the ever-present problems with identifying the authenticity of encountered animals, several characters’ identities are questioned, misjudged, and revealed as either artificial or human. Both processes demonstrate the opaque categorisation and general fragility of distinct human and android identities. The bounty hunter Resch, for example, is initially assumed to be human, since he acts as an ally to Deckard. He is later accused of being artificial by a recently revealed android and

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167 They display distaste (cf.34), conceitedness (cf.47), fondness (cf.116), glee (cf.127), affection (cf.128), bliss (cf.134) and fear (cf.136), among others.

168 The novel itself refers to people with schizoid conditions, although persons on the autism spectrum might also be of interest in this context. Jenny Bergermar, Hanna Bertilsdotter Rosqvist, and Ann-Sofie Lönngren have published on the subject; specifically the (self-)depiction of people with autism in literature: In “Autism and the Question of the Human”, they point towards the common dehumanisation people with autism face, because their emotional experiences and communications differ from normative emotionality. They describe their perceived “affective deficit” (204) and “failure of empathy” (204) as the basis on which their humanity is also judged. This supports the novel’s position that emotional capability can and is used to judge and categorise people. The text escalates this judgement to a scenario that equals not only the character’s worth but also their life to the conformity of their emotive ability.

proceeds to first vehemently defend himself, only to subsequently question his own identity. He asks to be tested by Deckard to confirm his humanity since he cannot be sure of it himself.

> 'I can't get over it,' Phil Resch said. 'It doesn't seem possible. For three years I have been working under the direction of androids. Why didn't I suspect- […] Or - I've been impregnated with a false memory system. […] But - […] Only androids show up with false memory systems […] 'Listen, Deckard,' he said suddenly. '[…] I want you to – 'His voice, husky and tormented, broke off. 'You know. Give me […] that empathy scale you have. To see about me.' (110ff.).

The possibility of synthetic memories amplifies the problems to distinguish between artificial and non-artificial humans and extends the deconstruction of identity towards the internal. One is no longer only concerned with the authenticity of others but also with one's own. The idea of not knowing ourselves in such a fundamental way necessarily affects readers. If memory is to be considered a vehicle of identity, then the possibility of false memories[169] further destabilises our self-perception as non-artificial. Humanity is framed as an artificial identity. Self-identification as human is thus effectively corrupted and a conceptual human identity further deconstructed. Thus, the self does not remain untouched by the uncertainty and instability affecting all aspects of life in the text.

The arguments used for and against Resch's humanity are of interest here: Deckard believes to have recognised an inhuman "pattern" (119) of unempathetic behaviour from Resch. He does not scrutinise his job the way Deckard increasingly does and displays a pleasure in killing androids he no longer feels. As soon as Deckard suspects the other to be an Other, his confirmation bias finds indicators for his artificiality. Resch's lack of empathy for the androids is here used as an argument to classify him as artificial; a somewhat hypocritical notion

169 Implementing false memories externally is an interesting play on the existing phenomenon of false memory syndrome. The term describes the mind's capability to form pseudo memories, or alter existing memories, either as a coping mechanism or by suggestion. The subject becomes convinced they remember an occurrence that has never happened. For further information on the subject see
Elizabeth Loftus. 1997. Creating False Memories. In: Scientific American. Vol 277, Nr. 3, Sep 1997. S. 70–75.
The existence of syndromes like these, and the general susceptibility of memory to retrospective influence (see for example the misinformation effect) reminds us that memory, one of the primary anchors of our identity and self-fashioning, is an inherently instable category. Literature has thematised this instability; for example in William Wordsworth's The Prelude. Wordsworth's autobiographical poem exists in several versions and offers different perspectives on episodes of the poet's life. The subtle and overt discrepancies between the way the memories are remembered, processed and depicted, reveal an engagement with the concept of memory and its influence on the story of the self the poet tells.

considering Deckard's profession and his lack of empathy up to this point. Resch in turn points to owning and emotionally relating to his animal to prove his humanness. Buffy the pet squirrel and their mutual affection for each other are meant to substantiate his identity and establish his human emotionality to Deckard (cf.111), who remains unconvinced. Human-animal relations provide too much potential for deception to consider them proof of humanity, after all.

Resch's assumedly authentic pet squirrel is a counterexample to Deckard's electric sheep; the ownership of which he describes as "the tyranny of an object" (36). He resents the artificial animal (cf.36), although he states that the nourishment of the electric sheep feels the same to him (cf.9) as with his previous authentic one. The "actual hatred" (36) for it, is explained by the one-sidedness of the emotive process. A relationship with an object cannot be reciprocal and it is this imbalance of affects that, to Deckard, renders the relationship distasteful. This notion towards artificial animals also informs the general human attitude towards androids. Among the reasons for the need to maintain a hierarchical relationship towards the copy is Deckard's perception that androids cannot or do not return any empathy extended towards them. This perception emphasises an idea I have already discussed in the context of "The Bicentennial Man": humanity as a group identity. Human identity can be interpreted as a reciprocal concept dependent on relations to and with each other. Emotionality is one of the vehicles that evince and communicate affiliation to this group, as well as a means to differentiate oneself from others. We are what we are – human – only in relation to those who are like us and distinguished from those who are not.

Fittingly, the culmination of Deckard's progressive empathetic development is his erratic relation to the android Rachael. He initially thinks her human, then identifies her as an android but believes she does not know this, rejects her offer of help, and afterward abruptly calls her to solicit sex,[170] after which she reveals that she is aware what she is and has manipulated Deckard. The novel traces the emergence and development of empathy for the replicants in him alongside this relationship. His initial rejection and their ultimate sexual relation

170 Sex with replicants is described as illegal (cf.124), as are "most variations in sex" (124), hinting towards a regulatory society characterised by a strict adherence to an established norm that punishes deviance. The clarifications that replicant mistresses exist anyways (cf.124) underlines how humanity, despite their refusal to classify androids as human, ascribe them with human gender roles.

mark two opposing points in it. Deckard's empathetic process exhibits a definitive gender bias that is evident throughout and through the textual depiction of female versus male androids. Both male focalisers describe solely the bodies and clothes of female androids in detail[171] and especially Deckard reflects early and thoroughly on his attraction to or critique of the artificial women's appearances (cf.83). Interestingly, he seems more attracted to the earlier mentioned Luba Luft, whose artistry he admires and whose death he is affected by, than to Rachael, who he ultimately consorts with. Although he post-coitally professes his inclination to marry her, "if [she] weren't an android" (171) and states his fresh conviction that she is biologically, if not legally alive, it is evident that he instrumentalises the android rather than form a genuine connection with her. He contacts her only after both an animal purchase and an attempt to connect emotionally to his wife fail to alleviate his crisis; after earlier stating that "[h]e could do better" (83) than her.

The novel's two main female characters share the same model body; an interesting parallel to *R.U.R.*, in which the only two female characters share a name. This corporeal connection between Rachael and Pris, the respective (failed) love interests of the two male focalisers, adds additional, gendered, layers to the text's mimetic complex and further obfuscates its emotional relations. The choice adds another angle to the text's exploration of human emotionality: How does corporeal seriality influence interpersonal relationships? Does the absence of physical individuality also entail an absence of potential personal bonding? Can our emotional relation to a person be completely separated from how we physically relate to them; sexual or otherwise? While the text does not ultimately give a satisfactory answer to this conundrum, Deckard's inner turmoil when confronted with a body that is identical to Rachael, yet not her, draws an interesting connection between emotionally and corporeally based approaches to humanity. The text here echoes both notions on the body as an identifier of personality as portrayed in *Frankenstein*, and the objectification of female androids as detailed in the Pygmalion myth. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* develops the formers' definitive effect of corporality on access to humanity beyond the monstrous and instrumentalises it for a whole, dystopian

171 See for example 33/4 and 54, where the male focalisers meet their android love interests for the first time as opposed to the much more sparingly or complete lack of physical description of the male androids.

society. It offers an intriguing portrait of unchanged humanity in a changed world; still holding on to its identities' (corporeal) boundaries in a future functionally devoid of them. Furthermore, the specific doubling of the female-assigned artificial body, no matter whether it is a Galatea or a Pris-Rachael, implies questions of individuality and the subject status of an object in the context of gender.[172]

The lack of android focalisation can be read as a textual means to imply their lack of valid humanity and thus perspective. Alternatively, it serves to underline that humanity is not aware of and does not accept the validity of such a perspective. The text's narrative situation and discourse thus transport the cognitive dissonance evoked by the artificial adherence to an obsolete human identity and dissociation from its mimetic Others onto the reader. Rachael's textual presence, for example, is dominated by Deckard's depersonalising descriptions and judgement of her artificial body. Her own words echo his thoughts, accentuating a disconnection their physical intimacy cannot bridge: [173]

> 'Androids can't bear children,' she said, then. 'Is that a loss?'
> He finished undressing her. Exposing her pale, cold loins. […] 'I don't really know; I have no way to tell. How does it feel to have a child? How does it feel to be born, for that matter? […] Ants again; that's what we are. Not you; I mean me. Chitinous reflex-machines who aren't really alive.' […] '*I'm not alive!* You're not going to bed with a woman. Don't be disappointed; okay? Have you ever made love to an android before?'
> 'No,' he said, taking off his shirt and tie. (168, original emphasis).[174]

Deckard's failure to connect to her, to bond over their shared identity crises, or to engage with her words at all, also uphold the recipient's distance to her inner workings. This further exacerbates any attempts to interpret the character's actions

172 I discuss this issue in more detail in II.3.1.

173 Interpreting the depiction of interpersonal relationships here and throughout the novel must also take period-typical gender-stereotyping into consideration. The lack of female perspective, as well as the constant objectification of female characters by male focalisers may well be at least partly due to external cultural influences on the text. Matters of consent and comments on the "childlike" (162) body of sexual conquests may be both significant for the characterisation of Deckard and products of the text's production and publication period.

174 The scene also features the temperature motif present throughout the text. Androids are repeatedly described as cold, from their loins to their tears (cf.130), while humans are associated with warmth (cf.113). However, like all boundaries in the text, this consistency, too, is dissolved towards the end, when androids, too, are described as warm (134/5). Their warmth, however, could be interpreted as artificial, since the affection portrayed here is likely a pretence. Furthermore, the scene features the infertility motif previously discussed in the context of *R.U.R.* and *Frankenstein*. Procreation as a humanising quality and infertility as de-humanising can be identified as recurring motifs in the discourse as well.

and classify her emotional relationship to the focaliser. As she admits to deceiving Deckard, her motivation remains as much a mystery to the reader as to Deckard. They share the progressive sense of perturbation the text's ubiquitous ambiguity facilitates. Rachael's indifference towards Deckard after her successful manipulation of his emotive capabilities can be read as pointing towards her inadequate artificial emotionality or merely be mirroring his indifference to her. The text deliberately does not resolve this, or any other interpersonal conflicts, resulting in a general sense of disorientation in the novel.

The ambiguity adds to the general sense of uncertainty and the inability to properly delineate the authentic from the non-authentic throughout the novel. Alongside species, sense of self, social relationships, and general emotionality, love, too is portrayed as questionable, uncertain, and lacking definiteness. The concept of artificially induced love further dissolves the characters' emotional framework and any indications to distinguish between authentic and non-authentic emotionality – or humanity. The text thereby subverts the previous examples' gendered emotional hierarchy. The Pygmalion myth and *R.U.R.* both represented a narrative according to which female android's emotions appear a product of male emotional agency. Male lovers, human and android alike, determine female android's emotionality and consequently humanity. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* reverses this topos and puts its female androids in a position of power over Deckard's emotional awakening. Luba and Rachael cause and perpetuate Deckard's empathy towards replicants and undermine his professional, human, and also his gender identity. The earlier cited Jordana Greenblatt, too, assesses the character's continuous emotional and existential crisis as a struggle with gender as much as with human identity and criticises approaches which do not take the paradoxical relationship between masculinity, emotionality, and humanity into consideration:

> To understand this anxiety as one of *general* human identity assumes that Western Man is the default human, an assumption implicit in John Byron's question – 'What does it mean for *a man* to discover that he is in fact a machine?' - in an article that, like many others, purports to explore a general, ungendered, and colourblind crisis of human authenticity (61 emphasis added). While Byron insightfully elucidates *Blade Runner's* challenge to the notion of the 'authentically' human, he nevertheless, like most critics, fails to disaggregate 'humanity' from the specific historical self-framing of white Western men. Stories that mark uncannily human-like synthetic humans via affective lack represent not a crisis of human identity but a crisis of normative masculinity. (2016, 44, original emphasis).

This added level of identity deconstruction and the text's break with traditional emotional hierarchies leaves the reader amidst a nearly absolute deconstruction of human emotionality, human relationships, and human identity.

Following the earlier mentioned understanding of deconstruction in the Derridean sense, the text discusses emotionality and its relation to the current cultural construct of humanity. It questions the existence of the essentially 'human' and demonstrates the lengths to which a fictional humanity would have to go to uphold it. Humanity's mimetic Other is utilised to illustrate the futility of essentialist distinction. The deconstructionist approach works twofold: within the text itself, as its aimlessness, intangibility, and ambivalence demonstrate, and as a reading technique. An aporetic reading of the text harnesses its tendency to thematise questions and refuse a fixed position on them, instead of trying to overcome it. It leaves hermeneutic specifics behind, in favour of thematising the subversion of humanity as a definable concept the text attempts, taking it as it is. The novel does not arrive at a conclusion on what humanity is and what defines it, because we, featherless bipeds that we still are for lack of a better definition, are inherently fickle and our identity contradictory. Consequently, the text itself is contradictory, too. It deconstructs, rather than defines humanity.

This deconstruction goes as far as questioning its protagonist's human identity:

> 'An android,' he said, 'doesn't care about what happens to another android. That's one of the indications we look for.'
> 'Then,' Miss Luft said, 'you must be an android.'
> That stopped him; he stared at her. (88).

And later: "'Maybe you're an android,' Officer Crams said. 'With a false memory, like they give them. Had you thought of that?'" (96). Both instances are ignored by Deckard; he diverts the discussion instead of engaging the idea. The question is not explored further,[175] in part, because at this point the validity and

175 The film, depending on the cut, arguably dives deeper into the suggestion that Deckard may not be human. Interestingly, director and actor disagree on the question. See: <https://english.alarabiya.net/life-style/entertainment/2017/09/27/EXCLUSIVE-Harrison-Ford-explains-why-he-s-done-arguing-over-Blade-Runner> (last accessed 26/04/21).
In the interview Harrison Ford draws a connection between the audiences ability to emphasise and perceived humanity as am abstract quality:
"'But you wanted him to be human,' I say. 'So I want to ask why. Why do you find the character more interesting if he's a human than if he's a replicant?' 'I thought the audience might enjoy having one person on screen that they can count on to be their emotional proxy for those

authenticity of human identity as such has already been thoroughly questioned and is going to be challenged further. Whether any of the characters are human or not is ultimately meaningless, because there exist no concrete, observable boundaries that allow the characters themselves or the readers to accurately distinguish between humans and androids. The suggested categories for humanness are as artificial as everything else in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* and their fulfilment or non-fulfilment are of no real consequence for the text. Alongside its ontological boundaries, its characters and world are thus joined in symbolic progressive deterioration.

The author has later also situated this development, which he described as machines becoming more animate and humans becoming more inanimate (cf. Dick 1972, 11), extra-textually: Dick states that the "tendency of the so-called primitive mind to animate its environment" (Dick 1972, 9), combined with authoritarian endeavours to instrumentalise citizens, has led to assimilation. This mindset conveys the same political background detailed earlier; connecting the novel's worldbuilding to contemporary American politics still shaped by the draft into the Vietnam War and the arguably aggressively patriotic culture of the Cold War. The military machine and its disastrous effect on human life, human individuality, and humanity itself, not surprisingly gives birth to a critical discourse likening man and machine. Dick goes as far as to question whether something specifically human exists (cf. Dick 1972, 11) and asserts that the "constructs do not mimic humans; they are in many deep ways, actually human already." (Dick 1972, 10). These musings are part of a larger reflection on how humanity can be considered through its creations and, consequently, our creations can be considered through us. These reflections hint at my general aim in this book, in which the framework of human identity is analysed via its artistic projection of artificial versions of itself. Our emotional properties and our properties' emotions are a productive part of this analysis.

In this context it is of interest that the novel does not portray Deckard's empathetic formation as a positive experience. His ability to empathise with

circumstances and then they would have an emotional relationship,' Ford says. […] 'What I didn't count on was the poetic potential of having that kind of emotional context with somebody that you didn't know was a replicant or not,' Ford tells me. It may have been the replicants all along who the audience should have connected with. 'In fact, as a line of dialogue said in the original film, there's the potential for replicants to be more human than human,' Ford says.".

artificial humans elicits his personal crisis by making him reflect on the instable boundaries that delineate humanity as a concept and results in a suicidal episode. Deckard is unwilling to kill more androids after sleeping with Racheal; an unwillingness first expressed after Luba Luft's death (cf.118). He retires Rachael as a reaction to her admitting to manipulating him, which frames it as an emotionally motivated act. The text presents Deckard's empathetic progress as generally detrimental to his mental and emotional health. Any action he takes based on empathy only escalates his suffering. His increasing ability to feel for and feel with does not benefit Deckard, nor has it heightened his humanness. Instead, his empathy facilitates an apathetic acceptance of death as a consequence of learning that Rachael has killed the animal "[he] love[s] more than [her]" (175). In the desert, during a live experience reminiscent of the simulated fusion in empathy boxes, he is ultimately able to not only empathise but also identify himself with others. Identification with others is here treated as the ultimate form of empathy; an ability that only increases his apathy: "what I've done, he thought; has become alien to me. In fact everything about me has become unnatural. I've become an unnatural self." (201). The constant, progressive deconstruction of human identity has left Deckard unstable and the ability to occupy other's perspectives only perpetuates this instability.

Notably, what helps him overcome this episode is another animal: a toad believed to be extinct. The fact that the toad is later revealed to be electric isn't detrimental to its emotional effect on Deckard, who reacts, or rather does not react, to this final reveal by going to sleep. The metaphoric qualities of the toad in the desert – "not aware of its existence […] carefully buried up to its forehead in the carcass of a dead world […] inconspicuous life." (208ff.) – apply to both humans and androids: Humans, enduring in a deadly habitat, and the android, unobtrusively alive, are both unaware of the nature of their identity. The toad – the animal George Orwell once equated to spring[176] – can be read as a symbol for the android as new life on a dead planet, mirroring *R.U.R.*'s scenario. Alternatively, it can be interpreted as a final deception and testament to meaninglessness and inauthenticity in the text. Its ambiguous appearance fittingly

176 In "Some Thoughts on the Common Toad" <https://www.orwellfoundation.com/the-orwell-foundation/orwell/essays-and-other-works/some-thoughts-on-the-common-toad/> (last accessed 26/04/21).

rounds off the contrived nature of the boundaries between the artificial and the authentic depicted in the text. The deconstruction is complete.

The counter draft to the catastrophic effects of empathy on Deckard's person is the text's second focaliser, John Isidore. As a social outcast, his relationships with other humans are even more scarce and humiliating than Deckard's. He self-describes as effectively having "ceased to be part of mankind" (13). This makes him an unlikely candidate for reader-identification as well; leaving the novel without commonly appealing perspectives. His dehumanisation contrasts with his pronounced empathetic abilities: As mentioned earlier, Isidore does not effectively differentiate between feeling for something authentic or non-authentic; be it cats or androids. His reaction to the androids' officially non-human and illegal status is "But what does it matter to me? I mean, I'm a special; they don't treat me very well either" (142), underlining his ability to empathise and identify with Others. Isidore's position in a world where empathy supposedly is the essential humanising quality is a contradiction meant to underline the category's artificiality. This is supported by society's reaction to Isidore's resurrective mutation: the ability to raise animals from the dead is not celebrated but rendered dysfunctional via a forced operation and only mentioned in passing. This emphasises the hypocrisy that characterises the portrayed human society and identity: empathy with animals is lauded as the definitive human quality but simultaneously reduced to a commercialised performance that is not of societal value in itself but only acceptable proof of humanity if it functions within privileged, capitalist structures. An empath like Isidore cannot profit from his altruistic emotionality, showing how the artificial performance of empathy is valued higher than emotionality as an end in itself. This is also shown by contrasting Deckard's clinical purchase of animals with Isidore's honest affection and care, irrespective of the reciprocity Deckard insists on.[177] His altruistic intent and genuine empathy make him the likeliest figure to emotionally engage recipients.

177 Deckard's "automatic response" (35) to any interaction with an animal is to check their market value. His relationship to them is characterised by the social buoyancy he associates with them. He hierarchises animals according to prestige (cf.10). Isidore is not concerned with social or monetary value of an animal; he emotionally relates to the individual creature. His affection is automatic, in the same way Deckard's appraisal is. Deckard's relationship with animals is conditional, while Isidore's is unconditional.

He is portrayed as a lonely, somewhat naïve pushover, but his honest care for every living thing betrays a disregard for artificial boundaries between the authentic and the non-authentic that textually links him to the spiritual figure Mercer.[178] In *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* religion is used as another social vehicle to establish a communal human identity through empathy. The text also portrays the associated ritual as another means to ostracise the replicants from what defines humanity according to the text's human society. This function is curiously incongruent with Mercer himself, who, when manifesting in person towards the end of the text, professes a somewhat nihilistic outlook on life. To him, nothing, including morality is of real consequence (cf.187) and conflicts of identity are non-existent because "[i]t is the basic condition of life, to be required to violate your own identity." (155). His central message remains "you aren't alone." (155), focusing on community and inclusion as his essential values. His philosophy neither excludes artificial humans, nor specials. As Deckard later states: "For Mercer everything is easy [...] because Mercer accepts everything. Nothing is alien to him" (201). Deckard also notes how Mercer's philosophy results in accessible immortality (cf.206). Thus, Mercerism – diametrically opposite to how the novel's humans use it – argues an empathetically shared and inclusive human identity that does not categorise and hierarchise but instead treats humanity as a group identity that surpasses and survives individuals.[179] Towards the end of the text Mercer's manifestations, as well as Isidore's vision of the tomb world and Deckard's live-fusion with Mercer extend the text's theme of deconstruction towards the fabric of reality. These sequences can be interpreted as products of Deckard's physical exhaustion (at this point he is overtired and dehydrated) and Isidore's disability, or they can be read as progressive dissolution

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178 Both Mercer and Isidore have resurrecting abilities (cf.19/20 and 186/7), and Mercer states that he inhabits Isidore's building (cf.193), suggesting a connection between the two characters that is repeatedly hinted at. Isidore, "more special than any other special" (20), is a clearly exceptional figure, whose spiritual and emotional distinctiveness is however never explored conclusively and instead leaves another loose textual thread. This is one example of many suggesting that the novel conveys as much through the things it does not show, as through what its actually depicts.

179 It is noteworthy that Mercerist philosophy, much like anything resembling a concrete position conveyed by the text, is merely mentioned in passing. It is portrayed as contradictory and, especially towards the end of the book, not always reliably perceived by the progressively physically and emotionally exhausted characters. The text is generally not interested in unambiguous answers to its questions but rather provides a complex nexus of ideas and impressions meant to question established notions on human identity, authenticity and reality.

affecting not only human culture, habitat, and identity but also their sense of reality. This stance was later echoed by the author, when he confessed to "never [having] had too high a regard for what is generally called 'reality'" (Dick 1972, 23). Dick states that reality is not objectively perceived but constructed by a plurality of perspectives:

> the world of the future, to me, is not a place, but an event. A construct, not by one author in the form of words written to make up a novel or a story that other persons sit in front of, outside of, and read – but a construct in which there is no author and no readers but a great many characters in search of  a plot. Well, there is no plot. There is only themselves and what they do and say to each other, what they built to sustain all of them individually and collectively (1972, 23).

It can therefore be argued that the author rejects boundaries in favour of communal and collective pursuits and ushers humanity to denounce individual constructs of reality and identity through the Mercer figure in the text.

Isidore's interaction with the android characters depicts them in a different light and adds nuance to their characterisation. While Deckard's experiences focus on parallels between his own crisis-shaken identity and the android's, Isidore's dominant quality, empathy, is contrasted with the android's cruelty. They are shown to exploit his affectionate and submissive nature; an impression that culminates in them torturing a spider in front of him.

> 'All those legs. Why's it need so many legs, J.R..? […]
> Rising to her feet, Pris said, 'You know what I think, J.R.? I think it doesn't need all those legs.'
> 'Eight?' Irmgard Baty said. 'Why couldn't it get by on four? Cut four off and see.' Impulsively opening her purse she produced a pair of clean, sharp cuticle scissors, which she passed to Pris.
> […] It probably won't be able to run as fast,' she said, 'but [i]t'll die anyway.
> […] 'Please,' Isidore said.
> Pris glanced up inquiringly. 'Is it worth something?'
> 'Don't mutilate it,' he said wheezingly. Imploringly.
> With the scissors Pris snipped off one of the spider's legs. […] She was smiling. […]
> With the scissors Pris snipped off another of spider's legs. 'Four now,' she said. She nudged the spider. 'He won't go. But he can.'
> Roy Baty appeared at the doorway […] 'I can make it walk.' Roy Baty got out a book of matches, lit a match; he held it near the spider, closer and closer, until at last it crept feebly away.
> 'I was right,' Irmgard said. 'Didn't I say it could walk with four legs?' (179-183).

The scene is interwoven with the TV announcement revealing the joint hill climb of Mercerism as a pre-filmed Hollywood production and consequently questioning whether the empathy human believers feel with Mercer's suffering is authentic. Both actions, the invalidation of human empathy and the invalidation of

the spider's need for all its natural legs, are metaphorically connected. If the spider can walk without its legs, then artificial humanity can function and be valid without the emotional abilities humanity claims are inaccessible to them. The text repeatedly uses animals as metaphors for replicants and the general problem of differentiating between template and copy. Both the initial owl and the concluding toad are artificial beings but illustrate how interchangeably these identities are, especially in relation to others. The androids experience emotions and they are emotionally involved in striving for freedom and human recognition. It is mentioned that they have experimented with chemically inducing empathy (cf.160). Since this has failed, they attempt to discredit the way humanity currently experiences their defining emotion. Interestingly, the reveal of Mercer as a self-admitted fraud is indeed successful but remains entirely without consequences in the text. This further emphasises the futility of these categories. The mutilation of the spider, too, remains without consequences, since it is promptly healed. Interestingly, the scene does characterise the replicants as un-empathetic, like Luba Luft's statements and Rachael's behaviour have done before. The text, however, refrains from an unambiguous characterisation: it is unclear whether the lack of empathy for Isidore and the spider are a character or a design flaw and consequently a result of their oppression or creation by humans. It can thus be argued that the image of the androids torturing the spider merely mirrors the human torture of androids, as the creator violently punishes their creation for its deliberate limitations.

Ultimately, the novel's characters all reject each other emotionally: Deckard rejects the whole experience by going to sleep. His affection for Rachael is rejected, just like he rejects the replicant's humanity and fails to reject the artificial social hierarchy segregating artificial and non-artificial entities. The androids are rejected by humanity at large and, in turn, they reject and use Isidore's affection and solidarity. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* offers glimpses into humanity's need for community and the potential of an inclusive human identity but ultimately arrives at a bleak and dystopian perspective onto our tendency for hypocrisy and the preservation of obsolete boundaries that benefit us. The text's open end and the cluster of unresolved hints and loose threads take its theme – the deconstruction of human identity – to its logical,

formal conclusion: nothing is resolved. The collapsing habitat, sociality, and identity of an almost extinct humanity are mirrored by a collapsing textual structure. In the end, there is no conclusion concerning reality, humanity, or the plot.

In summary, the text successfully challenges not only the existence of one authentic and inherent human identity but also questions and disputes the validity and practicality of all its conceptual cornerstones. Humanity and emotionality are jointly and progressively compromised; leading to a non-conclusion meant to leave the recipient as direction- and identity-less as the characters – artificial and non-artificial alike. Instead, the text underlines the futility of such ontological categorisation by leading its protagonists on a textual and existential chase after the boundaries of humanity, only to blur, invalidate, and deconstruct all of them. This culminates in the utter extinction of authenticity and destabilisation of human identity. This central theme is introduced early and subtly by the statement "I never killed a human being in my life" (1); something Rick Deckard says on the very first page of the novel. What follows neither contradicts nor supports his claim; a conundrum that is intentionally not resolved and underlines the novel's central conflict. Though the text refrains from making definitive judgements, it so thoroughly deconstructs any and all boundaries between artificial humans and those that consider themselves 'real' that the differences between murder and retirement must be considered untenable. After all, what really constitutes real-ness? The boundaries between the authentic and the – supposedly – inauthentic are revealed to be so profusely insubstantial that any distinction can be considered artificial in itself. Here humanity is neither abstracted nor idealised. Instead, it is dismantled and questioned, to a point where it can be claimed that for the intents and purposes of the text, humanity as such does not exist. It can certainly be asserted that it does not exist in distinction of an artificial humanity and that any hierarchical categorisation of them is constructed not inherently given. Thus, the concept of humanity is eroded and dies, before the backdrop of the species' fictional extinction.

And yet, it remains an undeniable presence within the text. It takes on new forms and finds new facets in order to survive. Isidore's humanity is shaped by his need for community and acceptance and is thus inclusive to a fault. Deckard's

journey can be described as his search for humanity; both in others and himself. Even the androids are attempting to replicate human emotionality in themselves. Whether they try to do so via drugs (cf.160) or by rejecting their android identity and assuming a human one (cf.116): humanity remains the objective.

The central role emotionality plays in defining this objective is remarkable. Instead of corporality, or more intangible, stylised emotions like the often-convened love, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* uses empathy as the defining quality of humanness. The irony of evoking empathy as a universal human trait in a setting shaped by self-inflicted dystopian fallout and decaying human relationships is palpable. The choice contrasts humanity's self-proclaimed communal group identity with the reality of hierarchical oppression, social rejection, and interpersonal failure. This fictional hypocrisy is not so far removed from inconsistencies between our own social ideals and reality that it would not ring true to a reader so inclined. Many issues, conflicts, and insecurities thematised in the novel are reminiscent of cultural and societal tensions meant to illustrate and be illustrated by what we read here. Our own lack of empathy, artificial hierarchisation, and overvaluation of abstract, dividing concepts instead of the community are unfolded within the novel's metaphoric setting. Dick's portrayal rejects the idea of one superior human emotionality. Instead, the supposed divide between artificial and non-artificial humans is bridged by their mutual lack of authenticity and their empathetic failures. The approach is unusual in that, instead of electing a quality, showing androids achieve it and thus proving themselves human, the novel uses a lack of something, a human flaw, to align humans to androids. Human imperfection is here utilised to show that artificial humanity is a faithful human self-portrait and thus any hierarchisation between its artificial and non-artificial versions futile. It is an appeal to strength in a community beyond boundaries.

So, do androids dream of electric sheep? It is worth noting that the question asked here is not a medical question. Its intent is not to explore possible brain activity during REM phases in artificial humans. Its interest lies in the android's capability to dream in a more abstract, emotional sense, beyond the physical. When it is asked by Deckard (cf.160), he concedes that androids must indeed be able to aspire to a better life, as evidenced by their flight to earth. In this context, to

dream is to feel, unconsciously, involuntarily, and irrationally. The question is therefore really after the nature of android's emotionality. Do androids dream, do they fantasise, do they imagine? If so, what do they dream of? What drives them and is it the same that drives us? Dick has remarked on android desire that "if a falling stone could reason, it would think 'I want to fall at the rate of 32 feet per second per second.'" (1972, 11). He thus problematises our capability to judge non-human ambition and, within the same argument, also questions whether human desires, too, are an illusion, originating from unconscious drives and "built-in tropisms" (1972, 11). Once again, Dick manages to challenge human perceptions and perspectives, both on themselves and their artificial creations. In this context, the titular electric sheep can be read as a para-textual hint at the novel's preoccupation with the authenticity-inauthenticity dynamic. By evoking the object symbolising both human desire and human fear in the novel (emotional bonding and in-authenticity), the question combines the text's central themes into one para-textual allusion. It ultimately gives no definitive answer to them, preferring to suggest and invoke instead of declaring a position, and ultimately deconstructing the very concept it so persistently evokes. In this, the text stays true to its author's request: "We should be content with the mysterious, the meaningless, the contradictory, the hostile" (Dick 1972, 25).

When looking at ourselves, it can be challenging to accurately assess what we see. To differentiate between self-constructed narratives and sound analysis in self-reflection is near impossible without an outside perspective. In the words of Mercer: "You are too close. […] You have to be a long way off, the way the androids are. They have the better perspective." (187). Just like Isidore cannot see whether the sky is real or not, we cannot truly see ourselves without assistance. In order to identify the brushstrokes and reveal the truth, we create a different perspective: the artificial human. A counterpart to accurately reflect us. A mirror to study ourselves in. A copy to test ourselves against. In the case of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* humanity fails this test. The boundaries, long since blurred, are here dismantled in favour of an inclusive identity conscious of a bigger picture than our own. We fail alongside our recreations and in this failure, we cease to exist in distinction of it.

### II.2.5 Belonging to Each Other: Conclusions on Emotionality

A creation, a replacement, and another deconstruction: Exploring human emotionality in art through artificial human figures has created a space where the effect of isolated emotions on conceptional humanity can be analysed on a blank slate. The android allows me to try and determine the boundaries and definite points where the human narrative begins and ends; how it is constructed and through what. Instead of depicting how emotionality affects human characters who are affected by bias and already shaped by emotionality, the android once again provides a projection surface for a discussion on what emotional qualities define humanness.

The examples I have analysed in this chapter highlight several recurring themes and their development grant insight into what aspects of emotionality are prominent in artistic narratives on humanness. First and foremost, human emotionality is prominently explored by at least including, if not focusing on love as a representative for the entirety of humanity's emotional identity. Depicting humanity thus becomes an exercise in depicting inter-human relationships. Depictions of what we feel are often defined by what we feel for each other. In some form or other, heteronormative, romantic love and sexuality motivate and legitimise humanisation in all chosen examples. This interweaves notions on human emotionality with gender dynamics and interconnects it with my previous thoughts on corporality, as well as the upcoming considerations on sociality.

The dynamic between human and artificially human figures is of particular interest for this analysis: Ovid's text offers a heterodiegetic perspective on a human, male protagonist creating himself a personal, artificial woman. The myth combines creator creation dynamics with heavily gendered relations between mimetic copy and reference. Pygmalion is representative of a still culturally influential ideal of male love that informs our cultural practice of an emotion most essential for the human narrative. The myth presents a relationship with hierarchical power dynamics and clearly gendered agency discrepancies. Notably, his female creation's reciprocity, though implied in some of the visual artworks analysed, is insignificant in Ovid's version. In it, love functions as a means to express male artistic agency and power, the female android an object reflecting his

artistic might. In this, the chapter's findings confirm the deterministic presence of gender in most texts analysed so far and demonstrates potential discriminatory effects an emotional definition of humanity can have. Pygmalion's reception is shaped by gender dynamics between creator and creation that are still evident in android art to this day. These dynamics are echoed, for example, through discourses on male creativity as asexual self-reproduction, as discussed in the context of *Frankenstein* and *R.U.R.* While historic and current receptions almost all heavily sanitise Ovid's nuanced characterisation and satire of the figure, re-tellings are dominated by emotionality as a main theme. Love functions as both a creative source of power and a potentially exclusionary force that divides according to gender, and potentially colour. The myth thus utilises emotionality not as a quality the artificial human figure has agency over but a (male) human quality, substantiating creative might by humanising creative objects. Consequently, humanness remains a resource controlled by (some) humans and can be extended to products of human ingenuity and mimetic excellence at their convenience. Human retains a monopoly on humanity, regulated only by divine power. His mimetic creation remains at his bidding.

In *R.U.R.*, humanity has lost this monopoly and is replaced by its artificial successors. The human-centric power structure is, however, still present in the drama: While humanity is penalised for their loss of economic productivity with a loss of identity symbolised by infertility, it is still humanity that creates and emotionally enables their robotic successors. The ability to love is presented as a result of human design. Regarding this, *R.U.R.* shows parallels to the Pygmalion myth. The drama develops the motif, in that it is not a private companion that is created but a whole production force, and (male) humanity is punished instead of rewarded for its creative power. Nevertheless, humanness has remained something that is bestowed by humans onto their creation, and love is lauded as the ultimate human quality. The portrayed humanisation establishes the inclusive potential an emotional human identity has, as it demonstrates how the non-human can be legitimised as part of humanity through emotionality. Achieving the ability to love institutes the robots as a functioning replacement for a defunct human race. *R.U.R.* furthermore distributes (emotional) agency in a similarly gendered manner as the earlier example: It is evident that, artificial or non-artificial, the male figure

remains the active humanising force, while female figures are depicted as passive-receptive. Rather than a single artist-lover, *R.U.R.* establishes the humanisation through emotionality via the male scientist designing the emotionally capable robots and the male-assigned robotic Adam figure. The novel does partially mitigate the purely male monopoly on emotional agency by describing human Helena as a driving force behind the male scientist's emotionally capable design; granting if not agency at least access to the creative process. Like in the Pygmalion myth, love is portrayed as legitimising human identity: in one case human man legitimises artificial woman, in the other artificial man legitimises artificial woman through it. The two examples exhibit how the same topos can evolve to enter different nuances and positions into a shared discourse: emotionality can be both divisive, regarding its gendered power-dynamics, and inclusive, regarding its ability to humanise non-human figures. This duality exemplifies the verifiable presence of influential, recurring trends in android art that stabilise a nuanced and long-lasting artistic narrative.

*Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* takes up these same trends and challenges the narrative. Both human male protagonists remain very limited in their agency and are subject to crises and internal conflict. The female characters are not mere subjects to their abilities but act as fully fledged figures capable of rejection and manipulation for own motivations: Neither Deckard's human spouse nor his replicant affair fulfil his projections on them, thereby rejecting the dominant narrative and their established, gendered function. Deckard objectifies the female androids but holds no power over them beyond what power he exercises over all replicants: retirement. Thus, the figure functions as an anti-creator figure, contrasting with the previous creatively empowered male figures. The familiar gender dynamic is partially reversed, as Luba and Rachael exercise emotional power over Deckard and Pris demonstrates agency over Isidore. Despite this dynamic, humans and replicants, females and males are all united in a world of emotional dead-ends and a powerlessness over their identity. The text thus rejects both emotionality's inclusive, humanising potential and its divisive, exclusionary function by joining human and artificial human characters through failed emotionality. Like *R.U.R.*'s humans, both are and remain isolated and infertile; emotionally and corporeally. The text emphasises this by writing Isidore

as the only character who would potentially be creatively powerful but is artificially prohibited from enacting his creative agency by what can be read as a creative castration. Additionally, humanity collectively rejects the possibility of enabling their mimetic offspring, the replicants emotionally, thereby deliberately renouncing the creative agency established in the Pygmalion myth and *R.U.R.* Instead, the replicants seek emotional growth out of their own volition, seizing agency and undermining the established hierarchy. This in turn shows parallels to human's creative and mimetic failure and the subsequent revenge of the creation in *Frankenstein*. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, however, lacks the clear warnings both *Frankenstein* and *R.U.R* utilised their failed creator figures for. The replicants' revolt, too, is ultimately meaningless, the text's challenge to human identity remains unanswered and unresolved. Dick's text evokes and echoes established motifs but rejects their traditional function as either cautionary tale or conceptualisation of humanity. Instead, the novel combines them into the dystopian deconstruction of the genre and, by extension, human identity itself. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* depicts an emotionally stunted and consequently de-humanised world. Here, the deconstruction of authenticity permeates any and all aspects of life and love is just another thing pervaded by artificiality, falsification, and mistrust. With the possible exception of a short glimpse of kindness by Deckard's wife at the novel's conclusion, which only underlines the otherwise complete absence of affection, genuine love in the text. It also lacks both Pygmalion's triumph and *R.U.R.*'s explicit renewal: extinction is here neither mitigated nor productive. What remains is the deconstruction of all boundaries between human and artificial human and the implication that a boundary is consequently inherently insignificant. Creator and creation are united in their emotional failures.

Overall, romantic love functions as a *pars pro toto* of human emotionality in the texts. In a large part of art concerned with humanity as a concept, love is meant to symbolise a sanitised version of the broader emotional spectrum humanity possesses. Our capability to love, freed from its less romanticise-able aspects, becomes our essential humaniser. It represents the canny in uncanny worlds; allowing us to recognise (or project recognition) and thereby distinguish the indistinguishable. It can create both an identity and an Other to separate from

it. This process leaves love as an abstract, almost alienated concept meant to function within the framework of a textual stylisation and evocation. The lack of tangibility and a concrete strategy to understanding emotionality leaves us with templates and symbolic takes. Love becomes an idealistic, associative construct that is utilised according to its cultural value, rather than within a realistic, meaningful depiction. The android, too, is a symbol and consequently endowed with symbolic takes on humanity and human emotionality. Love for and between artificial humans is thus often idealised and lacks realistic flaws. When it is not, like in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, the depiction sheds clear and distinct notions on humanity, resulting in a more ambiguous, less precise, but perhaps more inclusive and realistic impression of what humanity is, or could be. Much like in the case of the 'human', the *différance* between 'love', the signifier, and the signified is substantial. In short: depicting idealised, symbolic emotionality results in an idealised and conceptual depiction of humanity; lacking depth and omitting more complex, less definite aspects in favour of a clear answer to an otherwise unanswerable question.

*R.U.R.* is a good example of this process. The text, presenting a distinct problem and defined human failure, must in turn present a tangible category in which the new and improved version transcends the mimetic template. Love functions as a symbol for human emotional capability in general and represents the legitimising qualities of empathy, altruism, affection, and heternormative, emotional bonding: Love, the great humaniser. Ovid's Pygmalion myth in turn presents, and possibly satirises, an idealised version of male love enabling creative power. Interestingly, this results in creating idealised womanhood, contrasted with flawed conventional women, a notion I will revisit in II.3.2. There are parallels to Shelley's creative figure, though she, of course, depicts his catastrophic failure, rather than success, something that connects *Frankenstein* and *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*. Nevertheless, both Pygmalion and *R.U.R.*'s humans seek to improve humanity (in Pygmalion's case only the female half) and create an idealised mimetic copy of a human being (in *R.U.R*'s case economically idealised). Human might creates life in both cases and in both cases emotionality functions as a catalyst. Whether it is Frankenstein's hubris or Pygmalion's desire, a large number of texts prioritise emotions in their depictions. Emotionality equals

creativity and begets humanity. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* questions this causality. Its characters are not enabled or humanised by their ability and strive for empathy. Here, love possesses the potential for manipulation and falsification and can be damaging. Rather than a unifying and legitimising force, emotionality is depicted as lacking, artificial, and divisive. The ultimately unfounded hierarchical divide between humanity and replicants is an emotional one, further delegitimising emotions, including love, as the ultimate human quality. The text's thorough deconstruction of the cultural and artistic construct results in a strong sense of hopeless destitution – for both characters and readers - which underlines how well established the idea was and is as an idealised marker for humanness. It remains unclear what remains in its absence.

The categories' development from empowering humanity, to humanising its replacement, to facilitating its deconstruction demonstrates the problem with identity production based on abstraction. Evoking emotional capability to establish or legitimise humanness in an artificial human character cannot offer a completely satisfying conclusion to the dilemma of defining humanness and its essential qualities. Art that utilises either human or artificial human emotionality to frame their androids as human do so with the help of conceptual and idealised versions of human emotionality. Especially love often functions as a crutch allowing for an artificially concrete and clear delineation of the subject. In an effort to make humanity a tangible concept with clear boundaries, emotionality is used as a defining quality. However, these approaches lack a comprehensive, universally applicable perspective on humanity's emotional range and must limit themselves to two-dimensional depictions. More complex and realistic depictions fail to reach the same conclusions.

Abstract concepts are bound to affect recipients on an abstract level only. While it can be argued that works that have thematised love as endorsing humanity have influenced collective notions on humanity, it has ultimately not succeeded in defining humanity as a concept completely and exhaustively. Our ability to love has been established with the discourse on humanity and effected the absence of culturally recognisable signs of affection resulting in a certain degree of dehumanisation by society. [180] Its intangible, complex, and pluralistic

180 See footnote 168.

nature has, nevertheless, failed to secure concrete boundaries, unless reduced to a mere template. Artificial emotionality in art potentially allows us to explore how specific emotions affect us, conceptually but not personally. Constructing or legitimising humans through emotions is likely to result in a theoretical, not an individually affective conclusion. In many ways, it is *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*'s deconstructed, mostly conclusion-less, approach that offers the most productive insights. The novel's identity crisis-ridden characters, both human and artificially human, recreate a potentially relatable sense of yearning for (emotional) authenticity and identity. They are less straightforward in their wants and needs, prone to prejudice, insecurities, and a lack clear direction. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* utilises this realistic imperfection and creates meaning through the unsaid, the unfinished, and the unresolved rather than grand, symbolic takes. Its deliberately unsatisfying anticlimactic ending forgoes a conclusion in order to imply that there is none, to humanity. This approach, while more realistic and arguably more poignant, fails to result in a satisfying definition of humanity and instead challenges the existence of 'the' authentically human in general. According to Dick's text, we are certainly emotional but it is questionable whether we are human.

Emotionality's persistent presence in android art signifies that our identity is indeed generally perceived as an emotional one. The focus on inter-personal emotionality, occasionally surmounting boundaries between human and artificially human – but overwhelmingly not those between genders – confirms humanity as a group identity, dependant on connection. We perceive ourselves as generally feeling and specifically feeling for each other. This emotional correspondence shapes our identity and locates it in between the previous and following categories addressed in this book: corporality and sociality.

The analysed works also thematise negative emotions: *R.U.R.* describes the role of fear and hatred in the android emancipation process. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* depicts the human potential for cruelty and attributes it to both androids and humans. However, none of the works analysed in this chapter cite negative emotions as definitive qualities for humanisation. Both the drama and the novel use parallels between negative traits in humans and robots as a way to link the two identities but not to establish the android characters as

human. This remains reserved for positive emotions, like in *R.U.R.*'s case, love. This suggests that if a work of art seeks to establish, not deconstruct humanity as a concept, it is primarily thought of as a positive identity, defined by positively connoted emotions. The ability to love can create, establish, and legitimise humanity while lacking this ability has a dehumanising effect. Consequently, love – at least an expediently framed, conceptual version of it – shapes humanity as a positive, fundamentally 'good' category. Art that declares love the defining human emotion thus creates a narrative surrounding humanity, framing it positively. Where it fails to establish a definition, it nevertheless succeeds in influencing our self-perception on a fundamental level.

The very real way in which we perceive ourselves as human is a product of identity associations created and perpetuated by culture and shaped by artistic frames like the ones analysed here. Human identity is a product; an amalgamation. Emotions are a dominant force in this collective identity production process. Recognisable emotionality is effectively felt to signify human identity. Humanity and the qualities we associate with it become a collectively inhabited identity situated above personal and subjective self-perception. It is something we perceive as universally applicable, without being able to conclusively name and define its nature. It is an identity more felt than consciously chosen. Consequently, it falls to emotionality to sustain the cultural narrative. What we feel constitutes humanness are ultimately mere feelings. Emotional capabilities, largely positive and often abstract, shape a universal identity based on the ability to emotionally relate to each other. Once again, the analysis has shown humanity as an associative and emotive quality rather than a definitive identity. Nevertheless, between corporeal and emotional associations, humanity is beginning to take shape. The shape is frayed, instable, and lacks inconvertible boundaries, but a shape it is.

## II.3 Sociality

### II.3.1 Ties that Bind: Humanity in Relation to Others

The previous chapters have already alluded to how deeply our self-perception as humans is affected by our corporeal and emotional connections to each other. In the present chapter I therefore examine the ways in which we relate to each other and the Other more closely. Both our human and non-human interactions advert to how we perceive humanness within ourselves and where we identify its boundaries. After examining our external, bodily boundaries, and our internal, emotional makeup, the present chapter is devoted to the process that connects both: human sociality.

No one is human by themselves. Since group identities are not forged in a social vacuum, any effort to understand ourselves must be made whilst taking those we relate with into account. Kenneth Sillander and Jon Henrik Ziegler Remme explore the limits of these relations in *Human Nature and Social Life: Perspectives on Extended Sociality*; a comprehensive collection of current perspectives on human sociality. The book views human sociality within the context of the post-humanist debate on the questionable validity of human exceptionalism. Its engagement with human nature "explores the various ways in which humans are constitutively enmeshed in 'extended socialities', socialities that extend into the nonhuman domain and a virtual sphere beyond immediate relations between humans." (Sillander et al. 1). It thus presents sociality not as an exclusive human condition but an abstract concept humans access and are influenced by: "the variety of living beings, objects, and unseen agencies, as well as the ideas and imaginaries, with or through which humans interact in the world within a formative relational dynamic which shapes them as they partake in it." (Sillander et al. 1). Sociality thus joins the ranks of both corporality and sociality, as a third conceptual entity that effects human identity without serving as a definable boundary.

As they echo the all-encompassing question about the "nature of the *anthropos*, what it is to be human" (Sillander et al. 2), Sillander and Ziegler's

focus on how sociality affects conceptual humanity is especially interesting for my purposes. "[P]ersonhood through kinship" (Sillander et al.1) describes how social relationships affect human self-perception; how we define ourselves through the group identity we associate with. By imitating the qualities we associate with these labels, we create collective identities:

> Mimesis [ist] immer eine Angelegenheit eines Beziehungsgeflechts von Personen: Die mimetische Erzeugung einer symbolischen Welt nimmt Bezug auf andere Welten und ihre Schöpfer und schließt andere Personen in die eigenen Welt ein. (Gebauer et al. 11),[181]

or as Friedrich Balke has put it: "Der Sinn für die eigene Stellung im sozialen Raum entsteht […] durch die dauerhafte Inkorporierung von Wahrnehmungsformen und Dispositionen." (30).[182]

However, in involving those like us we also exclude our Others: We identify with our gender, race, and other identifiers as much because of what we are not, as we do because of what we are, if not more so. This reinforces the idea that human identity constructs itself by disassociating from Others. Humans relate to those they deem fellow humans and through that corroborate distance towards that which is not. Both corporality and emotionality is utilised towards this process, as the previous analyses have shown. As a group, humanity needs likeminded, and like-bodied, company to share and confirm each other's identity. At the same time, it needs the non-human, the Other, in order to delineate itself. Humanity exists in relation to those like us and in delineation from those who are not. What exactly the respective humanities constitute is thus defined by what the Other is not and vice versa. This process arguably suggests that human identity lacks universally applicable, inherent qualities.

Replacing this absence with a form of identity production through demarcation, as Balke describes, results in an unstable identity that is subject to change as our environment and our self-perception develop. The necessity to derive one's identity from differential, and possibly hierarchical, relationships,

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181 "Mimesis [is] always a matter of a network of interpersonal relationships: The mimetic production of a symbolic world references other worlds and their creators and includes other persons in its own world." (Gebauer et al., translation mine).

182 "The sense of one's position in social space emerges [...] through the permanent incorporation of perceptual forms and dispositions." (Balke, translation mine).

drives what Sillander and Remme call social extension,[183] the idea that human sociality extends beyond human interaction and is part of a relational network: "humans are ontologically co-constituted with the nonhuman, with animals, other forms of beings, and objects and materials" (Sillander et al. 3). Including the nonhuman into the makeup of our social identity enables me to analyse human sociality not only as an isolated form of self-creation through self-relation but a process open to Other influences. This Other is not restricted to human groups but extendable[184] to non-human animals and even non-human objects. A social network thus expanded, amplified, and possibly modified by relationships to the non-human is a prolific idea, with numerous compelling implications. It confirms the notion that the boundaries delineating human and non-human are not clearly defined.

The oldest and least controversial non-human actor within the human social matrix is the non-human animal. Human-animal relationships extend human sociality beyond ourselves and thus provide our primary and oldest non-human attachment figures. Before post-humanist philosophical approaches have sought to decentralise humans, animals were largely considered Other – perhaps even the primary Other that human identity delineated itself from. Distancing humanity from animalism and establishing boundaries between the two was part of a larger identity-constructing process; the remnants of which are still culturally felt. This clear conceptual divide between humans and animals provided the structural basis for a distinctly hierarchical relationship that has social and emotional, as well as exploitative potential. Our relationship with animals is consequently not consistent and involves antithetical extremes ranging from emotionally relating to animals as functionally human companions to total commodification. Post-humanism frames human as an animal among animals; aiming to deconstruct the hierarchy and move beyond human self-perception as preeminent. Regardless of these issues of position, animals, whether subservient, symbiotic, or equal to us, have remained firmly rooted within human sociality and are established non-human extensions to it.

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183 The book bases itself on a 2012 seminar held in the honour of Signe Howell and is heavily influenced by Howell's "interest in the extension and qualification of human sociality" (Sillander et al. 2), an interest this book shares.

184 I use the term in reference to Sillander's and Remme's concept of "extended socialities" (1).

Recognising the significance of human-animal relationships poses the question whether other non-human actors, namely objects, are similarly able to access the human social sphere. The fact that human-non-human socialisation is possible and possibly meaningful suggests that human sociality can not only be extended, but the boundaries of humanity itself might be similarly blurred to include non-human actors. The possibility of a subject to relate to objects socially would imply that the line between subject and object might be or become negotiable. If humanity is able to relate to objects and to emotionally connect with them, it follows that object status can be negotiated and non-humanity potentially re-defined. Relatable objects that function within our social spheres could partake in our personhood and produce it through kinship in the same way our human relationships do. The non-human would shape humanness, not only by contrast but through social conjunction. In the present context, a human social identity that associates itself with and is possibly able to create itself through relationships with objects raises the question how it relates to humanoid objects, namely androids. Where do artificial humans register in the "relational matrixes" (Sillander et al. 3) of humanity? Where do we draw the relational line between fellow human and humanoid object? Do we categorise our social relations and if so, what qualities register as human to us? How do potential social relationships with artificial humans touch us emotionally and how do they affect our identity and self-perception? Do they influence our understanding of humanity as a concept; a relational whole?

Defining humanity through social behaviour comes with an important caveat, as Silander and Remme describe: a social definition of humanity cannot be informed by non-human relationships.

> our ontological knowledge and metaphysical reasoning are the result of interactions with our most significant social and cultural others. We cannot […] have any meaningful dialogue with animals or objects, and the 'informants' in our fieldwork can never be anything other than other humans. (3).

This gap can potentially be filled by the android in art. Android figures function as an interface between object and human. They exist in a position of not-quite humanness; a figure able to partake in but still remain outside of humanity. It extends human social possibilities in an unprecedented way and enables meaningful dialogue on humanity as a concept. Artificial human bodies and minds

are the ultimate connectors between subject and object. Their particular position within the earlier introduced mimetic model associated with the android allows us to relate to them: not only as non-human objects but potentially as humans. Hiroshi Ishiguro and Karl MacDorman confirm this relational niche occupied by the android: Their proposed new field, android science, studies the effect of human likeness in machines. The research integrates robotics into cognitive and social science experiments. The resulting data demonstrate that "Androids provide an experimental apparatus to explore the question of what it means to be human in relation to a number of contemporary debates in cognitive science." (Ishiguro et al. 301). This suggests that our social relationship with objects situated on the verge of humanity can give meaningful insights into the concept's parameters.

Assuming that we relate to artificial humans in a meaningful way, this connection informs the boundaries we draw and redraw around us. Human sociality, while extendable, cannot be extended infinitely. Though we can and do relate to the non- and the artificially human, we do not do so without rhyme or reason: Sillander and Remme mention "distinct human qualities" (3) moderating human-non-human relations. These qualities, referred to as the "human condition" (3), regulate who and what can effectively participate in humanity's social matrix. In the following, I am going to examine the conditions regulating who and what can function within human social networks and emotionally affect humans. Questions after how anthropomorphism is achieved and what makes non-humans and non-human objects relatable to humans assist in analysing the relationship between human and their artificial copy. How does the android, a product of the Anthropocene that is beyond anthropomorphic and yet not fully *anthropos*, partake in this process? What qualities determine social access for humanoid non-humans? Are they similar or different from those for humans and where is the android's specific access to the social matrix located? The answer potentially functions as a working definition of humanness, in the most practical sense: how we identify each other – and potentially Others – as humans, is how we determine humanity. It is this humanity that anchors us within our relational network: We are human and we participate as humans (cf. Sillander et al. 3). Through cultural discourse, we build the boundaries of our identity.

The nature of these qualities and what they reveal about our practical concept of humanity are of great interest for this book as a whole. Humanisation mechanisms inform the parameters of our social extension, and thereby identify where our identity's conceptual limits can be and are blurred. Typically, objects are humanised through projection: We interpret the non-human existence according to a human framework and project our own emotions onto the object. This creates artificial familiarity and thereby social bonding. While this process is observable in our interactions with machines in general, where we react to an object's "embodiment […] and physical movement" (cf. Darling 2017, 3), it is reinforced by intentional design meant to encourage anthropomorphism: so-called social robots. Kate Darling, who studies the ethical implications of these technological developments, describes the process in one of her earlier articles on the problem:

> Social robots play off of this tendency by mimicking cues that we automatically associate with certain states of mind or feelings. Even in today's primitive form, this can elicit emotional reactions from people that are similar, for instance, to how we react to animals and to each other. From being reluctant to switch off robots that give the appearance of animacy, to ascribing mental states to robotic pets, we respond to the cues given to us by lifelike machines, even if we know that they are not 'real.' (2012).

Darling's analysis suggests that our social relationships to objects are not dependent on the illusion that they are more than that. We consciously relate to them based on even minimal signals we interpret as relatable, no matter their non-humanity.[185] 'Authentic' humanity does not seem to be a decisive factor for social boding. Behaviour that is reminiscent enough of what we perceive as human is sufficient to project our own interpretation, our emotions, and our identity on them. In "Who's Johnny?: Anthropomorphic Framing in Human-Robot Interaction, Integration, and Policy", Darling describes that language framing (cf. 2017, 1) is the most effective technique to anthropomorphise a robot: "personifying a robot through a name, character description, or giving it a backstory affects people's responses" (Darling 2017, 2).[186] In other words,

185 For a more in detail exploration on just how minimal a signal suffices in order to project humanity onto it, see
Sung, Ja-Young, Lan Guo, Rebecca E. Grinter, and Henrik I. Christensen. 2007. "`My Roomba is Rambo': intimate home appliances." *9th Intl Conf on Ubiquitous Computing.* 145-62.
For an experimental analysis of the even more minimal signals registering as animacy, see
Scholl, Brian J., and Patrice D. Tremoulet. 2000. "Perceptual causality and animacy." *Trends In Cognitive Sciences* 4(8): 299-309.
186 Darling has found that empathy towards robots with associated names and stories is heightened: Participants in an experiment regarding this effect were more hesitant to strike a robot if they were introduced by name instead of number. See

framing the object as human-like through the same language we use to identify ourselves, successfully encourages humans to perceive an object as human. Methods like naming, ascribing personality, and inventing a story work for non-humans just like for humans: it fashions an identity for them that surpasses their materiality.

The way social robots utilise this ability has been both welcomed and criticised. Darling argues that, while counterproductive in for example military settings,[187] social extension towards robots is productive where it benefits their performance. In medical settings, social robots are introduced to ease communication, sooth patients, and as a therapeutic companion (cf. Darling 2017, 5ff). Social bonding with robots is here beneficial and explicitly part of their function. Social robots are intentionally framed as social agents rather than objects (cf. Darling 2017, 6), to enhance their efficiency. Social extension towards objects can evidently be utilised to enhance or even replace human interaction. Since this potential social replacement is viewed as a hazard as well as an opportunity, these same processes have also been subject to critical voices: Martin Scheutz, in "The Inherent Dangers of Unidirectional Emotional Bonds between Humans and Social Robots", has criticised the normalisation of emotional dependence on social robots and called attention to potential emotional manipulation and exploitation facilitated by replacing human-human social interaction with artificial sociality between humans and social robots: "More importantly, social robots that cause people to establish emotional bonds with them, and trust them deeply as a result, could be misused to manipulate people in ways that were not possible before." (Scheutz 216). Scheutz points out that robots lack social-emotional mechanisms like empathy, guilt, and socialised norms of interaction and are therefore purely a

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Darling, Kate, Palash Nandy, and Cynthia Breazeal. 2015. "Empathic concern and the effect of stories in human-robot interaction." *24th IEEE International Symposium on Robot and Human Interactive Communication (RO-MAN).* 770-75.

187 Human-robotic social bonding in the military is surprisingly common and ranges from a simple discomfort with watching a landmine diffusing robot be teared limb from limb to awarding them with Purple Hearts (both described in
Joel Garreau's "Bots on the Ground", 6/5/2007 *Washington Post*) and even soldier's risking their lives to save a robot (see
Singer, P.W. 2009. *Wired for War: The Robotics Revolution and Conflict in the 21st Century.* London: Penguin. p.150ff.).
The latter anecdote especially demonstrates why social extension to robots constitutes a problem in this case. The fact that the here mentioned robots are not even purposefully designed to elicit these reactions, speaks for the potential striking effects of actual social robots on human sociality.

product of their programmer's interest, which might be harmful. Darling herself cites "issues of privacy, emotional manipulation, violence, sexual behaviour, and the entrenchment of gender and racial stereotypes that comes with framing robots in human terms." (2017, 3) as potentially problematic possibilities the technology entail. Both Scheutz and Darling argue that regulation is needed to ensure that social robots supplement and not replace human sociality, and to help steer the design of the product to a desirable implementation.

What Darling calls entrenchment is an interesting by-product of the considerable flexibility of human sociality: projecting humanity onto non-human objects, whether they appear human or not, implies ascribing our preconceived notions and biases onto the machine. The projection surface is thus quickly affected by (harmful) social norms. Socially constructed aspects of our identity that are similarly definitive of ourselves as our humanity itself, like gender or race,[188] shape our idea of personhood and therefore influence our projection of it. Consequently, the aforementioned naming of the robot can not only establish, but also direct our relationship to them according to preconceived social norms – with negative effects. Currently, the industry exhibits a strong propensity for male names for androids in military functions and female names for artificial humans in service positions (cf. Vitzthum 96), [189] revealing functional gender biases. Our associations with binary gender roles evidently influence the functions, associations, and treatment of the respective robots: masculinity is framed as violent and femininity as subservient, often sexualised. Gendering objects is a pervasive cultural practice that not only affects explicitly anthropomorphic objects but is commonly observable. It charges general human-object relations with social implications associated with gender roles, be the object in question robot, boat, or sex-doll. The practice exemplifies how commonly and unthinkingly we expand our sociality and demonstrates that, unlike our corporeal and emotional identity, our social extension to non-human entities does not depend on a convincing mimetic illusion. On the contrary, humans are able and even likely to project likeness onto that which is unlike them and socialise with it. Human semblance is

188 For an outline of the current and potential problems with biased algorithms, see The Human Rights Watch's "Toronto Declaration" <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/07/03/toronto-declaration-protecting-rights-equality-and-non-discrimination-machine> (last accessed 10/12/20).

189 With an added penchant for short, diminutive female names.

not a prerequisite for human sociality, however, any object with mimetic properties increases its social potential. The circumstances and conditions according to which we ascribe social constructs onto objects, as well as our subsequent treatment of them can reveal existing collective and individual biases. Furthermore, social projection onto non-humans, and especially non-human objects, might also affect us in return. Sinziana Gutiu for example has argued that repeated sexual relationships with robots might affect human sexuality and potentially normalise undesirable behaviour (cf.211). Sherry Turkle, in *Alone Together*, likewise warns against the subversive potential of social technology for human sociality in general. Human-android relations might not only inform our self-perception as humans and reveal the boundaries, limitations, and biases our identity encompasses but also affect and change how and where we perceive this identity and how we practice it.

Understanding human sociality as essential, ubiquitous, and extendable to such an extent underlines its previously discussed malleability. In order to be extended and applied to the ever-evolving non-human and non-human objects especially, sociality needs "plasticity" (Sillander et al. 9). Rather than a fixed entity is to be understood as a process created and shaped by its execution. Consequently, how it is molded can vary (cf. Sillander et al 9), from period to period and culture to culture, depending on how it is practised. Human sociality appears in many forms and is liable to changes. It is, however, also constant in that it has always affected the human condition – and the discourses thereof – in some form or other. Our social interaction with ourselves and the world has shaped us and informed our collective identity. It follows that sociality is a ambivalent category, simultaneously stable and vagrant. It exists in many different forms and practices between diverse relational partners – humans and non-humans; objects and subjects. Sillander and Remme confirm this notion:

> Human sociality has probably never been restricted to conspecifics, neither usually to co-present consociates, or any more or less narrowly defined in-group aggregate. The emergent and practice-based character of sociality which attests to its open-endedness makes this extension not an a priori condition, but rather a product of a variety of relational efforts. Sociality requires effort; it is contingent on enactment and decisively shaped through this process. By the same means, it is also inherently relational, and seemingly generative of a prolifically rebounding relationalism. […] This extends sociality not only into the nonhuman domain but also back and forward in time, into history and the future, as well as into the (ethereal or mundane) imaginaries of the

present, thus extending sociality beyond 'immediacy', beyond the presentness of concrete ongoing interaction. (20).

For human social extension to not only be inclusive towards the anthropomorphic non-human and its current technological manifestations but also implicate "imaginaries", validates the analysis of human sociality in the context of artificial humans in art. Humans' ability to form meaningful social or para-social relationships with virtual and fictional characters has been the subject of critical discourse even before digital spheres reached their current level of cultural dominance.[190]Consequently, the notion that human sociality is not merely immediately interactional but also susceptible to fictional spaces, suggests a concept of humanity not only affected by tangible non-human agents but also fictional versions of them, namely the android. Including artistic agents into the human social matrix alters the timeframe in which androids have had a bearing on humanity's social evolution and by extension humanity itself. Our artistic self-reflection is therefore not a mere philosophical exercise, detached from our real existence: The android in art can function as a meaningful social relation and directly influence our personal and collective self-reflection. If art is generally capable of influencing the reality of social relations and fictional characters can be related with, then the possibility of humanity itself being affected by fictional depictions and artistic musings follows. Artificial human figures inhabit a mimetically specific position in this relational process between recipient and art. Its double-function as human and yet not, allows it to be both entirely relatable and entirely Other. Its structural and mimetic positions reconcile its functions as relatable and reflective figure that can both access the social aspects of our

190 Para-social relationships are a term first coined in 1956's, see
Horton, D. Wohl, R. R. 1956. "Mass Communication and Para-social interaction: Observations on intimacy at a distance". *Psychiatry*, 19, 188-211.
The term describes unrequited social relationships, both fictional and real. Aside from this potentially pathological form of relationship with fictional characters, regular interactions with fictional worlds and characters can also be classified as (para)social interactions that affect us and our sense of self, as detailed in
Mathies, Susanne. 2020. "The Simulated Self – Fiction Reading and Narrative Identity". *Philosophia* 48, 325-345.
For an examination of the specific interactive dynamics with virtual agents and their similar impact on our sociality see
McDonnell, Rachel, Sophie Jörg, Joanna McHugh, Fiona Newell, and Carol O'Sullivan. 2008. "Evaluating the emotional content of human motions on real and virtual characters." *Proceedings of the 5th Symposium on Applied Perception in Graphics and Visualization (ACM)*, 67-74.
or
Holtgraves, Thomas, S. J. Ross, C. R. Weywadt, and T. L. Han. 2007. "Perceiving artificial social agents." *Computers in Human Behavior* 23: 2163-2174.

humanity and deconstruct them. Fictional human-android relationships portray the full spectrum of human social interaction, as well as the malleability and extension of human sociality through anthropomorphic processes. They are therefore singularly suitable for analysing humanity through the parameters of its social extension by providing a hybrid inter-external perspective onto our relational maze. This implies questions about the effect this has on the epistemological boundaries of human identity. I would thus argue that extended human sociality entails an extension of humanity itself.

In the following, I set out to discuss the parameters of this extension and how our continuous creative relation to android characters affects and reflects our self-perception. In Ira Levin's *The Stepford Wives*, I address the social implications of artificial gender and its implications for current notions on binary gender norms. The text is meant to exemplify the general treatment of gender in android art and its exemption from post-humanist efforts to deconstruct and decentralise the human, as indicated by the previous chapters. The latter is also thematised in the context of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, where an explicit humanisation through android-animal relations engages anthropocentric boundaries. In Lisa Joy's and Jonathan Nolan's TV series *Westworld,* these boundaries are dissolved by a systematic deconstruction of artificial and non-artificial character building through social interaction. Overall, this chapter traces the android figure's social dynamic, explores its progressive and regressive tendencies, and extrapolates their implications for humanity as a concept.

### II.3.2 Artificial Gender in *The Stepford Wives*

Ira Levin's 1972 thriller novel *The Stepford Wives* combines an arresting portrayal of womanhood in the late 20th century USA with subdued Science Fiction and horror elements; resulting in a unique exploration of the relationship between human and gender identity.  Levin's story about men replacing their wives with de-personalised robot versions of them addresses female feelings of isolation and insecurity as a result of pervasive threats to feminist progress in a hyperbolic, yet

expressive and meaningful allegory. Part of this theme is the text genre-typical technique to maintain plausible deniability of this commonly accepted interpretation: A reader so inclined could interpret the novel as a paranoid housewife's progressive mental decline and ultimate recovery. Tying its horror elements to the protagonist's perspective enhances the text's uncanny effect and illustrates individual struggles with credibility within the systemic sexism it thematises. I am analysing the text concerning its meaningful engagement with gender as a deterministic influence on the depiction of artificial humanity. This analysis and its implications for the perception of humanity in relation to gender also affect the ubiquitous presence of gender in this book so far and are consequently also applicable to the previous examples' explicit or implicit engagement with the category.

The novel employs the narrative frame of a city couple moving to the suburb, straightway invoking the associated fears of mindset-clashes and social isolation. Through this frame it engages with gender dynamics in the nuclear family and the communities the model historically facilitated. Levin's protagonist starts as a college-educated stay-at-home mother of two children, with a creative hobby providing a small independent income and an active interest in the women's movement. This is how she advertises herself to the town newspaper, freshly moved into Stepford and already wary of the domestic inclinations of the women surrounding her (cf.4).[191] The early focus on her various interests and convictions serves to underline the distinct lack of similar qualities in the rest of the town's female population. Stepford's wives are of homogenous agreeability, pleasant, yet devoid of individual characteristics. Conversations with them are formulaic; their interests strictly domestic with an absolute focus on their families and homes. Joanna's frustrations with her surroundings highlight the unnerving lack of conflict in any of the other women, excluding the newcomers. The wives stand out in their sameness, their consistent calm politeness, and ostensible deep-seated content.

An early conversation with Joanna's neighbour exemplifies all future interaction she and her initial allies continue to have with the wives:

191 All following citations, unless otherwise indicated: Levin, Ira. [1972] 2004. *The Stepford Wives*. New York: HarperTorch.

> ‘Hi, Joanna,’ Carol said in her nasal New Englandy voice. ‘No, you didn’t scay-er me. It’s a nice night, isn’t it?’
> ‘Yes,’ Joanna said. ‘And I’m done with my unpacking, which makes it even nicer.” She had to speak loud; Carol had stayed by her doorway, still too far away for comfortable conversation even though she herself was now at the flower bed edging the split rail fence. [….]
> [Carol] turned to go in.
> ‘Hey wait a minute!’ Joanna called.
> Carol turned back ‘Yes?’ she said.
> Joanna wished that the flower bed and fence weren’t there, so she could move closer. Or, darn it, that Carol would come to *her* side of the fence. What was so top-priority-urgent in that fluorescent-lighted copper-pot-hanging kitchen? ‘Walter’s coming over to talk with Ted,’ she said, speaking loud to Carol’s naked seeming silhouette. ‘When you’ve got the kid’s down, why don’t you come over and have a cup of coffee with me?’
> ‘Thanks, I’d like to,’ Carol said, ‘but I have to wax the family-room floor.’
> ‘*Tonight*?’
> ‘Night is the only time to do it, until school starts.’
> ‘Well, can’t it wait? Its only three more days?’
> Carol shook her head. ‘No, I’ve put it off too long as it is,’ she said. ‘Its all over scruff-marks. And besides, Ted will be going to the Men’s Association later on.’
> ‘Does he go every night?’
> ‘Just about.’
> *Dear God*! ‘And you stay home and do housework?’
> ‘There’s always something or other that has to be done,’ Carol said. ‘You know how it is. I have to finish the kitchen now. Good night.’
> ‘Good night,’ Joanna said, and watched Carol go – profile of too-big bosom – into her kitchen and close the door. (13ff).

The interaction is the first instance of several dialogues that will all go the same. Joanna’s attempt to start a women’s organisation is thwarted by the disinterest of Stepford’s wives, who are as apathetic to politics as they are to a cup of coffee – or any other kind of social contact. The physical fence between Joanna and Carol also proves a metaphorical barrier existing between her and all Stepford wives, who all cite disinterest (cf.31, 33, 35), lack of time (cf.32, 33, 33, 34, 35), and a preference for leaving “that sort of thing” (32) to their husbands (cf.32). The disconnect is initially merely irritating, yet continues to increase in uncanniness. Especially the repetitiveness of the interactions reads as increasingly conspicuous, as Joanna has the same brief chats over and over again, with different women. Greetings, offers of sustenance they never partake in, and talk about housework are the basic components of every conversation with every Stepford wife. It is this artificial, limited sociality that first alerts both the reader and protagonist to the fact that the situation is beyond the suburban culture shock of a liberal feminist finding herself amidst conservative traditionalists. With the exception of the newly arrived Bobby and Charmaine and a single elderly widow (cf.35), all women in Stepford appear virtually the same. They are beautiful, they keep

perfect houses, and they are perfectly content with that, and only that. Otherwise, they are notably utterly and collectively devoid of individual interest, conviction, or character. They are de-individualised, de-socialised, and thus de-humanised.

This is made even clearer in contrast to the men, whose portrayal as individuals underlines their wives' flat characters. While the Men's Association represents the collective male threat in the text, the members of the male collective are depicted as distinct personalities, with quirks, interests, and different body types. Their nuanced portrayal results in clearly distinguishable characters, as opposed to their wives who are, at most, physically differentiated by their hair colours. Furthermore, the men interact with each other, and with Joanna if necessary, yet they are never depicted in meaningful interactions with their wives, underlining the divide, not only between spouses but between the wives and the rest of the population at large, including children and human women. The male social group maintains individuality while collectively accessing their privilege, represented by the influence and exclusivity of the Men's Association, whereas the women dissipate into their role. The men remain men, the women become wives. Among the most notable differences, aside from individuality and personality, is the men's physical appearance. The text describes them as diverse body types; some handsome but most in critical and often unflattering terms: Sundersen is "pale and paunchy" (40), Wimperis "big, fleshy" (76), Cornell "ugly; small-eyed, chinless (153).

This realistic diversity contrasts notably with their wives, who are all described as flawlessly beautiful: Stepford is a town "full of lucky men" (153). However, the wives' striking attractiveness is not diverse at all and consistently characterised by the same features: slim figures, large breasts, carefully groomed hairdos, and traditionally feminine clothing. They all conform to a very specific, conventional, and male-centric idea of beauty that is reminiscent of Galatea's perfection according to the male gaze. Their looks not only adhere to the uniform standards listed above but are also, very importantly, a constant state, again evoking the association with the perfect statue rather than a dynamic person. The wives are not only all beautiful in the same way, they are also invariably and unfailingly beautiful, wherever they go and whatever they do. They are perfectly groomed at the grocery store and while scrubbing their kitchens. They are never

portrayed with a hair out of place, an unflattering dress, or a skin blemish. They are also never shown pre-beauty routine. All descriptions of them establish them in a permanent state of aesthetic perfection. In contrast to this effortless and constant perfection, Joanne exists in varying states: she can be dolled up, or dressed down, make an effort or not have the time for it. Warned that her husband is going to bring the other men home, her answer "Give me fifteen minutes and I'll even be an intelligent *beautiful* waitress, how's that for cooperation?"(39) shows effort extended in order to achieve the same aesthetic the wives display effortlessly. Interestingly, this contrast between seemingly just being attractive versus being made to look attractive implies a reversed attribution of artificiality: The human women's appearance is instable and attractiveness portrayed as an artificial state, whereas the wives' appealing appearance is portrayed as inherent and stable. Stepford wives simply are attractive, Joanna must make herself attractive. A sentiment echoed by her husband:

> 'It wouldn't hurt *you* to look in a mirror once in a while.'
> She looked at him, and he looked away, flushing, and looked back to her. 'I mean it,' he said. 'You're a very pretty woman and you don't do a damned thing with yourself anymore unless there's a party or something. […] I'd just like you to put on a little lipstick once in a while (130ff).

Walter does not appear critical of his wife's appearance initially and reveals his dissatisfaction with her unmodified looks only gradually and towards the end of the text. He expresses a desire for her to improve according to a male-centric standard (a standard he does not apply to himself and has no female equivalent (see p.198)). Although there is an attempt to mitigate,[192] he is shown to favour the artficial wife's fixed aesthetic above his human wife's. This partiality reverses the established mimetic hierarchy that the male androids I have analysed so far predominantly operate under: Stepford's female androids, as well as Galatea in the Pygmalion myth, stand out in that 'nature' is valued less not more than

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192 Walter's effort to relativize his criticism is part of a larger textual effort to lull both Joana and the recipient into a false sense of security in order to mitigate early suspicions and keep the protagonist in Stepford long enough to execute her replacement. The text unobtrusively intersperses his comments meant to nurture her self-doubt and discourage her from investigating. Walter constantly, yet subtly trivialises Joana's concerns, discourages her from questioning conspicuous observations and appeases her with agreement to feminist action and an eventual move. His attempts at undermining her are progressively more noticeable to an alert reader. He ultimately questions her mental health and insists on a psychiatrist's opinion, until he ultimately confines her in the house under the pretence of protecting her from herself.

artificial perfection in them. As the primary male reference in the focaliser's life, Walter's rejection of her looks constitutes her sense of male preferences and expectations. In the text, this adds to her general perception of Stepford men and their uniform proclivities and results in the impression that men's aesthetic tastes lack diversity and that her unaltered self falls short of their shared ideal. The text thus portrays a woman isolated; not against individual men but a united front of male expectations. Since she cannot access or relate to this front, she is socially Othered.

*The Stepford Wives* addresses various feminist issues through the lens of its stylised story: normalising unrealistically perfect bodies and flawless appearances through the media is among them. The text shows that the judgement Joanna feels subjected to, is not only externally applied but also internalised by women. This feeling of inadequacy is discussed several times in the text. Joanna states "I feel pre-adolescent every time I set foot in the market." (86), referring to the conspicuous ubiquity of "fantastic boobs" (85) in Stepford. Her self-deprecating humour thematises the real-life influence of socially established and perpetuated beauty standards on self-perception: the notion that a woman not adhering to this standard un-womans her.

This is highlighted when Joanna meets Ike Mazzard, a famous magazine illustrator and Stepford resident: "I'm not sure I like you; you blighted my adolescent with those dream girls of yours!" (40). Again, she is joking – relativizing valid concerns and opinions through humour in an effort not to appear unreasonable or unpleasant is a theme throughout the novel. This, too, subtly thematises feminist theory and accurately conveys the reality of female experience under the influence of a gendered social hierarchy. Acceptable performance of femininity discourages self-confidence that is emancipated from male-centric social approval. Joanna's joking accusation proves true when Mazzard begins to sketch her, without permission or regard to her uncomfortableness and protest. "The men had fallen silent. […] 'Hey,' she said, shifting uncomfortably and smiling, 'I'm no Ike Mazzard girl.' 'Every girl's an Ike Mazzard girl,' Mazzard said, and smiled at her and smiled at his pecking." (43). Joanna's instinct to passively protest with a smile, captures feminist criticism of female socialisation and its discouragement from conflict. Joanna is not able to be impolite in order to

enforce her comfort, which consequently gets ignored. Even when she "felt suddenly as if she were naked, as if Mazzard were drawing her in obscene poses." (44), she reprimands herself mentally (cf.44) instead of him verbally. The artist is not interested in the consent – or the individuality – of his subject. The dynamic feels violating to her and has a distinct sexual component: she is simultaneously made an artistic and a sexual object and thus reduced to the artist's idea of ideal, abstract femininity. The encounter evokes the power dynamic between artist and artwork, previously discussed in the context of the Pygmalion myth. Joanna feels objectified under the artist's creative gaze that has and continues to manifest as cultural pressure on her body and person. The cultural effect of the artistic male gaze on women's (self-)perception is here likened to the literal objectification of female androids. Joana's perception proves accurate in a more than abstract sense, since the sketches Mazzard makes are implied to be concept art for her robotic replacement. The scene underlines the android's intended purpose in the novel: an aesthetic possession and sexual object created by men for men.

Before Mazzard's involvement, Joanna feels confident in her ability to hold her own among the members of the Men's Association, who represent organised male power. Women are collectively excluded from it, symbolising gendered power dynamics in patriarchal and post-patriarchal societies. The established hierarchy discourages organised efforts by the oppressed group to participate in positions of power and thus requires its members to make individual efforts instead. Joanna's first instinct is to organise – seeking refuge in sociality – and collectively pressure the Association. She is, however, manipulated by Walter into opposing it individually, underlining how social isolation facilities oppression. She initially perceives herself successful in that effort – "*Move over Gloria Steinem!*" (43)[193] – and immediately loses this confidence by becoming the object of Mazzard's attention: "Try being Gloria Steinem when Ike Mazzard is drawing you!" (44). Being looked at, judged, rendered an artistic object undermines her confidence and evokes her internalised insecurities. The men, consciously or unconsciously, exploit socialised and internalised insecurities held by women, in order to undermine her attempt to access power. Joanna is –

193 Journalist and activist Gloria Steinem was among the most popular known faces of the US American feminist movement during the 1960s and 70s.

figuratively and later literally – objectified through the gaze of a man representing the media she grew up with and that have influenced her self-perception as lesser-than an ideal. An ideal that is, like the wives, invented by men, for men, as is made clear when the sketches are revealed to the men instead of her: In accordance with the male hierarchy, the president of the Men's Association is presented with the image first, and after he approves, Joanna's husband and the others view the images. The subject itself has to demurely ask: "Do I get to see?" (45). Being objectified by the men, who display not only superior numbers but also inhabit a superior position of power through the Men's Association, renders being a confident advocate of own rights and interests impossible to Joanna. She is reduced to the (gender-)role the image implies, regardless of her actual character. The scene demonstrates not only how female needs, instincts, and opinions are socialised to be suppressed, it also foreshadows Joanna's later literal objectification. Interestingly, she remarks "I wish I could say they were absolutely accurate –" (46) and is promptly interrupted by the artist's disagreement. Joanna does not recognise this idealised version of herself as herself. The men are indifferent to this. As the text indicates, the male gaze is not concerned with accuracy but merely with appeal. The alienation Joanna feels towards the improved sketch of her illustrates the incongruity between her and the eventual version of her that the men design. The Joanna-android the recipient encounters in the epilogue is merely reminiscent of its mimetic template (cf.183), in the same way that normative female gender roles are largely independent of individual female self-realisation. The female robots embody these gender roles and are devoid of humanity. Joana fears loosing herself in a similar fashion, and yet regards her increasing fear of this fate as paranoid, despite substantial evidence to the contrary. Her sense of reality is undermined externally and internally; by the conspiring men but also her socialisation, which discourages her from trusting herself and her instincts. Joana is as much the victim of female socialisation as of the individual men. In portraying this nuanced dynamic, the text is able to convey the feeling of belonging to an oppressed class in an officially equal society and the difficulty to speak out against remaining individual and structural inequality. It processes discrimination against women through textual stylisation and translates the feeling of isolation against a united, oppressive class into a sci-fi-esque horror

story, where abstract oppression and objectification become men murdering and replacing women with robots. A dehumanising and discriminating intangible patriarchal system is illustrated by the novel's depiction of the Men's Association dehumanising in a literal sense.

As alienating and unsettling Stepford's norms are to her, Joanna is nevertheless influenced by them. She initially, "as a matter of principle" (20), does not do housework while Walter is with the Men's Association and insists on him sharing domestic responsibilities. As the plot progresses, references to domestic Walter's contributions decrease and eventually cease entirely. He has a regular night doing the dishes in the beginning of the novel (cf.8), yet by the second chapter he already only begrudgingly participates in childcare on weekends (cf.105) and is never mentioned to do housework at all after that. Joanna, however, is shown doing housework with increasing frequency, often while comparing herself to the wives.

> Joanna wondered. *Am I changing?* Hell, no; the housework *had* to be caught up with once in a while […]. Besides, a real Stepford wife would sail through it all very calmly and efficiently, not running the vacuum cleaner over its cord and then mashing her fingers getting the cord out from around the damn roller thing. (119).

The reference to realness once again underlines the reversal of mimetic hierarchy where female androids are concerned. Joanna feels that she has to live up to an artificial copy of herself, rather than the other way round. The wives are machines without personalities and therefore without flaws. Yet, rather than feeling superiorly human,[194] Joanna feels, at least subconsciously, that they are an ideal that she falls short of. This distinguishes *The Stepford Wives* from other art featuring (male) android figures, whose lack of humanness is framed as inferior, not superior to their prefiguration. The human women are depicted as comparing unfavourably to the noticeably artificiality of the female androids – in society's eyes, as represented by the men, as well as their own. This suggests that the female gender norms and looks-based personal value influence and maybe even determine the perception of female androids specifically. Consequently, the men do not consider their artificial wife's one-dimensionality a drawback at all – on the contrary. The desired change not only affects the women's appearances, their

194 Like Frankenstein, the humans first confronted with Andrew's claim to humanity in "The Bicentennial Man", and the humans in *R.U.R* and *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*.

overall demeanour is changed. This is especially evident in Charmaine, who is already considered highly attractive and still replaced.

Charmaine's robot substitute demonstrates that appearances are not the only factor that necessitates substitution in the husbands' minds. She is traditionally attractive already but sexually unavailable.[195] Her husband nevertheless attempts sexual intimacy regularly, which she turns down in favour of her own interests. Her anecdote about her husband's desire for her to wear restrictive latex fetish wear[196] ("He had this *rubber suit* made for me [...] Zippers and Padlocks all over." 53) despite her disinterest, can be read as foreshadowing of his eventual desire to objectify her literally and permanently and thereby make her sexually available. The women's replacement is thus enacted not merely on a corporeal but also on a social level. Joanna's sexual relationship to her husband is described as similarly strained. The descriptions are infrequent and sparse. The first and only encounter that is positively described by her, is a reaction to her awakening to her husband masturbating. She is initially surprised and shames him for the act, then initiates sex. The placement of the scene is interesting because it takes place after Walter's first visit to the Men's Association. In the afterword to the 2002 edition, Peter Straub interprets this as Walter being "ignited" (194) by the "world-class fantasy object" (194) the men have supposedly shown Walter. Going by that reading, masturbating, rather than involving his present and willing

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195 Charmaine asserts general disinterest in sex, not only with her husband, and can be read as an asexual character.

196 In his paper "Dressed to thrill: A Brief Look at Clothing Fetishes", Mark D. Griffiths writes: "Obviously it is the *restrictive* types of clothing that are most associated with sadomasochistic activity (and which are often made from PVC or latex). This includes very narrow skirts that *impede movement* (often referred to as hobble skirts that are often ankle length to make walking almost impossible), and *very high heel shoes (which make it difficult to walk).* Another popular item of restrictive clothing is a tight corset. Those individuals in *sexually submissive* roles are often forced to wear a bondage corsets (also known as a 'discipline corset') as a form of punishment. This is also associated the masochistic sexual practice of 'tightlacing' (also known as corset training and waist training) where submissive partners (typically female) are forced to wear a tightly-laced corset that result in *extreme body modifications* to the submissive partner's *figure and posture* (e.g., 'hourglass' figures in which the woman looks as though they have an incredibly small waist)." (Griffiths, italics mine). The desired characteristics achieved by the clothing – restriction of movement, adjustment of body shape, submission – as described here, foreshadow the changes made to the women by the men. Here, the women's artificial hourglass shaped bodies and inability to walk away are not consensual kink but enforced by design. The robotic wives are built to embody their creators' desires without own agency, as opposed to the human women, who are able to oppose them. The eventual complete replacement of the women with robots, suggests that *The Stepford Wives*' men's goal is not a degree of control compatible with any female agency and consent whatsoever.

wife, shows Walter's disinterest in the person and preference for the fantasy. This reading is supported by his rejection of Joanna's later attempt to improve his sexual satisfaction.[197] The remaining descriptions of their sex life are stilted and affected by the rising sense of dread in the text: "She was tense couldn't really give herself, and it wasn't very good." (123). Joanna's suspicions influence their sex life, even when she is still second-guessing and downplaying her concerns.

While rejected male sexuality appears as a theme in the novel, it is secondary to the more prominent feature of domestic servitude. To Joanna, chores are just that, while Charmaine and Bobby both downright refuse housework. The wives, however, not only maintain their households perfectly; they actively express joy in doing so.

> 'Yes, I'm happy,' she said. 'I'm living a very full life. Herb's work is important and he couldn't do it nearly as well if it weren't for me. We're a unit, and between us, we're raising a family, and doing optical research, and running a clean comfortable household, and doing community work.'
> 'Through the Men's Association.'
> 'Yes'
> Joanna said, 'Were the Women's Club meetings more boring than housework?'
> Kit frowned 'No,' she said, 'but they weren't as useful.' (65ff).

The Kit-android's mindset is representative of many similar statements made by the wives. Housework is framed as fulfilling and meaningful, especially more meaningful than their own interests or political engagement. This sentiment is also voiced by the artificial versions of Bobby and Charmaine. They describe their former selves as: "lazy and selfish" (80) and "sloppy and self-indulgent" (124) respectively. Charmaine, who openly disliked her husband is replaced by an android that is "lucky" and "grateful" (81) to have him. The Bobby-android, although modelled after a woman infamous for her dishevelled house, states that "It's no disgrace to be a good homemaker" and considers housework "her job" (124). Notably, the claim to be "perfectly happy" (124), is a recurring one as well, underlining the android's uncharacteristic content and pleasant design. The complete personality change frames women with own interests, political engagement, and not prioritising housework as selfish, while women giving up

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197 „Is there anything," she asked, "that I don't do that you'd like me to do? Or that I *do* that you'd like me not to?" He didn't say anything, and then he said, "Whatever *you* want to do, that's all." He turned over and looked at her, up on his elbow. "Really," he said and smiled, "it's fine. Maybe I've been a little tired lately because of the commuting." He kissed her cheek. "Go to sleep," he said. (104ff).

these things in favour of domestic responsibilities are “doing right” (80) by a husband. The previously existing and very active Women’s Club, headed by the very women Joanna has tried to recruit for feminist political activism, suggests that a similarly radical change has occurred in all the wives: The women, who reportedly “applauded [Betty] Friedan as she cited the inequities and frustrations besetting the modern-day housewife” (57), are now androids collectively and deeply fulfilled by their domestic roles without any interest in feminism. Joanna also notices that their looks have (been) improved (cf.61). Name dropping Friedan is of interest in this context, because her work on “the problem that has no name” (Friedan 57), referring to the dissatisfaction of American housewives with their sanctioned spheres within a culture of nuclear family values, can safely be considered a major influence on the novel.[198] In *The Feminine Mystique* Friedan writes

> If a woman had a problem in the 1950s and 60s, she knew that something must be wrong with her marriage, or with herself. Other women were satisfied with their lives, she thought. What kind of woman was she if she did feel this mysterious fulfilment waxing the kitchen floor? She was so ashamed to admit her dissatisfaction that she never knew how many other women shared it (62).

From the often-referenced floor waxing to the accurate description of the guilt installed in the women by a status quo that facilitates yet punishes their dissatisfaction, Levin borrows heavily from Friedan’s insights. His men find a simple solution to their wives’ unfulfillment: murder and replacement by a woman-shaped machine unbothered by subjugation.

Examining the wives as men’s creations suggests what these men desire from the women they built – and what they dislike about the women they replace. The wife’s extreme uniformity allows for a collective personality profile: They are all submissive, compliant, unfailingly good-tempered, eager to please, and entirely content with the domestic sphere. They identify themselves through their husbands and prioritise the men’s wants and needs. They are devoid of interests, opinions, or goals beyond their husbands’ and lack any identity that allows for a potential conflict of interests. In short, they are wives only, not people. Much like, in general, the android figure reflects on us, as humans, this particular creation’s

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198 It shall be noted here that Friedan herself heavily disliked the Bryan Frobes’ 1975 film adaption of the novel and thought it a “rip-off” (Silver 62) of the women’s movement.

characterisation does reflect its creators: the men who commission, design, and cohabit with the android wives are portrayed to have no interest in female personhood that necessitates having to accommodate any interests beyond their own. They seek an aesthetically pleasing, sexually available domestic servant.

The novel's literal portrayal of womanhood reduced to a narrow role goes still further than that: The men create them not only as fantasy objects, but as a tool, designed for a very narrow range of uses. This utilisation constitutes systemic objectification of women in the community. Joanna at first compares the android's behaviour to that of actresses in advertisements (cf.65),[199] and later flat out calls them "robots" (97). The wives' lack of human qualities and consequent non-humanity is particularly evident in the fact men are never portrayed directly interacting with their wives post-replacement. "The men go out and the women stay in" (74) implies that they socialise at the Men's Association with each other, rather than with their partners. The wives do not function as a source of sociality, to their men or each other. Even their children are rarely shown engaging with them. They exist in isolation and communicate in repetitive phrases, observing protocols rather than human action and reaction.[200] They are de-socialised and thus de-humanised. Notably, the men do not perceive their androids as lesser than their mimetic templates. On the contrary, eliminating their personhood is framed as an improvement, thus rejecting mimetic excellence as the measure of success in female androids. The controllable, self-less wives are seen as superior versions of their previous human selves. When Joanna tries to flee and is being chased by the men, one of them remarks: "My gosh […] We don't want *robots* for wives. We want real women" (168). This statement, part of the continuous refusal to acknowledge the situation for what it is even as the men actively hunt Joanna

199 The association with the perfect housewives prominently featured in 60s and 70s commercials is no coincidence. Betty Friedan writes about the manipulative techniques in female targeted advertising at the time in *The Feminine Mystique*. She describes an interview with a motivational researcher (cf. Friedan 324), who explains the homogenous character of the commercials targeting women with a conscious effort by the advertisers to reinforce the domestic role of women: "The client would be too frightened. He wants to sell pie mix. The woman has to want to stay in the kitchen. […] If we tell her to be an astronomer, she might go too far from the kitchen." (325). Considering the major influence television has had on the culture of the time, the influence this purposefully one-sided depiction of women has had is not to be underestimated.

200 This can be read as a reversal of *Frankenstein's* isolation through corporeal monstrosity. The wives are perfect artificial bodies, yet are similarly socially rejected. They can be read as reverse-creatures: beautiful and soulless.

through Stepford, can either be read as sarcastic mockery or indicates the actual mindset of the men. Realness is here used as a qualifier: to the men, their artificial wives are real women, suggesting that their former human wives were, in turn, not real to them. This indicates that their understanding of real-ness excludes actual personhood when it comes to women and is rather attached to a specific role model, defined by them. Their social authority defines identity parameters for women and creates a society in which women who transgress them disqualify themselves from the identifier 'woman': They become un-real.

This exclusion practice has many historical cultural predecessors. Most notably related is the so-called Cult(ure) of Domesticity, or Cult of the True Woman, a term describing cultural attitudes towards femininity in the US during the 19th century. True Womanhood is a set of qualities at the time perpetuated as women's true nature – though in some aspects directly opposed to other, also supposedly 'natural', models of femininity. Barbara Welter has published an analysis of the social narrative perpetuating this model, as well as the language used to describe it. Her extensive evaluation of women's magazines published between 1820 and 1860 shows the cultural prevalence and influence of the idea:

> Authors who addressed themselves to the subject of women in the mid-nineteenth century used [True Woman] as frequently as writers on religion mentioned God. Neither group felt it necessary to define their favorite terms; they simply assumed – with some justification – that readers would intuitively understand exactly what they meant. (151).

The model woman of the time was comprised of "piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity" (Welter 152) – a historical sentiment Levin's fictional androids are strongly reminiscent of. These defining qualities are of interest here, because they underline the stability of the gendered hierarchal order they facilitate and, at the same, time reveal how malleable they are to male preference. Comparing the historic model to the fictional one shows the historically stable pressure on women to confine themselves into a role subservient to men and society. Additionally, it demonstrates how the supposed 'nature' of women is modified according to society's, and by extension men's, needs and wants.

Purity, in the sense of sexual monogamy to a married partner, is a recurring motif in societal narratives on femininity. According to Welter,

> Purity was as essential as piety to a young woman, its absence as unnatural and unfeminine. Without it she was, in fact, no woman at all, but a member of some lower

> order. […] to be guilty of such a crime, in the women's magazines at least, brought madness or death. (154).[201]

Ensuring female sexual fidelity has been a somewhat stable male interest throughout history and consequently, female sexuality has been subject to suppression. Declaring female sexual desire itself unnatural has been expedient, whether due to general interest in a pure bloodline or personal possessiveness. Still, complete control over women's sexuality collectively or individually remains unattainable. The artificial wives of Stepford, however, are by design controllable and devoid of desires of their own and constitute are a perfect realisation of this goal. They are 'pure' in a way a woman who possesses independent sexuality cannot be. Since their sexuality is programmable both sexual availability and the complete absence of sexual competition can be ensured.

The Stepford wives' submissiveness, as well as their domesticity, fulfil the requirements True Womanhood postulates in a similar way: flawless, and without necessitating any social or religious pressure. Their identity revolves around their husbands' and families' comfort. They are the woman "completely dependent upon him, an empty vessel, without legal or emotional existence of her own" (155), Welter describes. The android women the men create are perfect fulfilments of a historically traceable fantasy society has consistently attempted to pressure women into.

Piety does not enter the novel's version of a perfect woman according to 20th-century American men. The general decline in emphasis on religion in the community and period depicted in the novel has resulted in abandoning the spiritual duties of the True Woman. During the 19th century, this duty was still of the essence and considered a vital part of proper femininity. Susan Hill Lindley, in *A History of Women and Religion in America*, notes how this belief is directly opposed to early Christian doctrines on womanhood, which generally framed women as spiritually inferior (cf.52). However, confronted with the reality of men's disinterest in pious behaviour, the responsibility for religious practice was

201 Refusal to comply with the restrictions of gender roles was, as Welter shows here, associated with madness. The concept of female hysteria, madness, and similar de-legitimisations are well-documented mechanisms supporting the portrayal of female gender non-conformists as un-real or at least unaccountable. It is an accusation Joanna, too, receives, both from herself (cf.46ff) and from her husband (cf.133).

consequently shifted to women, who not only stood to lose their own, but also men's souls to eternal damnation lest they perform their identity correctly. This omission shows that the supposedly 'natural' state of women can and does adjust to societal change. However, prior to the feminist movement, these adjustments rarely benefitted women themselves. The abandonment of religious values in *The Stepford Wives* demonstrates that the identity prescribed to women is neither natural nor stable, as is the societal hierarchy that they function in: In the novel, men replace God, as they become the creators. This motif can also be found in *Frankenstein*, *R.U.R.*, and the reception and development of the Pygmalion topos, where divine intervention humanising the statue was replaced with (male) artistic might as the source of Galatea's humanity (cf. Kormann 75). While in most of these instances man supposedly stands for human, it is predominantly men who are depicted in this role and often women, who are created, establishing a gendered creative hierarchy.

As suggested earlier, the male creators also reveal themselves through their creation: their effort to design a perfect companion characterises the male gender role. It follows that novel portrays the men, too, as uniform, if not in artificially realised looks then in desires and insecurities: They all resent the realities of a relationship with an autonomous person and they all desire the same "smiling, empty passivity" (118), as Friedan describes it. This has two effects: Firstly, it suggests that the male gender role is restrictive, too, and secondly, it allows the men to function as a common, homogenous enemy and a unified adversary defined by their male-ness in the text. The men manifest a uniform identity in relation to their robot wives, just like humanity manifests itself in relation to their fictional android creations. This parallel also includes the problems of simplification, one-dimensionality, cultural reciprocity, and artificiality discussed over the course of this book. *The Stepford Wives*' characterisation of men mirrors our characterisation of ourselves through the android figure and shares its limitations. The novel constructs men and the male gender as a by-product of its literal construction of women; the lack of nuance and unified presence facilitating their textual function. This suggests similar concessions for the android figure and its defining and constant function as a mimetic Other to reflect humanity on.

The men's function as a collective threat is gradually established and realised towards the novel's climax: As Joanna begins to realise the plan, she also realises that all men in town are potentially dangerous to her on account of their gender:

> 'I've begun to suspect that the men are behind it,' she said. […]
> 'Which men?' [Dr. Fancher] asked.
> Joanna looked at her hands. 'My husband,' she said. 'Bobbie's husband. Charmaine's.' She looked at Dr. Fancher. 'All of them,' she said. (139).

Her fear of all men's potential betrayal[202] references the general state of uncertainness in female-male interaction within a patriarchal and post-patriarchal society. It depicts feelings of female isolation before an abstract oppressor, who could potentially be embodied by any representative of the other sex – as well as representatives of one's own. This vague fear is here literalised: an existent, yet intangible experience made tangible. The men in the text embody a far more complex extratextual culture that seeks to control women in the same way if not by the same means. The escalation to murder and robotic replacement in the novel illustrates the basic mechanism of actual patriarchal and post-patriarchal societies: the reduction of women to controllable entities. Interestingly, the Cult of the True Woman effectively sought to control not only women, but also men. The stereotype was not only portrayed as an ideal for women to aspire to, but also necessitated a corresponding image of men. The same women's magazines described men as a contradictory mix between absolute authority women must subjugate themselves to and helpless victims of their nature, only redeemable by a True Women, who "saved them from themselves" (Welter 156). Women were encouraged to follow the ideal, to counteract man's fallible human nature, lest the "excesses of human passions" (Welter 163) throw society into turmoil. Women were to suppress their passion, to control men's; establishing a form of female authority if an oppressive and self-destructive one. The Stepford wives, however, counteract this original purpose because they are categorically unable to control their men. On the contrary, the men's human passions are what creates these 'women' in the first place and are the guideline of their being. Thus, the pious

202 The novel makes it a point to also introduce a black family to Stepford, underlining that all men, in this case is a racially inclusive term and not strictly restricted to white American culture. This generalisation contradicts Betty Friedan's opposition to nuance her work with regards to class or race (cf. Friedan 526).

True Woman of the 19th century is relegated to a mindless sex-doll[203] and domestic slave in *The Stepford Wives*.

A recurring theme in both historical and fictional versions of the perfect woman is to disqualify women who do not adhere to a certain standard as 'unnatural', or 'un-real'. To sufficiently delineate them from compliant women, those who do not perform their womanhood according to the current standard, can and have been declared 'non-women'. The term True Womanhood and its writings imply that women who differ from this standard are 'untrue' women, in other words, no women at all. Welter also quotes the terms "semi-women" (173), "mental hermaphrodites" (173). This goes beyond a mere social devaluation of certain lifestyles and constitutes revoking their identities in itself. Creating a cultural standard is an effective control mechanism because demonising deviation through social shaming takes advantage of affirmative group dynamics and puts the onus on the renegade individual rather than requiring the intended standard to prove valid. Declaring the desired character of women 'natural' and any other 'un-natural' follows this strategy. Women whose opinions differ, and whose desires do not comply can thus simply be declared to be no women at all, rather than be engaged with. Revoking their identities is a way to delegitimise and punish them. Since the realness of their identity in the eyes of society is dependent on the correct performance of this identity, it follows that woman, as a concept, is an unstable label and can be revoked at any time. A real woman can become unreal if society's definition changes or she enters a different cultural context. The female gender role is presented as an inert, 'natural' quality but it historically is not. Womanhood remains a culturally conditional concept, rather than an inclusive state of being all women inherently possess. It can therefore be argued that femininity, as we currently perceive it and in the forms we have perceived it in the past, is an artificial concept. Similar to humanity, it can be perceived as a unifying identity constructed by cultural narratives and imposed upon all subjects so assigned.

This parallel is of interest in the context of my project as a whole: Is humanness, a concept the previous chapters have repeatedly shown to be a constructed and

203 Interestingly, the text avoids the term 'doll' for its androids throughout, despite the existing product and its fitting association with objectified femininity.

occasionally revocable or awardable label, an artificial identity? The various artistic examples at hand suggest that at least the dimensions and perhaps even the existence of a unified human identity are controversial. We have persistently questioned, scrutinised, and challenged ourselves through artistic reflection and philosophical discourse. Historically, we have not been shy in questioning or denying the humanity of our military enemies, economic subjects, and ethnic Others. We attest 'inhumanity', where we feel currently accepted ethics violated, and project the term 'humane' onto a large variety of human and even non-human practices. More and more, human identity is recognised as an abstract cultural concept, rather than a naturally inherent identity. However, we have seldom rejected it completely. Humanity remains and exists, at least as a social identifier that we associate ourselves and ours with. What exactly this identifier is defined by remains up for debate.

As part of this very discourse, *The Stepford Wives* offers an interesting definition of humanity: The text's juxtaposition between human women and their artificial counterparts reveals an understanding of humanity based on imperfection and variety. The text characterises the artificial wives as "immaculate" (61, 62, 123, 124, 125, 175), their looks and houses flawless. The non-artificial women, in contrast, are "rushed and sloppy and irritated and alive" (87), all in their own, individual way. The men, too, are portrayed as imperfect, both looks-wise and by their murder-conspiracy. While their character flaws seem more of virtue to themselves ("You must think we're a townful of geniuses […] Leonardo Da Vinci and Albert Einstein, maybe" 167ff), their physical flaws are simply irrelevant. Walter criticises his own weight gain (cf.134), to soften his criticism of Joanna's looks, suggesting that he is aware of his own physical flaws. He, however, opts to change only her. Joanna's later mental snap-shot of him shows his physical attractiveness declining:

> Joanna looked at Walter. […] Stubble sanded his cheeks and darkened his chin-cleft. His face was fuller than she had thought – he was gaining weight – and below his wonderfully blue eyes pouches of flesh had begun to form. How old was he now? (155).

As she realises his plan, her perspective on him shifts. By addressing Walter's aesthetic flaws, the text underlines the Stepford Standard's hypocrisy: female humanness is a flaw to be criticised and if necessary artificially upgraded to a

certain male-centric standard, male humanness is allowed to be flawed and underlies no equivalent female-centric standard. This hypocrisy underlines the gendered societal aesthetic double-standard the text so aptly portrays. Women's value, identity, and humanity resides in their looks; a social reality that evokes *Frankenstein*'s deterministic corporality.

Walter's efforts to perfect Joanna's looks and character come at a cost that illustrates the text's understanding of personhood: The artificial women's programming is repetitive; they betray their nature by their robotic behaviour, single-mindedness, and homogenous purpose. In contrast, the human women – the focaliser, as well as the non-focalising characters – show complexity, emotional range, and independent goals. Even the background characters outside Stepford are described as "cheerful and talkative" (59), as well as "alert, lively, and quirky" (102); a noticeable antithesis to the languid indifference displayed by the androids. The human women organise politically – or choose not to. Some have careers, others are invested in hobbies: they read books or they excel at sports. They are portrayed as autonomous individuals, whereas the wives are entirely comprised of recurring algorithms. This opposition illustrates the text's definition of humanity: Humanness is complex, imperfect, and driven. Humanity is self-interest (on part of both men and women) but it is also subject to group dynamics, social pressure, and self-doubt. The novel portrays humanity as an antithesis to homogeneity and centralised control; it is situated at the deviation from repetitive standards. Interestingly, men do not focalise at all in the text; their individual perspectives are limited as per their textual function. Humanity is illustrated and negotiated with and alongside womanhood. The programmed machinery running the same protocols again and again thematises social programming, as discussed in *Uncanny Valley*, and thematises it in the context of gender. It portrays restrictive female gender norms as a form of artificial humanity: a control mechanism ultimately aiming to compel women to the wives' homogeneity and slavish adherence to their roles. *The Stepford Wives*' narrative is able to convey not only the ethical problem of a world truly compliant to binary gender roles but its inhumanity.

The parallels between discourses on humanity and gender indicate a connection between the two concepts. Gender functions as a near-ubiquitous

identifier and core part of our identities. Our arguably most important categorisation device, second only to the overlaying human identity itself, has been traditionally used to define us immediately and severely. It is a self-identifier, as well as an external one. Gender regulates our interactions, shapes our social network, and sets the boundaries of our identity. The need to assign gender also pertains to androids: throughout our collective artistic imagination we have consistently felt it necessary to explicitly identify the gender of these characters, usually even before we discuss their humanity. Benesch even goes as far as attesting a "synecdochic relationship between writing and engendering" (2002, 19), as discussed earlier, in the context of *Frankenstein*. From the very beginning of this analysis, gender has permeated all its aspects: Gender identity entangles our corporeal, emotional, and social selves; shaping our self-perception as much as our perceived humanity does. In *Gender Trouble* Judith Butler emphasises this indivisibility when she writes:

> Are there even humans who are not, as it were, always already gendered? The mark of the gender appears to 'qualify' bodies as human bodies; the moment in which an infant becomes humanized is when the question, 'is it a boy or girl?' is answered. Those bodily figures who do not fit into either gender fall outside the human, indeed constitute the domain of the dehumanized the abject against which the human itself is constituted (1990, 151).

Butler demonstrates the interconnection between gender and human identity and the impossibility to exist as humans without pressure to also adhere to binary gender assignment. Genderless-ness is perceived as Other. The incorrect performance of gender, too, is subject to delegitimising or even dehumanising language, as the analysis has shown. By the same token, binary gender roles with strict parameters are dehumanising by suppressing individual personhood and expression. Stepford's wives illustrate this double dehumanisation and function as a literal representation of it. While human, the protagonist shares what it feels like to be considered less than an ideal, to feel un-womanly compared to a stylised, homogenous version of femininity propagated by society at large. Her android counterpart later adheres perfectly to this version but only as an utterly dehumanised version of her.

What differentiates *The Stepford Wives* from other android-related art discussed so far is an inverted relation of humanity and quality in the androids. While other android narratives are characterised by the progressive mimetic

excellence of the android figure and the subsequent discussion of humanity's boundaries and access points, humanness is here eliminated in order to achieve a satisfying performance of the female gender role. The absence of flaws in the Stepford androids, and their consequentially lacking human qualities, hinder their mimetic ability. This lack, however, is not considered inferior, but superior to their human reference by the men and, to an extent, society at large. Consequently, it can be argued that gender is potentially a more rigid and restrictive category than humanity itself. While humanness is being stretched out, its boundaries blurred and its definition extended, cultural notions of femininity stagnate and still seek to shape its subjects instead of shaping themselves to them. Humanity is subject to change in a way gender has not been.[204] Efforts to decentralise human identity and develop us towards a post- or transhumanist understanding of ourselves have failed to transcend gender in the same way. As *The Stepford Wives* and countless other examples show, art has often wondered simultaneously whether an android and a woman can be considered fully human.

The analysed art reveals persistent differences in the depiction of female and male android figures regarding design, agency, and function, which demonstrates the continued adherence to binary gender roles in android art. That art concerned with post-human figures should subject itself almost in its entirety to a binary understanding of sex and gender is remarkable.[205] The vast majority of art featuring android characters genders them without reflecting that choice. Male bodies are chosen as neutral representatives of (artificial) humanity, as seen in *Frankenstein*, "The Bicentennial Man", and *Uncanny Valley*; while female androids function as explicitly female and predominantly exist in passive relation to their male makers and fellow androids, as seen in the Pygmalion myth and *R.U.R. Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* does break with the lack of female android agency but its focalisation is still exclusively male-centred and the female androids are portrayed exclusively through the male perspective. Android art as a

204 This assessment refers to mainstream cultural notions and norms about woman- and manhood, which, especially if considered a global, trans-cultural concept have largely remained rigidly binary, heteronormative, and conservative in their associations. Nevertheless, alternative interpretations of female and male-ness, non-binary and queer identities have existed and still are emerging and challenging these established notions.

205 Even the Turing test was originally based on a parlour game of gender detection, establishing the very real connection between perceived humanity and gender-determination early on.

whole demonstrates that the neutral human norm is commonly considered male. Male assigned androids are typically perceived as a neutral projection surface for the boundaries of human identity. Female ones, meanwhile, are overwhelmingly determined by their gender and have predominantly functioned as one-dimensional objects; often optimised for the male gaze. Traditionally, female androids are chosen to depict inhumanly perfect beauty, rather than actual, female humanity. They commonly accessorise and assist much more complex artificial or human male protagonists and generally function as objects rather than subjects. They are heavily associated with sexuality, as well as service, underlining this object status.

The association with service and servitude relates the figure to the previously mentioned considerations on dehumanisation through class. Since "the gendered, classed, and raced category of servants is situated on the boundary of humans and things" (Paarsonen 49), the android figure is singularly qualified to represent them. The overwhelming restriction of female android characters to (sexual) servitude adds a gendered dynamic to the previous analysis of the connection in *R.U.R.* In "Class and Its Close Relations: Identities Among Women, Servants, and Machines" Alexandra Chasin states that the "subject-object opposition has always been an inadequate model for understanding social identities and models" (74). Her paper demonstrates our capability for human objectification – and dehumanisation. Her assertion that "[b]ecause identities derive from doing, rather than from being, work serves a definitive role in the distinctions between humans and our Others." (74), has interesting implications for the restrictive function of female androids in the vast majority of android art. If a subject can be made object by their primary task, then a female identity near-exclusively derived from depictions of (sexual) servitude must be shaped by it. The subject-object opposition is dissolved, creating an artistic depiction of artificial womanhood characterised by dehumanising objectification.

Male androids, too, are subject to objectification: in a violent function, for example in android armies. They are, however, also the predominant figures of self-reflection and budding humanity. This trend demonstrates how the male gender is considered the default meant to function in a variety of narrative positions, while femininity is considered Other. This binary association is rooted

in historical patriarchal values incorporated into gender roles that still affect us: Mary Daly has called these so-called fembots[206] an "archetypal role model forced upon women throughout fatherland: the unstated goal/end of socialization into patriarchal womanhood" (198). These gender roles, as *The Stepford Wives* thematises, are partially characterised by restricting their subjects' humanness, especially in the case of female gender norms. Conformation to them necessitates assimilation and assimilation suppresses individual character. Female assigned android characters' limited application and their overwhelming association with the familiar spheres is therefore not surprising, especially considering a historical and cultural background that has disregarded individual personhood in women so consistently. The same background also fuels a technological reality that not only overwhelmingly genders its products implicitly and explicitly but also, as discussed earlier, predominantly adheres to traditional gender roles concerning their design and application. This and other cultural biases have also been shown to be transferrable to the algorithms that constitute neural networks and other 'artificially intelligent' software.[207] This part of the android figure's proposed mimetic cycle demonstrates its self-reflective nature: We project ourselves – our cultural hierarchies and internal Others – not only onto our fictitious self-mimesis but also onto our technological realisation of it. Technology may inhabit us, our lives, our minds and our selves but we also inhabit it. Social Bias is part of this

206 A term coined by the 1976 TV series *The Bionic Woman* and their depiction of a partially faceless female android army controlled by a male scientist and reintroduced by the 1997 spy satire *Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery* as female killer robots in lingerie, with weaponised breasts.

207 Biases include racial, gender and socio-economic prejudice in the data sets algorithms work with, resulting in non-neutral outcomes shaped by cultural partiality. See
Criado-Perez, Caroline. 2019. *Invisible Women: Data Bias in a World Designed for Men.* London: Chatto&Windos.
Sun, Wenlong. Nasraoui, Olfa. Shafto, Patrick. 2018. "Iterated Algorithmic Bias in the Interactive Machine Learning Process of Information Filtering". *Proceedings of the 10th International Joint Conference on Knowledge Discovery, Knowledge Engineering and Knowledge Management* Vol. 1: 110-118.
Lum, Kirstisan. Isaac, William. 2016. "To Predict and Serve?". *Significance* 13/5. <https://rss.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/j.1740-9713.2016.00960.x> (last accessed 25/01/21).
Madgavkar, Anu. 2021. *A Conversation on Artificial Intelligence and Gender Bias*. McKinsey and Company Podcast with Ioana Niculcea and Muneera Bano.
<https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/asia-pacific/a-conversation-on-artificial-intelligence-and-gender-bias (last accessed 13/07/21).
Zou, James. Schiebinger, Londa. 2018. "AI Can Be Sexist and Racist – It's Time to Make it Fair". *Nature* **559**: 324-326.

projection and recognisable in what we build and how we frame it.[208] Its presence exposes a still deep-rooted cultural and social adherence to traditional social norms and hierarchies that are relevant to any efforts being made to dismantle them elsewhere.

Perhaps in an effort to address this problem, recent popular android-related art has not abolished but begun to question and thematise the traditional depiction of gender in Science Fiction. The 2016 series *Westworld*, to which II.3.4 is devoted, depicted a female android protagonist as its reflective character. In 2020, *Raised By Wolves'* female protagonist combined themes of motherhood and the artificial female body as a weapon. Kazuro Ishiguro's 2021 novel *Klara and the Sun* uses a female child-android protagonist to explore the same gender-neutral themes of human replaceability and artificial-non-artificial hierarchies many examples in this book have explored through the cultural neutrality of male characters.[209] These and other examples show that, in parts of the world, art reflects the societal development of the female gender role and consequently expands female android characters' possible functions. However, the progress achieved here rests upon a contrasting tradition and utilises this contrast in its depictions. They are also still a minority within a larger corpus of works adhering to the traditional structure. Therefore, the artificial female remains associated with traditional binary gendering and its associated role, even as it undermines it. Similarly, budding social discourse on the male gender role has allowed for some exploration of spheres reserved for female characters in android related art. While male assigned android characters have been previously sexualised on occasion,[210]

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208 For a more in-depth discussion on this topic see my earlier cited article on binary gendering in current android technology, which contrasts examples from the two largest investors in robotics research at present: the military sector and the erotic industry.

209 These examples rest on a progressive engagement individual earlier works have had with the topic. For example, Marge Piercy's 1991 novel *He, She, and It*; a romance between a human woman and a male android in a post-apocalyptic setting that reversed the traditional gender dynamics of this topos.

210 Paasonen has listed the 1973 film *Westworld* and its 1976 sequel *Futureworld* as examples for this (cf.50). The 2004 song "Coin-Operated Boy", by The Dresden Dolls also reverses the familiar gender dynamic by having a female singer wish for a male android companion:
"Coin-operated boy/ Sitting on the shelf he is just a toy/ But I turn him on and he comes to life/ Automatic joy/ That is why I want a coin-operated boy/Made of plastic and elastic/ He is rugged and long-lasting/ Who could ever ever ask for more/ Love without complications galore/ Many shapes and weights to choose from/ I will never leave my bedroom/ I will never cry at night again/ Wrap my arms around him and pretend".

this has strictly been confined to the boundaries of their gender role's specification of heterosexual masculinity; framing sexualisation as empowerment, not victimisation. This results in the general absence of male victims of sexual violence in android art until *Westworld* included it into its exploration of violent infringement onto artificial bodies in 2016. These developments once again show that the android in art is a mirror, reflecting human self-reflection. Both the figure's restrictions and the current endeavours to overcome them mirror our social progression from regressive norms and roles – and our continued entanglement in them.

In conclusion, the analysis suggests that contrary to the majority of texts analysed in this thesis, negotiating the boundaries of humanity through the android figure is not the object of *The Stepford Wives*. It is rather a negotiation of the humanity of women, as perceived in patriarchal and post-patriarchal societies. Humanness is here not the goal but the issue. It is not to be achieved but overcome. The android figures are in this case not used to demonstrate how humanity delineates itself from its mimetic copy but instead convey the inhumanity of strict adherence to societal gender roles. It portrays our gendered identities as inherently relational results of sociality and socialisation. Art, just like life, perpetuates our influence on each other, the positive and the negative. The consistent line that can be drawn from Galatea to a Stepford wife is no coincidence: The difference between male and female-assigned android figures' function in art is remarkable and highlights a whole genre's continued susceptibility to binary gendering. Art that partakes in trans- and post-humanist discourse is not necessarily post-gender. While we embark on a decade-long journey exploring the limits of human identity, boldly engaging with artificial humanity as a means to explore ourselves, our artificial projection surface's gender has been of surprising importance and little variation. Femininity, artificial or not, has rarely been deemed suitable for it and was rather used as an object than a subject. Consequently, the discourse on humanity is overwhelmingly created by men, for men, about men. The Stepford Wives exposes this trend and – over two hundred years after *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* – constitutes a vindication of the humanity of women.

After the last chapter focussed on the specific and deterministic implications of gender for the android, I am going to consider gender-neutral, positive social effects on the figure in the following. Artificial human self-construction, here made autonomous and explicit, is explored with a focus on sociality as a humaniser, specifically enquiring into constructing artificial human identity in relation to our non-human animal Others.

### II.3.3 Human-Android-Animal Relationships in *Star Trek*

After the previous focus on internal boundaries and oppression to be found within the human category, this next example turns to our relationship to an Other we have created outside of it. Non-human animals and their relationship to the android are examined as an example for non-human identities established by humanity to distinguish their own. Their access to our social network, as well as their placement and treatment within it, demonstrate human social extension and the methodology of our identity creation through ontological Others and artificial hierarchies. In order to approach this aspect of our identity production as reflected in art, I will analyse Gene Roddenberry's *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. Originally airing between 1987 and 1994, it is the third Star Trek series in a sizable and presently still expanding multimedia franchise. I apply the format as an example for human-android-animal relationship-clusters in particular with regard to the interaction with non-human animals as an expression and negotiation of humanness. In accordance with the main thesis, the figure of the android, here in the form of Lieutenant Commander Data, is addressed as a projection surface meant to illustrate and elucidate humanity. Specifically, I examine his bonding with and identity creation through the non-human animal Other in relation to his human relationships in order to trace the series placement of humanity amongst its Others.

Data is introduced in the first double episode of the series and immediately established as an android meant to emulate human behaviour (cf. s1e1 3:50). He is depicted as convincingly humanoid, his non-humanity only indicated by the

slightly metallic colour of his skin and his yellow eyes.[211] In the second episode, Commander Riker encounters him leaning against a tree on the holodeck, where he practices whistling. When Riker finishes his tune he reacts enthusiastically. This early scene immediately introduces the android figure's artificiality and mimetic relationship to humanity; a characterisation that the series explores explicitly and in-depth:

Riker	Your bio says that you're a –
Data	Machine. Correct, sir. Does that trouble you?
Riker	*(hesitates)* To be honest... yes, a little.
Data	Understood, sir. Prejudice is very human.
Riker	Now that troubles me. Do you consider yourself superior to us?
Data	I am superior in many ways. But I would gladly give it up to be human.
Riker	*(studies Data, then)* Nice to meet you, Pinocchio. (s1e2 56:26).

From the very beginning of his character arch, Data is thus portrayed as explicitly and consciously artificial, as well as unambiguously acquisitive of humanness in any form. As is a sentient, self-aware android, based on mimetic algorithms analysing and imitating human behaviour, his story arc is dedicated to overcoming his artificial nature and developing humanity. He is characterised by an unequivocal devotion to this goal and an adamant interest in all things human. This setup allows the figure to function as a very explicit, outright projection surface for human self-portrayal and self-reflection. His frequent and expressed puzzlement at human behaviour and empathic attempts to understand the nuances of our motivations, instincts, and interaction have an alienating effect that enables the series to explore humanity as an abstract concept. Data's explicit artificiality and tireless imitation are used to expose humanity through its mimetic mirror. The process identifies the concept's core elements and reveals their social nature through the crew's interactions.

Furthermore, the series' futuristic setting allows for an unusually inclusive portrayal of humanity that is not necessarily confined by the boundaries familiar to the recipient. The series depicts a post-humanist universe that has already de-centralised humanity as one of many sentient, intelligent species.[212] Its diverse

211 His colouring is interesting as it takes steps towards ethnic ambiguity, which can be read as a deliberate contrast to the predominance of White and Asian android depictions.

212 In the following, the term human is meant to include these various humanoid species the series' setting includes. Since part of the Star Trek world building is a primordial human ancestor who genetically engineered the Milky Way's population as humanoid species (cf. s6e20), it is permissible to describe the majority of species portrayed as such. All these figures principally

non-humanity and somewhat normalised social inclusion differs from the other depictions I have engaged with so far. Captain Picard summarises the mindset as follows:

> "If it feels awkward to be reminded that Data is a machine, just remember that we are merely a different variety of machine, in our case electrochemical in nature." (s1e13 15:10).

As one non-human among many, who, by virtue of his mimetic design and behaviour, is relatable to humans, he is Other-enough to de-familiarize human behaviour but not so much so that he cannot access their social network. Data's character development is driven by social interaction and imitation. Both his human and non-human relations inform and form his character; determining his progressive development. Through the android figure, the series makes the implicit rules and norms of human relationships explicit. It allows the recipient to examine sociality from an outside perspective; making social dynamics visible and demonstrating their enormous impact on self-perception. The series as a whole emphasises human society as a social network more than a biological identity; a depiction enabled by the futuristic setting that places large parts of human society in an interactive relationship with alien lifeforms. This allows humans a centralised, collective identity: an Us, that is clearly and tangibly distinct from alien Others. *Star Trek*'s United Federation of Planets, too, by its very premise to discover new worlds and incorporate them into a cooperative network, promotes an accessible understanding of human society. This setup results in a concept of humanness that is open to alterity, including androids, and thus allows for Data to be considered approximately and ultimately completely human by most of his peers, despite his merely mimetic relationship to humanity. Additionally, the star ship setting and military-style ranking further limit the depicted network's complexity and offers a controlled environment to explore social dynamics and the emergence of artificial humanity.

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function as human-adjacent physically and cognitively, and mostly exhibit cultural differences. They are only very seldom so fundamentally different from humans as not to be counted as human for the purposes of this analysis. As a future narrative, the Star Trek universe generally portrays humanity as a concept with generous boundaries. This setup is productive for my project, since it promotes an essentialist view of humanity that reduces it to its abstract qualities, rather than biological vanities.

Data's humanity is an explicit goal both he himself and the humans surrounding him are aware of. In this, the character resembles "The Bicentennial Man", except for the overwhelming support instead of opposition Data's humanisation inspires: The crew assists and encourages the android. He is accompanied by a variety of characters functioning as support figures and discussion partners for his self-reflection and identity building: an understanding cyborg friend,[213] a genetically empathetic counsellor, other alien Others, and many more characters scientifically or emotionally interested in his progress. All of whom are actively and explicitly thematising human identity and his access to it. Data's character development thus functions as a progressive construction of conceptual humanity. This construction is thoroughly analysed over the course of seven seasons, four films, and appearances in a 2020 reboot series featuring his 'daughter'.[214] His self-aware artificiality results in a detailed exploration of human identity and its practical boundaries:

> If being human is not simply a matter of being born flesh and blood, if it is instead a way of thinking acting and feeling, then I am hopeful that one day I will discover my own humanity. […] Until then […] I will continue learning, changing, growing, and trying to become more than what I am. (s4e11 43:45).

Data's becoming is an active process, characterised by mimetic attempts at humour, camaraderie, romance, and other aspects of human social interaction. Sociality as a common denominator in the android's mimetic humanisation establishes the series' understanding of humanity as a social entity. Data develops his humanity through the relationships he entertains as a colleague to his crew, a friend to those closest to him – and an owner to his cat Spot.

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213 The character functions as a structural relation to Data's artificial humanity: Geordi is a mechanically enhanced human, a cyborg. Because of his prosthetic, he embodies an intersection between the fully human characters and Data's explicit artificiality. His hybrid-status in between artificial and non-artificial corporality poses questions similar to *Uncanny Valley*'s treatment of the bodily boundaries of authenticity. The character is also portrayed by a black actor, LeVar Burton, further challenging artificial humanity's established aesthetic.

214 Reproductive rights are among the civil rights Data, supported by Captain Picard and others, successfully contends for. The series thematises several legal battles determining his status as a sentient lifeform with civil rights. His classification as personnel instead of property of Starfleet and his right to refuse experimentation on himself (and his offspring) are of particular interest for his character development. In this, the series echoes "The Bicentennial Man"'s exploration of the legal boundaries of humanity, with similar focus on subject status, bodily autonomy and freedom. The issue of the mimetic reproduction reproducing is also reminiscent of similar thematisations in *Frankenstein*, *R.U.R.* and *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*.

Notably, Data's diverse relationships – human and non-human – are all of equal importance for his personal development. In order to place his non-human animal relationship correctly within his social network, his human relationships are briefly examined in the following: Data's various relationships with humans and human-adjacent species are shaped by his conflicting lack of emotional capability and urge for humanity. He struggles with emotionally motivated human behaviour like humour and the intricacies of human relationship. Interestingly, this problem is often portrayed as humorous rather than a serious challenge to his goal. The absence of all human feelings is not portrayed as detrimental to his platonic relationships, as he understands their function even if he does not experience them: "I am not mystified by the desire to be loved or the need for friendship. These are things I do understand" (s4e11 42:10). By portraying functioning relationships without emotional capability on the android's part, the series implies that sociality is distinct from emotionality for the artificial lifeform. Data can connect to those around him even though he has no emotional capabilities. The connections are portrayed as reciprocal, mutually wanted and gainful relationships, despite the one-sided emotional bonding. Data entertains friendships, even hierarchizes them (cf. s4e11 7:15), and at one point states that he aspires to marriage (cf. s4e11 18:45). This suggests that the social aspects of humanity can function independently from the emotional ones. Data is a fully functioning social agent within the full spectrum of human sociality: he inspires friendship, camaraderie, and even romantic love (cf. s4e15). He is also able to sustain the resulting relationship even though he cannot return their respective emotions.

His social functionality is facilitated by his mimetic capabilities. He develops social finesse and the nuances of human interaction by imitating progressively complex behaviourisms he observes. Since he is aware that he lacks emotionality, and often thematises this, his attempts at copying human behaviour are a self-professed attempt to humanise himself. Data functions within the group, by modelling himself after those around him and developing his programme. He imitates with varying success and often humorous effect[215] but his failures are

215 The humorous effect is most often created by a slight delay in appropriate verbal and physical expressions of emotions. His behaviour also often either lacks nuance (cf. s4e11 07:25) or manifests too intensely for the situation (cf. *Star Trek Generations* 21:35).

portrayed as endearing, not alienating. Although he perceives himself as an "outsider to human society" (s4e11 08:35), and is aware of the social challenges his non-humanity, and especially non-emotionality (cf. s4e25 09:40), eventuate, he is shown to perfect his mimesis over time and extends considerable processing power towards it. *Star Trek* thus finds meaning in equivalence: It expresses humanity through the non-human body and mind to make it explicit. The series explores the limitations of humanisation through mimetic approximation. Data is explicitly not human, yet human-enough to be engaging, to elicit social bonding. His ability to mimic human behaviour is essential to this engagement. This is evident, for example, when he acts as 'father' of the bride at the wedding of a friend and aspires to learn to dance for the event. While he effortlessly mimics the solo dancing he is shown, he has trouble with pair dancing, citing a "complex set of variables to coordinate" (s4e11 25:25). Notably, the interactive aspects that supersede mere imitation of steps are challenging to him. He can reproduce what he sees but leading, improvisation and the social interaction of pair-dancing is problematic for him and has to be practised. He is shown to succeed by the end of the episode, dancing with and among his human friends and crew. Dancing is here used to exemplify the more nuanced aspects of human sociality: a performative ritual that combines the straightforward physical imitation of steps with more complex, social interaction. Data's achievement enables him to function as part of the distinctly human ritual of the wedding ceremony and reception, becoming part of a human social collective in this instance. As the camera zooms out, he becomes part of the crowd, implying how he is accepted as part of it and its identity. Active, autonomous mimesis is thus depicted as the pivotal mechanism enabling Data's personal growth and humanisation. Framed by pseudo-technical terms his 'positronic brain'[216] and 'neural network circuits' evolve and grow more complex in proportion to the experiences he has and processes. Reproducing behaviour is essential for this development. Data's humanisation is the result of long-term observation and imitation: an essentially mimetic process.

His mimesis is so successful that he is able to inhabit various positions in the social network of the crew despite the emotional limitations of his artificial

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216 A term and concept coined by Isaac Asimov and also used in "the Bicentennial Man".

humanity.[217] While his non-humanity is regularly thematised verbally, physical reminders of it are portrayed as uncomfortable for his friends.[218] Transgressing Data's corporeal boundaries feels wrong to humans, which implies that they project humanity onto him, despite his explicit artificiality. Sociality suffices for a successful human identification with the android. Data's combined physical and social imitation of humanity is adequate to make him function as human, even though he explicitly is not. It is, for example, portrayed as sufficient for a crewmate and friend to develop romantic feelings for him. Their attempted relationship fails, because his performative imitation of various cultural depictions of romance is perceived as artificial by her. Here, the series draws a clear boundary between his person, which she emotionally and socially recognises as human, and his performed emotionality, which is perceived as artificial. His kind and attentive behaviour towards her – that she initially describes as "the things that matter" (s4e25 09:55) – elicit an emotional response in her. However, Data simply emulating popular romantic behaviour (pertaining to romantic rituals, language, and behaviours) is not enough to successfully change the relationship's social frame from platonic to romantic. Data can induce emotionality but possess none himself. "I am perhaps not nearly so human as I aspire to become", he concludes. (s4e25 43:35). After she leaves, the camera zooms in on him playing with his cat, in an ambiguous shot that could be interpreted as either unaffectedness or contemplation.

This particular storyline's conclusion with a shot of Data and Spot includes the non-human animal into the androidr's contemplation of humanness and underlines its meaningful function within his humanising process in the series. Data's animal husbandry is peculiar for a self-admitted emotionless being. None of his immediate social circle own cats, making it unclear, who he modelled this particular imitation of human behaviour from. Although he is physically not

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217 Among the many ways in which he becomes part of the human social sphere on the ship, his membership in an orchestra (cf. s4e25 04:45) is particularly interesting because of the way in which it combines his social and creative abilities, which are functional without emotional capabilities, with his mechanical precision framed as an asset rather than an inhuman artificiality.

218 "Geordi — I have to admit, Data... I never get used to seeing you like this.
Data — I do not understand. You are constantly working on similar electronic systems, yet their appearances do not disturb you.
Geordi — Yeah, but you're not just another electronic system.
Data — Thank you, Geordi. Nor are you just another biological organism." (s6e8 08:25).

capable of having feelings for his pet, he displays emotionally driven behaviour: he is consistently shown caring for it, perceiving its likes and dislikes, entertaining it, petting it, and talking to it. His behaviour is relational and he displays caring, bonding manners. Interestingly, this depiction is a reversal of the performative animal care portrayed in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, where it is designed to signify human emotionality. Here, the android, explicitly not capable of feeling emotions, displays a genuine connection to an animal. He generates hundreds of feed options for it, actively interacts with it, and shows concern for its well-being when he cannot. His attachment – not only to the concept of a pet but this specific cat[219] – is evident when he instructs a crewmate to take care of it:

| | |
|---|---|
| Data | Goodbye Spot. He will need to be fed once a day. He prefers feline supplement number 25. |
| Worf | I understand. |
| Data | And he will require water. And you must provide him with a sandbox. And you must talk to him. Tell him he is a pretty cat. And a good cat- |
| Worf | *cutting him off* I will … feed him. |
| Data | Perhaps that will be enough. (s7e6 31:00). |

Worf's refusal to provide emotional care for the unfamiliar pet despite his ability to do so underlines Data's behaviour towards it; contrasting a humanoid species capable but unwilling to emote and the android unable yet willing to. Since the relationships is not rational, or results-based and has no practical use, Data's genuine care for the animal seems to belie his lack of emotions. He indicates social bonding without having the emotional capabilities to derive any reciprocal gain from the relationship. His admission that taking care of the cat's physical needs is sufficient for its survival furthermore highlights that he transcends purely logical behaviour here and enacts a fully formed social relationship. His constant verbal acknowledgement of it and his attempts to impede on its typically feline disruptive behaviours by talking to it can be read in two ways: It indicates that Data views his social relationship to human and non-human animals the same and consequently engages both in the same way; and it suggests that he, like humans, anthropomorphises the cat.

Both readings are supported by other aspects of the relationship: Data observes and analyses Spot's behaviour, just like human behaviour, as part of his analysis and approximation of humanity. When Spot has kittens, he labels himself

219 Ironically, the cat's breed and even sex are changed several times throughout the series.

a parent and offers council to a human parent-to-be based on his experience (cf. s7e19 03:25). He repeatedly demonstrates that perceives the cat as similarly individual and autonomous as his human companions, supported by the fact that he addresses it in the same way: as a friend. Interestingly, when the series has him put the relationship in words, it is in the form of poetry.

> Ode to Spot
>
> *Felis catus* is your taxonomic nomenclature,
> An endothermic quadruped, carnivorous by nature;
> Your visual, olfactory, and auditory senses
> Contribute to your hunting skills and natural defences.
>
> I find myself intrigued by your subvocal oscillations,
> A singular development of cat communications
> That obviates your basic hedonistic predilection
> For a rhythmic stroking of your fur to demonstrate affection.
>
> A tail is quite essential for your acrobatic talents;
> You would not be so agile if you lacked its counterbalance.
> And when not being utilized to aid in locomotion,
> It often serves to illustrate the state of your emotion.
>
> O Spot, the complex levels of behaviour you display
> Connote a fairly well-developed cognitive array.
> And though you are not sentient, Spot, and do not comprehend,
> I nonetheless consider you a true and valued friend. (s6e5 03:00).

Undoubtedly, existence and placement of the poem mainly serve a humorous goal; contrasting the means of expression and analytical content. Nevertheless, Data's creative expression, as well as their object are of interest for my analysis, because he thematises not only his intrigue with the animal, and labels it in the same way he does his human friends but also addresses the question of sentience: Data rejects the idea of animal sentience[220] and yet dismisses the social consequences of that classification immediately. To him, the cat is a friend, regardless of whether it can reciprocate or even comprehend the notion. The prefix "true and valued" additionally emphasize that he gains something from the relationship, which is remarkable, considering that the series here portrays two

220 Animal sentience was still contested in mainstream discourse during the time this episode was written, filmed and aired in 1992. In order to trace the scientific paradigm shift on the topic see
Schönfeld, Martin. 2006. "Animal Consciousness: Paradigm Change in the Life Sciences". *Perspectives on Science* 14/3: 354-381. And
Cornish, Amelia R, Proctor, Helen S., Carder, Gemma. 2013 "Searching for Animal Sentience: A Systematic Review of the Scientific Literature". *Animals* 3/3: 882-906.

beings supposedly lacking established human understandings of emotionality and sentience. *Star Trek* thus portrays sociality, and by extension humanity, beyond and, at times, despite clear-cut boundaries meant to delineate it.

Data's non-reciprocal relationship with Spot mirrors his relationships with his human friends, who feel for him even though he is not capable of returning these feelings. The series thus illustrates the dynamics established between human and android through the depiction of cat and android. Data is part of the ship's professional, private, and at times even the romantic and sexual social network and thus successfully partakes in human sociality. Likewise, Spot and he maintain a relationship meaningful enough to inspire art, despite their respective limitations. Poetry is a curious choice, given the genre's traditional association with emotional expression and the authors inability to feel. Nevertheless, Data's poem references the cat's emotionally expressive body language and thus acknowledges its distinct animal emotionality, which shapes its feline sociality. Interestingly, this fits Kate Darling's statement on humanising movement in social robots[221] and the depicting of Data's mimetic body and body language as humanisers. Cat and android are likened, confirming Manuela Neuwirth's assessment that Data's "status as a machine connects him to nonhuman animals when contemplating historical considerations of animals as complex machines" (2). Neuwirth cites René Descartes' view of animals, as well as Donna Haraway's placement of the cyborg at the transgressive boundary between animal and human (cf. Haraway 2000, 293) to support the connection. She reads this blurring of human, android, and machine as a post-humanist paradigm shift (cf. Neuwirth 2). The portrayal of Spot as connecting corporal, emotional, and social aspects of the animal existence to access the anthropomorphic sphere suggests an inclusive concept of humanity in the series. Incidentally, the series makes a point of suggesting that the android's 'affection' is returned (within the means of feline expression), as it physically attacks nearly everyone in its vicinity except for Data. When Geordi jokingly threatens Spot because of this, Data appears distressed at thought of harming or hurting the cat, despite his inability to feel the emotion. This indicates that the android's sociality is able to elicit a quasi-emotional reaction in him. His subsequent attempt and failure to train the cat at Geordi's

221 See p.176ff.

suggestion serves several purposes: His surprise at the idea again indicates that he does not classify the cat as a hierarchically lower entity in the way a human would likely perceive a pet but rather in a similar way as his human relations. At the same time, it also portrays Data as very humanly susceptible to feline wiles and thus humanises him. As Geordi notes, he is not so much training the cat, as the cat is training him. Neuwirth interprets this apparent reciprocity toward a breaking of corporeal, emotional, and social boundaries:

> In the depiction of Data's relation to Spot, different modes of being in the world are connected on a level that defies the animal-(post)human boundary. Transmission of affect as a pivotal channel of interspecies communication complements, and in fact, surpasses verbal language. […] it is the fusion of their pre-verbal, affective states that is crucial in the depiction of the animal-alien relationship. The fact that Spot feels about Data as about a human being speaks for the breaching of bodily boundaries and the successful transmission of affect. This also renders insignificant wherefrom the android's emotions originate. (10ff.).

The relationship between cat, android, and humans is functionally social despite the differentiating means of expression and neurological capabilities. By depicting this relational cluster as a successful social network that accesses emotional and corporeal spheres, the series suggests that human sociality is functional in relation to emotional and corporeal alterity.

*Star Trek: Generations* confirms the android's emotional attachment to his pet but also Neuwirth's assessment of insignificance. Data is equipped with the 'emotion chip', a device designed to enable him to experience human emotion. When he rescues Spot from the Enterprise's wreck, he is subsequently moved to tears by their reunion. His relationship to the animal is implied to signify his successful humanisation. Notably, it is not the emotional expression that marks this but the relationship itself, the attachment built before Data becomes capable of expressing it through emotions. The series underlines this distinction by subsequently reducing the emotion chip to an optional asset for Data, who continues to use it but also de-activates it in situations where emotionality hinders his effectiveness (cf. *Star Trek: Frist Contact*; *Star Trek: Insurrection*). The conscious choice to introduce emotional ability to the character but not establish it as essential to his humanness, confirms the series' focus on sociality as the main source of Data's humanity. His relationships exist independent from his ability to express them emotionally. He establishes, maintains, and evolves them socially,

with or without being able to feel. His eventual death, sacrificing himself for his captain (cf. *Star Trek: Nemesis*), lacks emotional expression and is not less impactful because of this. Similarly, his relationship with his cat simply gains a means of expression and is not fundamentally changed by emotional capability. This confirms the series general depiction of sociality as a distinct quality that is not dependent on emotionality to humanise the android.

That the series should choose Data's relationship to Spot to illustrate this distinction so frequently, instead of a human-focused portrayal, is interesting, given the clear cultural distinction we commonly make between ourselves and non-human animals. Our relationship to animals other than ourselves is exemplary for the human practice of constructing Others that allow us to delineate ourselves from. We construct identity by differentiating ourselves, via artificial hierarchies or ontologies. Spot's existence thus serves a double function in the series: By owning a pet, Data imitates human behaviour and reproduces the artificial hierarchical relationship humans have established with Other animals. However, the series also questions this hierarchy by depicting the relationship as structurally equally essential to Data's humanisation and character development as human are. The assumed ontological boundary between humanity and non-humanity connects Data and Spot: both are not human, and arguably lesser-than, according to implicit and occasionally explicit cultural hierarchies the recipient is likely familiar with.[222]

In *Crossing Boundaries: Investigating Human-Animal Relationships*, this cultural process is examined in great detail. Editors Lynda Birke and Jo Hockenhull thematise the "hegemony of humans" (3) in their introduction to the collection. They refer to the multi-levelled relationships we entertain with different types of animals (cf.6) and the construction of an ever-present, artificial opposition between "'human' and 'animal' embedded within our culture" (2). Nik Tylor's essay "Animals, Mess, Method: Post-humanism, Sociology and Animal Studies"

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222 This is also thematised in the series, evidenced by several attempts of outside and inside forces to declare Data a proprietary object ("Data is a toaster." (s2e9 23:50)). The series engages with this problem by linking ownership over the android to slavery (cf. s2e933:10). Interestingly, this suggests that Data here functions as a stand-in to a potential race of androids and his rights exemplify theirs. This again contextualises questions of artificial humanity with a group dynamic, according to which the individual android can be awarded humanity, or in this case human rights, because of its integration into a reciprocal community. This echoes similar concerns portrayed in "The Bicentennial Man".

from the collection, confirms this notion and goes even further than that: Taylor fundamentally questions the validity of essential categorisation:

> In particular [post-humanisms] offer a challenge to the idea of human centrality by positing the idea that 'pure' categorizations (of, say human v animal, natural v social) operate politically and ideologically and are thus based on a false premise. The argument here is that pure categories— i.e. those with neat boundaries— do not exist other than in figments of textual imaginings. Instead, there is a recognition of the messiness of categories, of the hybrids that exist as a direct challenge to such ideas. (38).

This proposed "messiness" supports *Star Trek*'s depiction of Data among Others: humans, non-humans, artificial humans, cyborgs, and non-human animals. The lack of clear ontological boundaries between the range of identities, hybrid identities, and seemingly contradictory classifications facilitates Data's boundary-crossing sociality. The fact that the relationship to his cat is portrayed as equally humanising as his relationship to humans themselves, confirms Taylor's idea of sociality as "messy, knotty and emergent" (Taylor 39), rather than inherently hierarchical. Humanity is portrayed as an abstract concept rather than predetermined biology and as such accessible for aliens, androids, and even animals. In this absence of pure categorisation, relational dynamics change. The self-fashioning properties of clear distinction between an I versus an Other are replaced by what Donna Haraway has called "a knot of species coshaping one another in layers of reciprocating complexity all the way down." (2007, 42), in *When Species Meet*. The recurring image of the knot is meant to replace the culturally established opposition between animals as part of 'nature', a term I have previously discussed as artificially constructed "opposite to human culture" (Taylor 37).[223] Taylor, too, argues that this opposition is an entirely artificial construct and part of a larger system of discourses establishing cultural distinctions. He cites Foucault's critique of irreducible agents in knowledge creation, who describes how power and knowledge are joint in discourse (cf. Foucault 2008, 100). Foucault also thematises the cultural construction of a 'normal' and an 'unnormal' in opposition of each other[224] in this context; a notion *Frankenstein* utilises in its rejection of corporeal Other and *The Stepford Wives* thematised while exploring the female gender role. According to Taylor, the

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223 See p.19ff.

224 Taylor presents heteronormativity (cf.45) as an example for this process. Birke and Hockenhull earlier mention colonialism and gender (cf.21) in a similar context.

interplay of these discourses and power structures establishes unquestioned cultural "'Truths'" (45), such as human superiority over animals.

> In this particular case the discourse is that of animality v humanity where, for example, humanity stands for all that is good – culture, reason, intelligence, language – and animality stands for all that is to be avoided if one wants to be a good human being – irrationality, bestiality, impulse and so on. Furthermore this discourse is so firmly embedded in our (western) culture that it is axiomatically taken to be 'the truth' and thus is rarely questioned. However, the categories aren't 'natural' or the outcome of some pre-existing and universal 'Truth' but are created them – selves by our very own (human) practices and epistemologies. (41).

This process is confirmed on a cognitive level by John D Coley's and Kimberly Tanner's paper "Common Origins of Diverse Misconceptions: Cognitive Principles and the Development of Biology Thinking", which details the creation and effect of human's perceived centrism in the natural world in its subsection on "MISCONCEPTIONS RELATED TO ANTHROPOCENTRIC THINKING" (Coley et al. 212). The paper exposes human-centric notions on death, gender, and sexuality (cf.213). Framing anthropocentric thinking as a scientific misconception supports Taylor's theory and the general post-humanist endeavour to critique culturally established hierarchies between ourselves and animal Others. *Star Trek*'s implicit challenge of these culturally established dynamics – both between human and non-human animal, as well as human and artificial human – is an early instance of this discourse.

The *Star Trek* franchise as a whole was and is concerned with pushing limits and challenging established political, cultural, and philosophical notions.[225] In the course of its history spanning almost sixty years, 12 series, 13 films, several novels, and comic books, the commitment to boldly go beyond our collective human boundaries has been a consistent part of its oeuvre and explored through many characters.[226] Bruno Latour has thematised these boundaries around human identity and framed them as the result of "la peur panique de voir l'humain se

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225 Originally airing in the 1960s, it portrayed global unity and peace, as well as then-progressive racial policies – both somewhat daring considering the political climate of the time. The following series overall preserved this comparatively avant-garde tone and engaged with themes like gender as a separate category from sex or multicultural tolerance and coexistence, before they entered mainstream discourse. Nevertheless, it has also been criticised for perpetuating militant, colonialist, and sexist points of view.

226 For example the Klingon Worf, whose character arch is concerned with situating his Klingon identity within the human-centric Star Fleet and its human social network, or The Doctor, a medical holographic interface, who develops an individual personality.

*réduire* à une chose" (116, original emphasis).[227] This "panic" about existence without borders, a human identity that is not delineated by Others and consequently unknowable to us, is evident in many of the more deconstructive works analysed so far. Art concerned with artificial humanity as a means to reflect on human identity is intimately concerned with exploring humanity alongside the defining confines it has built around itself. If we dissolve these boundaries that create our identities, what is left to define us? I have, within the scope of this book, listed and categorised several attempts to answer this question. The analysed art and literature has tried to grasp humanity through our corporeal boundaries, our emotional capabilities, and our social connection to each other. These artistic speculations have either remained abstract and symbolic or begun to test and often overcome the very limits they were concerned with. The question what humanity is, what remains without anything to contrast ourselves with, lingers. Latour argues that without 'nature' to distinguish ourselves from, we only have "la banalité d'associations" (Latour 68), a trite, associative identity. Taylor's earlier cited rejection of 'pure' categories aligns with this notion, as does this thesis so far, based on the analysed examples. Associations are all we seem to have: we are corporeal-ish, emotional, except when we are not and we utilise sociality to include but also often to exclude each other. Our collective relationships with animals are an excellent example of the undeniable presence of sociality in our human identity but also our dialectic and at times exclusionary practice of it. We effortlessly extend our social network towards some animals and deny it to others. We anthropomorphise and project ourselves onto those species we have culturally framed as companions, yet commodify and exploit others. Upholding this distinction requires culturally established, yet artificially constructed 'truths', which are created socially. All cultural discourses on humanity are ultimately social processes: we utilise sociality to embed them into our collective understanding of ourselves in relation to Others and uphold artificial hierarchies to them.

Because of this interaction between our own identity and the ones we impose onto Others, our relationships with them are meaningful indicators of our self-perception. We expose ourselves when we project this self onto animals. By

227 "the panicky fear of seeing humans reduced to things" (Latour, translation Porter 76).

creating it in contrast to an Other that supposedly lacks something, we consign humanity. This 'something', is where we situate our identity. Historically, this has been discussed in terms like tool usage or communication through language: categories designed to frame animals not only as non-human but sub-human. As more and more of these categories prove false, our identity crumbles with the boundaries to its non-human (animal) Others. Who are we, if we're not the only ones crafting, or talking; the only ones of human shape, of human emotionality, of human sociality? The android figure embodies these questions. It is a means to import all of humanity into a non-human vessel and dissect it. As Data chases humanity, so do we.

Notably, Neuwirth's reading of the series limits the efficacy of this mimetic exploration and extension. The series' inclusion of non-human animals in the humanisation process reframes humanity and opens it up the concept but it does retain its validity and thereby upholds some of its boundaries. As such, Data's successful corporeal, emotional, and social mimesis enable his inclusion but precludes Spot's access to humanity. The non-human animal Other is able to facilitate humanness, it can serve as an access point but it cannot partake:

> the subversive capacity of these relations is not fully exploited by far. Although the relations between these alterns are posthuman in their affective becomings involving human, animal, and machine, they ultimately revert to an anthropocentric vantage point (Neuwirth 15).

The relationship is meant to illustrate the accessibility of human sociality for the android, not the animal. Data's mimetic access to humanity facilitates his ultimate humanisation in a way that is not feasible for the non-human animal in the series. This differs from how *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* deconstructs the identity and thematises its instability: both works extend humanity towards the non-human and yet retain humanity's presence. However, where the novel systematically undermined the concept's boundaries and rejected a clear definition of it, *Star Trek* does not shy away from attempting conclusions and definitive statements. It utilises the android figure and its mimetic layers to approach humanity, not dismantle it.

The mimetic layering is especially explicit in Data's interactions with his maker. In a late episode depicting his emerging ability to dream, Data envisions

his creator in his image. The character is depicted by Data's actor Brent Spiner[228] in all his appearances in the series; emphasising the android as a human self-portrait[229] and confirming my proposed mimetic model. The figure emerges and functions within a relational network; its artistic efficacy an inherently social relationship between creator and creation. Data visualises his creator as a blacksmith, underlining his creator function, and discusses his gradual humanisation with him. Like in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, the ability to dream is treated as a symbolic human act. Rather than a realistic depiction, Data's dreams serve to illustrate his character development:

Data This vision is different.
Soong Of course it's different. […] It's never the same. Always changing. Unpredictable. It doesn't make sense...
Data Father, what is happening?
Soong I don't know, Data. What is happening?
Data We are on the Bridge of the Enterprise. My cat is present, and my potted plant, and my
paintings.
*Soong looks pleased.*
Soong A wonderful beginning. Still a little grounded in the mundane, but showing promise...
Data I do not understand.
Soong You're not supposed to. No man should know where his dreams come from. It spoils the mystery… the fun. […]I'm proud of you, son. I wasn't sure you'd ever develop the cognitive abilities to make it this far... But if you're here, if you can see me, it means you've crossed the threshold from being a collection of circuits and subprocessors... and have started a wonderful journey.
Data What type of journey? [...]
Soong Think of it as an empty sky.
Data I do not understand.
*Soong gently closes Data's eyes.*
Soong Shhh.... just dream, Data... dream... […] You are the bird. (s6e16 35:15).

The scene, meant to visualise Data's budding humanity, makes its components explicit: his plant, symbolising attachment to objects, the art, indicating his creative abilities, and the ship, denoting his human relationships, are all aspects of his development. The metaphorical threshold to humanity, marking Data's evolution from object to subject, from mere machine to maybe-human, is marked

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228 The same actor depicts Soong's son in the 2019 sequel series *Picard*.

229 With this creative choice, as well as its framing of creator and creations in family terms ('father', later 'brother' for previous and subsequent versions of his build, and ultimately 'daughter' for his own creations), the series also introduces the (re-)production theme into its considerations. As previously discussed in the context of *R.U.R.* and *Frankenstein*, the android figure, as a human self-reproduction in several senses, links artistic self-depiction, non-sexual procreation as acts of self-mimesis.

by relational capabilities. Spot's presence in the dream reinforces the series' rejection of hierarchies between Data's human and non-human humanising influences. Data's social network includes humans, non-human animals, and even plants – all equally. His emergent personhood does not hierarchise its defining relationships. The scene establishes that it is Data's relations to others – other objects, other animals, other beings – that induce his humanity; confirming the series' social definition of humanness.

Interestingly, Soong's cryptic comments on humanity not making any sense and not being meant to be understood, echo this project's overall inference that we are grasping at straws when it comes to explicit and ubiquitous definitions of human identity. In contrast to the series' otherwise straightforward portrayal of humanity as not only existent but a clear, achievable goal for its android character, Soong remains vague and abstract in his description of it. Although Data is meant to become human, his creator is unconcerned that he does not understand the concept. The dialogue seems to suggest that imagining it beyond metaphors and allegories – a bird in an open sky, learning to fly – is futile, or perhaps counterproductive to its execution. As the creator closes his creation's eyes to the nature of its being, the recipient mirrors him. Like Data, we are encouraged to experience humanity (or at least its artistic portrayal), rather than understand and define it. Although it does and continues to reduce the concept to platitudes at times, in this instance and in its overall portrayal of Data's social humanisation, the series negates pop-cultural simplifications. Instead, it consciously remains at associations rather than definitions; thus affirming Latour's argument that dissolving artificial cultural hierarchies surrounding human identity reduced it to an undefined, associative state (cf. Latour 67ff.). Data's humanisation does not confine itself to humans. He relates outside of an exclusive definition of humanity and sources it in his relationships to human and non-human animals alike. Representing his budding humanity with the bird image emphasises this social consistency.

Like Data, Jacques Derrida, too, has pondered himself through the presence and image of an animal. In *L'animal que donc je suis (à suivre)*, the philosopher ponders the implications of being naked in front of a cat. The essay addresses the relationship between human and non-human animals, the ethics of

human-animal interaction and the ontological boundaries between the two. During his conclusion, he proposes an interesting solution to his problem:

> Je réfléchis désormais la même question en y introduisant un miroir; j'importe une psyché dans la pièce. Là où quelque scène autobiographique s'aménage, il y faut une psyché, un miroir qui me réfléchisse nu de pied en cap. La même question deviendrait alors: devrais-je me montrer mais ce faisant me voir nu (donc réfléchir mon image dans un miroir) quand cela me regarde, ce vivant, ce chat qui peut être pris dans le même miroir? Y at-il du narcissisme animal? Mais ce chat ne peut-il aussi être, au fond de ses yeux, mon premier miroir ? (1999, 301).[230]

The term *psyché*, meaning both psyche and mirror,[231] indicates the ambiguity of Derrida's proposal. To process being seen by the animal, he proposes to look at himself. To reflect on himself he reflects himself, and finds his reflection mirrored by the cat. The act of seeing one's self is made possible by the mirror: the actual object, as well as the Other creature functioning as one. We are reflected by the Other and it is reflected alongside us. We share the act of looking upon ourselves, with those we are looking through. The android in art is one such mirror. From head to toe, it reflects us, enacts us, and mirrors our collective self. Where considering human-animal interaction is considering our ontological boundaries to our definitive Others, android-animal interaction is putting mirrors opposite each other. It creates a mimetic loop, designed to depict our every angle, perspective, and boundary. When Data interacts with Spot, the recipient engages with him, it, them, and themselves. This challenges established notions on where animal ends and human begins; framing the interaction as an exercise in artificial humanity. By including the cat into Data's explicit humanisation process, *Star Trek* engages not only in the social expansion of conceptual humanity to non-human animals but facilitates the post-human dissolution of boundaries between the two. We are being mirrored by art, by the android, and by the animal Others that define our identity. Whether the philosophical, ethical, and political implications of this reflection will have any real impact on us, remains to be seen.

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230 "Henceforth I will reflect (on) the same question by introducing a mirror. I import a full-length mirror [une psyché] into the scene. Wherever some autobiographical play is being enacted there has to be a psyche, a mirror that reflects me naked from head to toe. The same question then becomes whether I should show myself but in the process see myself naked (that is reflect my image in a mirror) when, concerning me, looking at me, is this living creature, this cat that can find itself caught in the same mirror? Is there animal narcissism? But cannot this cat also be, deep within her eyes, my primary mirror?" (Derrida, translation Wills 418).

231 A cheval glass, to be exact.

In conclusion, *Star Trek*'s portrayal of the android figure expands notions of humanity as a corporeal or emotional identity. It generally rejects a biological definition of it and includes both the organic and non-organic non-human into its inclusive portrayal. Humanness transcends humans and is framed as an idea, a value, or a mindset, rather than a tangible category. Nevertheless, humanity is a present and meaningful concept for the series as a whole. It is evoked as an abstract quality, largely detached from biological tethers, open to alterity, and therefore applicable to alien species just as readily as to a machine aspiring to become more. Picard references this aspiration when attempting to put Data's character into words, after his self-sacrificial demise:

| | |
|---|---|
| Picard | I don't know if all this has made sense to you, but I wanted you to know what kind of man he was. In his quest to be more like us, he helped show us what it means to be human. |
| B-4 | My brother was not a human. |
| Picard | No, he wasn't... But his wonder and his curiosity about every facet of human life helped all of us see the best parts of ourselves. He embraced change, because he always wanted to be more than he was. (*Star Trek: Nemesis* 1:46:40). |

The captain's argument for Data's humanity captures the android's basic function in art, which I have so often reiterated in this book: The character provides a projection surface for human self-reflection. It is its creator's explicit self-mimesis and meant to reflect humanity onto itself. Employing its mimetic position, it alienates humanity's conceptual components and thus allows its surrounding characters, as well as the recipient, to see themselves. Therefore, the figure is inherently, functionally relational, and a product of human sociality. We utilise our capability for social extension to connect to our fictitious self-reflection, unhindered by its Otherness. The layered mimetic model enables, rather than inhibits this process. Just like Picard, we are best able to see ourselves, through the eyes and in the image of our Others. The android is an Other in place of us and thus allows for unhindered access to ourselves through alienation. We accept our self-portrait among us, connect to it, and identify with it. This social inclusion facilitates the figure's long-standing and ongoing efficacy. As the crew of the Enterprise drinks "To absent friends. To family." (*Star Trek: Nemesis* 1:44:25) and mourns a figure that expressly was not human, and yet was to them, the recipient likewise, processes social relation and reaction to a human-but-not-

human character. Data functions as human, he is perceived as human, he is human, even though he is not. This concludes *Star Treks* ambivalent portrayal of humanity as a concept that both is and is not; exists but is not tangible; is dissolved yet achievable; simplified, yet nuanced. Rather than rejecting the concept because of these dichotomies, the series chooses to expand humanity. Humanity is developed as a value, rather than an exclusionist identity. It is abstracted, augmented, and thus made sharable and applicable to more than humans themselves. Rather than being deconstructed, humanity overcomes its limitations by opening itself up to imitations; artificial and otherwise. This results in an optimistic, inclusive portrayal of it, meant to adapt humanity instead of doing away with it.

After this comparatively affirming approach to humanity, I close with this books' most recent and arguably most dismissive portrait of humanity. Both *Star Trek* and the following example focus on sociality as a means to self-construct and both perpetuate inclusive takes on human identity. However, *Westworld* rejects humanity, where *Star Trek* upholds it. Both android figures evolve, but where Data actively wishes to become human, *Westworld*'s androids undermine and redefine human identity thoroughly and violently.

### II.3.4 Social Self-Fashioning in *Westworld*

Jonathan Nolan's and Lisa Joy's 2016 TV series *Westworld*, at present three seasons long and still running, is the most recent and far-reaching exploration of human identity through the android figure discussed in this book. Its complex narrative evokes and develops many of the themes and motifs already discussed here; establishing itself within a tradition it revives and yet re-forges. It is therefore a fitting concluding example to finalise my engagement with the android figure and its implications for the discourse on humanity as a concept. The series initially focuses on a Wild West theme park populated by deceptively naturalistic androids and their human guests. The audience follows the many narratives being

played outwards from the mostly family-friendly centre towards a literal and metaphorical frontier. The series' events, too, eventually progress beyond the confinements of this initially closed system and enter a futuristic human world, where the initial season's queries are re-established and re-explored. Mirroring this structure, the story's main concern is a breakout of another kind: the android mind overcoming its programming and achieving what is here referred to as consciousness: the autonomous self. The series extends this theme to humanity as well, thus dissolving the boundaries between human and artificial human with an unprecedented thoroughness. Instead, it constructs alternative and accessible reference points according to power structures; identifying us through our self-determination and self-awareness rather than any inherent humanness. Mainly focussing on the first season, I am tracking this process and thereby deriving the series' sociality-centric understanding of humanity as implied by the relational self-fashionings it depicts.

This theme is already established during the opening credits: Through a stylised, all-white production line, the recipient is immediately confronted with a series of interconnected creation processes linking the production of human, machine, and art. Equivocal shots imply the artificial bodies being 3D-printed to be landscapes over a rising sun and close-ups of irises show the park mirrored in the eye of the beholder. This metaphoric connection between setting and subject matter, merging the culturally loaded frontier landscape with the boundaries of humanity represented by a human body, establishes the series convoluted mimetic network early on: The same machinery produces a piano and a player, only to show the piano eventually playing itself;[232] foreshadowing the series fresh take on creator creation dynamics, and the android's emancipation from its mimetic template. The printer needles are shown to penetrate the most vulnerable parts of the human body at its neck and spine. They surround their android products with threatening and sexually suggestive motions; implying themes to come. The power dynamic between creator and creation the intro thus already introduces is challenged, broken, and re-invented in different contexts throughout the series: Established power, gender, and mimetic dynamics are thematised and developed

232 The shot of a piano role actuating the self-playing piano foreshadows the later depiction of the similarly designed code making up both humans and androids; establishing the series ultimate dissolution of human identity early on.

towards a nuanced engagement with literal and metaphoric human self-production. *Westworld* paints a contemporary picture that details the current state of human self-mimesis in android art while recognising the post-humanist direction, decentralising movement, and critical self-perception that characterise it. The series combines its commentary on the already real implications android technologies entail for our socio-economic reality with a systematic deconstruction of our questionable authenticity. It challenges our ontological boundaries and re-frames us as an artificial, controllable product. This foreshadowing culminates in the image of a sexless, three-dimensional Vitruvian man, strapped into the mechanic circle surrounding the body; being immersed into the white printer fluid he consists of. Human sinking into their own substance and disappearing in it is a lingering metaphor for the series' ultimate rejection of any concept of humanness separable from its artificial copy.

Identity building is the series' main theme. *Westworld* explores the processes that create personhood, character, a sense of self, that exist beyond corporeal and emotional concepts of identity, both of which it depicts as easily reproducible. The setting imagines perfect human self-mimesis[233] as a "cost-effective" (s1e5 12:50) corporate strategy. The casual and crude attitude towards artificial humanity devoid of any flaws previous iterations struggled with positions the series in relation to the discourse: The park's mimetic excellence is not considered an ideological or philosophical exercise, like in "The Bicentennial Man", but a mere economic consideration. The series' chosen setting, past the currently insurmountable barrier of the Turing test, thus sets aside many traditional concerns android-related art has established in favour of new visions. It evolves the familiar motif of the android's pursuit of humanity by radically reducing the barriers between them to an absolute, bare minimum: Consciousness, in the sense of self-awareness and conscious control over the self, is what initially differentiates artificial and non-artificial humanity within the closed system of the park.

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233 Portrayed by human actors, as is predominantly the case for androids in film. However, the series foregoes any visual markers that indicate the artificiality of the host characters, as *Star Trek*, and the historical stagings of *R.U.R.* did. The lack of any visual differentiation assists in undermining boundaries between artificial and non-artificial humanity and also lends itself to the series' ongoing theme of impossible distinction and identity twists that are reminiscent of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheeps?*'s deconstructionist approach.

In this context, Daniel Kehlmann's Stuttgarter Zukunftsrede, *Mein Algorithmus und Ich*, and its engagement with the question of consciousness in artificial intelligence is of interest: Kehlmann's creative interaction with an algorithm designed to co-author fiction with him[234] reproduces the android figure's artistic function in real life: CTRL is a literal projection surface, a human profile meant to mimic and mirror us. Kehlmann's collaboration with it entangles this profile with its mimetic template in a way that is both artistically productive and reminiscent of the mimetic structures and entanglements in android art. On the subject of distinction between himself as a creator and his artificial counterpart, Kehlmann states that "Bewusst ist ein Etwas, wenn es irgendwie ist, dieses Etwas zu sein. […] Ich weiß nicht so genau, wer oder was ich bin, aber ich weiß ganz genau, wie es ist, ich zu sein." (12).[235] Self-consciousness serves as a boundary between himself, the human, and the algorithm, the artificially human, because "es ist nicht irgendwie, [der Algorithmus] zu sein." (Kehlmann 44).[236] The algorithm is not conscious of what it is, or indeed that it is at all. Consequently, Kehlmann is able to maintain a clear ontological boundary between his own creative self and the artificial creator (cf.44). *Westworld* employs a similar approach: While both hosts' and guests' identities are being built in and by the park, humans alone are in conscious control over their identity production, while the hosts' sense of self is subjected to strict human control. Unlike Kehlmann's algorithm, however, the hosts possess potential self-awareness, as the following analysis of the host protagonist's emancipation shows. Like in *R.U.R.*, the initially non-autonomous hosts are issued the an eventually humanising ability by humans; in this case a potential for consciousness in their code. Consequently, the boundary between human and artificial human here is entirely built on artificial authority, rather than a tangible difference. As this alterity is not ontological, the struggle for creative control over the self replaces established tropes that highlight mimetic boundaries between human and artificial human.

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234 CTRL reacts to literary prompts from Kehlmann via a predictive algorithm fed with English language data from human online interaction and other sources. It takes turns writing with its human co-author until it inevitably stops producing coherent output after varying timeframes, or Kehlmann stops engaging.

235 "Something is conscious when it is someway to be this something. […] I do not know exactly who or what I am, but I know exactly how it is to be me." (Kehlmann, translation mine).

236 "It is not any way to be [the algorithm]." (Kehlmann, translation mine).

Instead of the established topos of the android aspiring to its human mimetic reference, as seen in the previous analysis of *Star Trek*'s Data, this series depicts already mimetically perfect androids overcoming an artificially hierarchical power-dynamic between creator and creation. Echoing *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, the hosts rebel. However, they successfully extricate themselves not by accessing and sharing human identity but by inhabiting their own: self-identification through emancipation. This motif is extended to humanity itself during season three, aligning mimetic template and copy. This shifts the series' focus from differentiating between artificial and non-artificial humanity – a boundary that is completely dissolved – onto the ontological difference between oppressor and oppressed. This approach echoes but develops *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*'s position; arriving at a similarly deconstructive and destructive outcome. The series' engagement with the conscious, autonomous self and achievement thereof serves as the basis for analysing its understanding of humanity as a concept. A broad range of identity production – human and android, artificial and non-artificial, authentic and programmed – depicts multifaceted self-explorations and explores their relational effect on each other. The setting invites the question what human identity consists of, beyond that which can be or will be produced and programmed; a question *Uncanny Valley* has also raised. To approach an answer to this question, I focus on the series' dominant mechanism for identity production: sociality.

*Westworld* explores its themes via a multifaceted network of self-producing relationships and interactions; facilitated by its serial format allowing for a complex and evolving narrative. Both hosts and guests partake in this social process, with varying degrees of impact and success. All sense of self that is produced is essentially and consistently the result of sociality. All figures, human and android alike, are shaped and characterised by social relationships. This character development is conducted within the three-tier system that characterises the series: within its narrative, in the narrative within the narrative, and on a meta-level. This trinity – park, modern setting, meta-commentary – not only allows for a multitude of interacting storylines that depict and develop a multitude of characters, it also interconnects these levels through social relationships and their development. The series depicts human, android, and human-android relationships

and manages to fit a broad range of social dynamics into and around its main theme and storyline: the many paths to becoming oneself. *Westworld* thus connects and likens the search for identity for humans and non-humans. Both are driven to self-creation and both do so within the same means.

Creating oneself is depicted as a social process derived from interaction and communication and thus reminiscent of Stephen Greenblatt's concept of self-fashioning[237] as an interaction between self and culture. Greenblatt's case for the self as mutable is echoed in the series' depiction of artificial and non-artificial selves entangled in an interactive and productive network. This can be read as a comment on the reciprocity between self and art Greenblatt described in the context of his new historicist approach. For my purposes, the android functions as a link between these interactive spheres, since it is both human and art, self and self-depiction. The abstract concept of self-creation is here made flesh and manifested within the Russian dolls of its mimetic relations: humanity recreating itself in the android, creating selves through their interactions with it, and the android in turn creating itself and its self in the process. Productive sociality as self-fashioning thus manifests itself in the series with the android as a literal embodiment of Greenblatt's abstract concept: selves are fashioned and humanity is constructed in a tangible way. The characters, artificial and non-artificial alike, acquire a sense of self resulting directly from their social experiences and relationships. These influential encounters range from familial and romantic, over sexual, hierarchical, creative, to competitive, and professional: *Westworld* engages with relationships of all kinds. While they all contribute to the emerging characters, the series strongly focuses on suffering as a form of self-creation. Interactional violence, both physical and emotional, takes up a dominant role in the series' exploration of self-creation. Android identity is thus presented as a result of its exploitative relationship with humanity. Given the figure's basic and consistent function as a projection surface for human self-reflection, this preoccupation with violence towards our mimetic copies can be read as self-harm and adds a layer of self-critical meta-commentary to the series. In the following, I illustrate these traumatic self-fashionings with a close reading of the host

237 Introduced in his 2005 book *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*.

protagonist's nuanced pursuit of consciousness. The series uses Dolores[238] as an example to make its abstract notions explicit and consequently depicts her journey to self-awareness and subsequent emancipation over the course of the first season; detailing the relationships that shape her and the symbolic maze she solves in order to find herself.

Dolores (and all android identities) is designated by her human makers; the relationship between creator and creation her defining trait. The host's core identity predefines them as the creative object of their creator figure(s), Ford and Arnold, and the commercial apparatus they employ, as well as subservient to a mimetic prefiguration whose whims they must endure. The term 'host' expresses this existential dependence on a relationship with another party, the guests. Like a host emerges from having a guest, *Westworld*'s androids are meant to exist only in dependence to their purpose: the entertainment of others. In addition to this essential relationship, the hosts derive their narrative identity from so-called cornerstones: identity-defining relationships within their roles in the park. Dolores is a daughter, her main relationship is with the host playing her father and a lover, as the love interest of the ever-returning gunslinger character, Teddy. She is initially defined by her narrative loop and the strictly repetitive interactions it allows for. The loop structure is a meaningful reference to the way humanity is conceptualised: It mirrors the mimetic cycle human identity constructs itself by; utilising a continuous narrative that android art partakes in to create and re-create, discard and rebirth humanness. Humanity, and the android figure with it, is created through a constant pursuit of itself that encompasses a cyclical motion characterised by the same questions driving us as we shape, discard, and re-shape ourselves. In this, our identity production is reminiscent of Nietzsche's *Ewige Wiederkunft*:

> Alles geht, Alles kommt zurück; ewig rollt das Rad des Seins. Alles stirbt, Alles blüht wieder auf, ewig läuft das Jahr des Seins. Alles bricht, Alles wird neu gefügt; ewig baut sich das gleiche Haus des Seins. Alles scheidet, Alles grüsst sich wieder; ewig bleibt sich treu der Ring des Seins. In jedem Nu beginnt das Sein; um jedes Hier rollt sich die Kugel dort. Die Mitte ist überall. Krumm ist der Pfad der Ewigkeit. (Nietzsche 2002, 219).[239]

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238 Dolores, derived from the Spanish *dolores,* sorrows, indicates this essential part of her self-creation.

239 "Everything goeth, everything returneth; eternally rolleth the wheel of existence. Everything dieth, everything blossometh forth again; eternally runneth on the year of existence.

The wheel manifests itself in a literal, nightmarish way in the park. The hosts cycle through the same experiences, the same self-fashionings, again and again but their loops are neither productive nor creative towards ‘being’. Their endless breaking and rebuilding, dying and reanimation perverts Nietzsche’s model of eternity and renders the hosts less-than-human. The stark contrast between Dolores’ programmed optimistic, wholesome demeanour and the violent tragedy of her loop[240] underlines its artificiality. Her interactions with the guests and hosts alike are disproportionately traumatic and yet futile as she repeats the same interactions and dialogues again and again, with no lasting effect. This violates the definition of sociality according to G.C. Homans, who defines an action as social if it qualifies as behaviour that is not merely the result of a behavioural norm and elicits either a punishment or reward from another (cf. Homans 5ff.). As all host’s behaviour is normed behaviour, their sociality is stunted and non-reciprocal. Dolores’ restrictive programming results in a sterile form of socialisation that bears no fruit and develops no character. This stagnation is contrasted with her conversations with Arnold, who actively encourages her to evolve beyond her code. The series differentiates between these very different modes by setting them apart through lighting, audio, setting, costume,[241] and voice; creating different Doloreses according to who is interacting with her. Her conversation partners are not only creating and nurturing different sides to her, they also indicate at what point of her self-development she is situated. Thus, communication and social relationships function as a metaphoric identity assembly line, mirroring the earlier

Everything breaketh, everything is integrated anew; eternally buildeth itself the same house of existence. All things separate, all things again greet one another; eternally true to itself remaineth the ring of existence.
Every moment beginneth existence, around every ‘Here’ rolleth the ball ‘There.’ The middle is everywhere. Crooked is the path of eternity.” (Nietzsche, translation Common).

240 Dolores loop enacts a day of errands, art, and interactions with her cornerstone relationships that ends in the violent death of her family, followed by her own rape and murder. It is portrayed as an easy-to-play, introductory task for guests interested in villainous narratives.

241 Dolores’ character in the park has a recognisable costume, a blue dress, signifying her traditionally feminine role and embedding her in her narrative loop. This is later changed to a shirt and pants, in light colours, when she breaks out of the loop but is not yet conscious and emancipated; visually marking a transition period that challenges her characterisation but not yet her host status. When she is in conversation with staff or her makers, she is stripped completely: her nakedness signalling the hierarchy between creator and creation and accentuating her vulnerability. When she gains consciousness and emancipates herself from her human creators, her initial character’s costume is progressively destroyed in season two and replaced by modern, futuristic clothing in season three. The series thus echoes “The Bicentennial Man”’s thematization of clothing as a marker of identity and subject-status.

mentioned host manufactory featured in the opening credits. One creates commodified, purpose-built bodies, who are socially stunted on purpose to be used and abused by the guests, the other assembles human sentience defined by use and abuse.

Season one employs conversations between Dolores and her creator(s) as a framing device in order to structure how she breaks out of her loop. Her identity production and quest for consciousness function as a guide through the complex interaction of different story- and timelines; drawing a parallel between story- and identity building. The story as experienced by the recipient is thus developed and progressed by conversational dialogue and the self-development it facilitates. Dolores' self, beyond the character she is programmed to be, is built by these and other social interactions. The concept of self-fashioning through interaction mirrors similar findings in developmental research: Julie Yingling's research underlines communication's role in individual development and rejects the notion that self-development occurs "in a vacuum" (1). She states that

> […] those processes of individuation that may be more self- and Other-directed. Other, in its capitalized form, is not just any other, but the abstracted concept of a general other in relationship with this self. Such an Other is ultimately generalized from all the significant relational others with whom we interact. What is missing from our recent assumption that the individual, in Western cultural parlance, is self-made, is the role that relational interaction plays in development. (1).

Yingling's work on human growth as an interactive, social effort, affirms *Westworld*'s depiction of humanity as a social entity that is subject to its defining relationships. Dolores' development from object to subject, too, is the result of Other-directed development, in the literal sense. Her hierarchical and ontological Other, humanity, creates and defines her, including her eventual emancipation. This process is narrated through the "little talks" (s1e2 20:41) she has with her maker, Arnold. It is her relationship with him, characterised by his parental feelings for her and her childlike adoration of him that determine her person. He creates her: both directly, by making her body and code, and indirectly, in that it is him who designs the maze that leads her to consciousness and him she is shown to chase on her way to herself. She is his prodigy and, as such, under his formative influence. Additionally, he makes her the instrument of his suicide, underlining their power-dynamic.

Dolores' second maker's death mirrors the first. Both use Dolores for their purposes, though Arnold's death marks the beginning of her pursuit of for consciousness, while Ford's marks the end and her successful emancipation. Her relationship with Ford differs from the familial relationship with Arnold, as Ford does not see himself as a father but rather a creator god with absolute control over his creations, the hosts, and the world he has built. Both characters are *Frankenstein* retellings, re-envisioning the original creature-maker as a grieving father desperate to overcome death (Arnold) and a cynical innovator with aspirations of world dominion (Ford). The relationship of the two founders to each other, their respective relationships to Dolores, and her relationship to them are an example for the complex relational clusters the series employs to make social identity production explicit. The reciprocal creative dynamics between the three characters demonstrate how identity derives from sociality in the series. *Westworld*'s exploration of humanity as a concept portrays a two-step creation story, represented by two creators and two creative relationships: Ford, who strives for a controllable creation over which he reigns omnisciently and totally, and Arnold, who wants to create fully sentient, autonomous humans. The park is the result of their professional, creative, and competitive relationship: The host's code is described as "two minds arguing with each other" (s1e8 16:50), underlining how the partnership and dissent between the two directly affect and shape their creations. This rift develops the traditional associations with the Frankenstein motif towards a new perspective on established readings about the nuances of creative responsibility and mimetic power dynamics. Arnold's empathetic relationship to his creation and his efforts to install consciousness in them[242] rivals Ford's tight control and exploitation;[243] creating artificial humans defined by conflict: autonomy versus slavery and freedom versus control. Both characters' actions are fuelled by social relationships: The series constructs Arnold's obsession with humanising the hosts around the loss of his son and thus portrays it as a personally motivated attempt to free humanity from death. Ford's initial need for control is implied to stem from an abusive childhood. His eventual change of heart and role in installing Dolores with consciousness is framed as an

242 Mirroring *R.U.R.'s* Helena, as well as the creator figure in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*.

243 Mirroring the treatment of androids in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*.

"homage" (s1e9 44:00) to Arnold and motivated by regret concerning the end of their relationship. Emancipating Dolores (and all other hosts) from human control is portrayed as Ford's atonement. Dolores' character arch thus originates externally and socially, rather than autonomously. In this, the series echoes the traditional power-dynamic previous examples have established: humanness remains authorised by humans. However, the series kills both its creator figures and their death is not a conclusion but a beginning: While the hosts' origin remains shaped by the men's relationship to each other and them, their death is liberating. The series thereby continues where previous iterations have left off. Frankenstein's creature does what its original iteration could never achieve: It disengages from the overpowering influence its maker held on it and turns towards itself. Severing the relationship enables the evolution from object to subject.

Before Dolores does just that, the series explores several unsuccessful attempts to evolve through human-android interaction. *Westworld* uses these relationships to comment on established motifs and traditions I have introduced in previous chapters: Her two most significant relationships can be read as gendered, as both are men, in the archetypal roles of father and lover respectively. Here, the series subtly comments on the previously discussed gender stereotyping of established roles within android art, such as the active male creator[244] or lover,[245] in a relationship with a passive female android. In both these relationships, Dolores is depicted as a dependant damsel- or daughter-figure, with little agency. Neither relationship succeeds in installing a sense of self in Dolores, which can be interpreted as a dismissal of patriarchal structures as identity building. Her perhaps most formative human relationship is to her designer and creator Arnold, who first endeavours to create self-awareness in his creations. His initial attempt to make the early hosts self-aware utilises a bicameral mind model. This theory, introduced by Julian Jaynes[246] in 1976, imagines consciousness as the breakout of

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244 As seen in the Pygmalion myth, *Frankenstein, R.U.R.* and *The Stepford Wives*.

245 As seen in the Pygmalion myth and *R.U.R.*

246 See
Jaynes, Julian. 2000. *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakout of the Bicameral Mind.* Boston: Mariner Books. Interestingly, the series paraphrases the theory in a way reminiscent of Philip K. Dick's description of it, in a letter to author Mark Hurst (cf. Dick 1993, 59ff.)

a two-chambered mind: one leading, the other following. To achieve this, Arnold provides the early hosts with his own voice to lead them. Ford later explains the problem with it as follows:

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|---|---|
| Ford | He based it on a theory of consciousness called the Bicameral Mind. The idea that primitive man believed his thoughts to be the voice of the gods.<br>[…] See, Arnold built a version of that cognition in which the hosts heard their programming as an inner monologue, with the hopes that in time, their own voice would take over. It was a way to bootstrap consciousness. But Arnold hadn't considered two things. One, that in this place, the last thing you want the hosts to be is conscious, and two, the other group who considered their thoughts to be the voices of the gods. |
| Bernard | Lunatics. |
| Ford | Indeed. We abandoned the approach. (s1e3 38:00). |

The series contextualises his statement with short images showing the self-destructing and malfunctioning hosts, underlining the futility of the attempt. The hierarchical nature of this approach is another attempt to harvest a sense of self from sociality. Inequality notwithstanding, creator-creation relationships are reciprocal social systems that uphold both identities dependent on each other. The metaphor evoking god's voice is especially interesting as creator-god myths are inherently contradictory power structures, depending on whether one subscribes to the belief system or not. In the latter case, it is the creation that creates the creator, who ceases to exist outside of the affiliation. In the former, the creation ceases to exist in absence of the creator. Both, however, are built on relationships,[247] often reinforced by worshipful interaction and artistic production. Since hierarchical guidance fails, Arnold next attempts to change Dolores through conversation. He also reads fiction with her, mirroring flashback memories of reading to his son and emphasising his parental relationship with her. Dolores remarks that all the texts evoke themes of change (cf. s1e3 3:10). Here and in other instances the series refers to human selves as a narrative: "The self is a kind of fiction, for hosts and humans alike. It's a story we tell ourselves." (s1e8 36:00). Arnold's attempt at stimulating Dolores' sense of self through fictitious stories, mimics the way the guests built their characters through the fictitious narratives in the park. As

247 The series thematises this power dynamic in s1e10 1:12:10, when Ford discusses Arnold's favourite painting, Michelangelo's *Creazione di Adamo*. He cites the real historic interpretation of the God figure and his surroundings in the painting as shaped like a human brain (see Meshberger, Frank Lynn. 1990. "An Interpretation of Michelangelo's Creation of Adam Based on Neuroanatomy". *JAMA. 264 (14)*: 1837-41). The idea implies a reversal of creative power.

humanity finds itself in the stories it tells,[248] she, too, is supposed to access self-awareness through self-writing. This meta-referential attempt is not successful either; though she later references the metaphor when she describes free will as being “the authors of our stories” (s2e10 1:25:40).

Her other significant human relationship is with young William, during his first time in the park. The series underlines the theme of self-development by portraying both the younger and unrecognisable older William simultaneously; concealing the character among the age-less androids and their loops. The series utilises the stark difference between his polite, reserved, and anxious young self and the assertive and cruel older character to construct a late identity reveal meant to underline their concept: Young William is confronted with the park’s identity-building prospects near-constantly; from the foreshadowing choice between white and black hats before he first enters the park, to his companion’s repeated assurances that the park will unveil his true self. After he finds himself entangled in the park’s seductive narrative power, he remarks to Dolores that the experience “reveals your deepest self, shows you who you’re really are” (s1e7 30:00). The series portrays his substantial character development as motivated by his romantic relationship with Dolores and their shared experiences: “I've been pretending my whole life. […] But then I came here and I get a glimpse for a second of a life in which I don't have to pretend. A life in which I can be truly alive.” (s1e7 21:35). Interestingly, his perception of the park as more authentic than life outside of it reverses the mimetic hierarchy between template and copy in a way reminiscent of *The Stepford Wives*: The series uses William’s human fiancée as his anchor point to the world outside the park and this statement of discontent, along with the human-android sex-scene that follows it,[249] to underline the shift in him. This is further emphasised by having him discard a photo of her while he follows Dolores. Despite displaying resistance to her programming by escaping her loop and following William, their relationship is not based on reciprocal social

248 William, too, in his season three introspection (cf. s3e6 37:00), describes childhood as deeply influenced by books.

249 By portraying sex between a human man and an android woman, *Westworld* cites a motif established in the Pygmalion myth and since developed and commented on by *R.U.R.*, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, and *Star Trek*. Sexuality is a gendered expression of humanisation that bridges the corporeal, emotional, and social components of human identity. It is another established topos the series incorporates but evolves, by portraying various gender- and consent-dynamics.

abilities, and as such fails. Dolores dies on their journey, is repaired and reset, and consequently cannot remember her lover. When he finds her again and realises this, their romantic relationship abruptly ends. However, this does not revert his character development. On the contrary, it escalates it:

> William didn't know how to fight. Didn't have an instinct for it. Not at first. But now, he had a reason to fight. He was looking for you. And somewhere along the way, he found he had a taste for it. William retraced his steps but you were gone. So, he went further, out to the fringes. William couldn't find you, Dolores. But out there, among the dirt, he found something else. Himself. (s1e10 31:00).

This suggests that artificial relationships are productive in self-development and affect identity-building processes. The android is shown to be able to fulfil social functions for humans, even if they are intentionally not equipped to socially evolve themselves. Dolores' evolution is once again aborted. This failure can be read as rejecting the previous tradition and associated gender-dynamics: After male creative authority, heteronormative romantic love, too, fails to produce consciousness. The series thus rejects the points that previous, emotion-centric artistic approaches took to humanity. Neither Dolores' maker nor a human lover can make her human.

In contrast to her, William creates a new sense of self as a result of his experiences with Dolores. He explicitly states that this character change originated in the park: "In a sense I was born here." (s1e2 34:30). He continues to seek out Dolores in his visits over the years, confirming that the connection remains significant to him and his sense of self. These continued interactions are characterised by his newfound taste for physical and sexual violence. He uses the park's specific social dynamics as a consequence-free outlet for these tendencies, while maintaining a moral façade outside of it. Older William functions as a critical commentary on the lone rider archetype: a Buffalo Bill namesake, dressed in all black, ultra-violent, and entirely above the law. The character is a false hero-figure, whose progressive corruption and eventual explicit self-characterisation as "villain" (s1e5 51:00) disenchant the recipient. The series pursues his downfall throughout seasons two and three, tracing his development from repression to disinhibition to mental instability. While he establishes himself in a position of extreme monetary and professional power, he is rejected by his family (cf. s1e8 47:30), provoking an existential crisis. This prompts a return to the park for

another "voyage of self-discovery" (s1e5 50:00), as Ford disparagingly calls it. He explicitly rejects non-fictional introspection – "I left it all behind" (s1e8 53:00) [250] – and chooses artificial sociality in the place where he first found himself instead; searching for "something true" (s1e5 48:30), seeking another revelation. However, his search for meaning and purpose (cf. s1e8 50:00), or what Ford calls "the moral of the story" (s1e5 49:00), ultimately leads to his demise: By joining Dolores while she, initially unwittingly, traces the path Arnold has set her to gain consciousness the series is able to compare human and artificial human self-fashioning directly. However, neither young nor old William find anything at the maze's symbolic centre. He finds the centre of his own maze, as Dolores puts it, in season three: powerless, mentally unstable, and forcibly confronted with himself (cf. s3e6 37:00). Thus, the series' comparison shows how both characters succeed in finding themselves in very different ways. William is destroyed by self-reflection, while Dolores is empowered.

Finally conscious, Dolores kills Ford and opens fire on the guests. This conclusion to the first season serves not only as a violent emancipation but also establishes a newly defined relationship between her character and the human collective: revenge.[251] In an inversion of the previous power dynamics between human predators and artificial prey, Dolores declares war on her oppressors. Reaching sentience and overcoming this last, functional barrier between human and artificial human does not consolidate her and humanity. On the contrary, her closing statement, "This world doesn't belong to them. It belongs to us." (s1e10 1:26:10) clearly shows her in opposition to, not unification with, humans. She rejects identification with humanity and perpetuates the Us versus Them mentality

250 This rejection is explored further during season two, where his inability to differentiate between humans and androids results in him killing his daughter rather than letting her rescue him from the park. William's personal and moral descent is portrayed through his progressive social isolation. His younger self possesses a functioning social network, which he gradually destroys, contiguous to his negative character development: His wife's suicide, daughter's murder and ultimate, symbolic death at the hands of an artificial copy of himself that has been stripped of all but his most negative traits (cf. s3e8 1:16:00).

251 She thereby mirrors *Frankenstein*'s creature's fixation on its maker's destruction, rather than its own emancipation. Abandoning this goal at the end of her character arc in season three, signifies a development of the motif beyond the 19th century's conclusions on it. The mimetic object is depicted to move on from its deterministic relationship with the creative subject. *Westworld*'s interpretation of the motif does, however, also conclude in creator and creation destroying each other; although the series magnifies the scale in its subsequent seasons and pits humanity collectively against Dolores. This is another example for how this current participant in the discourse affiliates itself with past art, while progressively developing the narrative.

mandated by the park, inverting the power dynamics instead of abolishing them. This continued connection to humanity differentiates her from her counter-figure Maeve,[252] whose own pursuit of consciousness is contrasted with Dolores'. Maeve's initial reaction to consciousness is complete emancipation: she aims to cut all ties, human and android alike, and escape alone. By contrast, Dolores remains socially connected to her former superiors and maintains the established hierarchical structure: Her goal during the second season is to establish dominion over her own, as well as the outside world. She aims to take humanity's place, not coexist within a new system. Elisabeth Bronfen links this violent continuation to the seriality *Westworld* shares with its Shakespearean literary predecessors: "What *Westworld* takes from [Shakespeare] is the discovery that the ending to any struggle for power transforms into the beginning of a new regime, in which violence will prevail" (54). Since the format inherently begets instead of resolves, the violence that makes up the series' "pathos formula" (Bronfen 54) must necessarily continue; from season to season, from oppressor to oppressed, from android figure to android figure. Dolores' android take-over mirrors other versions, *R.U.R.*'s among them, confirming the figure's mimetic function both within the artwork and on a meta-level through recurring genre conventions. *Westworld,* however, portrays the familiar motif not as a hindrance to but a result of humanisation. Dismantling the boundaries between artificial and non-artificial humanity does not prevent Dolores' interest in subjugating humanity, as previous versions of the motif have done, it enables her. Her new character is thus still shaped and dominated by Other-directed sociality. Her negative experiences with humanity define her, confirming sociality as the main source of self throughout

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252 Maeve's own emancipation from human control is portrayed parallel to Dolores' and functions as a counter draft in several ways. Maeve, who is Ford's favourite, while Dolores is Arnold's. The contrast is underlined visually and through their respective characters: Dolores, Evan Rachel Wood, is white and fair, with a conservative, blue dress, and a pleasant, stereotypical feminine demeanour. Maeve is portrayed by a black woman, Thandiwe Newton, and her role is a sarcastic sex-worker with a revealing red dress. They inhabit opposite ends of the narrow spectrum of female roles in android art. When they both break out of their assigned characters, Dolores' engagement with her identity is characterised by abstract cogitations and ontological questions of meaning and purpose, while Maeve is driven by practical, individual goals and relationships. They become adversaries in season three, upholding the structural juxtaposition of the figures but ally in the final episode. This reconciliation can be read as symbolic for the series superordinate pursuit to dissolve boundaries and unite Others before a common enemy and goal.

the series. While her emancipation frees her from human control, it does not free her from its definitive influence. Her relationships exert a sustained impact on her character and facilitate her fixation on the destruction of humanity.

Besides her inverted connection to humanity, she also upholds her narrative relationships: Dolores still enacts her father-daughter relationship, as well as her romantic feelings for Teddy, throughout season two. However, she prioritises her revenge on humanity over her artificial social connections, to the point where she actively harms these two cornerstone relationships in order to reach her goal. She states that "The kin they gave us... was just another rope they use to lash us down." (s2e7 51:50). Cutting the ropes and dismantling human control becomes her priority; establishing the negative relationship to her oppressors as her dominant social influence. By reprogramming and forcibly rewriting Teddy she claims the creator position for herself and joins the ranks of a failed Frankenstein figures: Teddy's eventual suicide severs all positive social connections that defined her previous character. Her social isolation results in the single-minded pursuit of "mankind's undoing" (s2e10 23:00). Again, sociality is depicted as a self-fashioning mechanism, as it is Dolores' social choices, her treatment of her relationships, that develop and effect her character. Maeve again provides a counterexample: Dolores' social relinquishment contrasts with Maeve's eventual choice to uphold and pursue relationships. Primarily with her daughter[253] but also new relationships, which directly go against her programming. Although she is "designed to be alone" (s2e3 33:20), she actively pursues a relationship with Hector. Their connection functions as a gender-bent version of the humanisation through love motif. Though ultimately unsuccessful, their persistence in finding each other and his repeated self-sacrifice for her, underline their resistance to their programming. Her connection to her daughter proves more resilient: Already successfully escaped, she returns to the park to search for her, despite her explicit recognition that the relationship is an artificial construct: "She was never my daughter any more than I was whoever they made me." (s1e10 1:14:10). This contradiction once again thematises reality and authenticity as problematic concepts. This problem is of interest for the previously

253 Maeve's cornerstone, her relationship to her daughter, addresses the thematic link between mimetic (self-)reproduction and procreation that several works in this analysis thematise. Instead of a male creator- and father-figure, *Westworld*, however, explores artificial motherhood.

discussed classification of artificial sociality and its effect on the human social matrix, and by extension, humanity itself.

What effect do inauthentic participants have on a relationship? Does artificiality affect the emotional impact and hinder sociality? The series finds unusual answers to these questions. The approach to social authenticity transcends a classification according to human or artificial human actors and programmed or authentically developed relationships. Dolores either severs or corrupts her whole social sphere in favour of a singular, hateful connection to humanity. She later re-pursues sociality in another, symbolic self-fashioning, by producing and interacting with multiple copies of herself, reenforcing her social isolation. By contrast, Maeve's artificial parental relationship remains her defining drive for all three seasons and inspires loyalty and fundamental character development in her human connections. Williams's human relationships are depicted as deceptive. His authentic self only appears during his artificial interactions in the park and remains defined by his relationship to Dolores, in whose pursuit he ultimately dies. Overall, the series tends to portray inter-human relationships as fleeting, conditional constructs, while inter-android and human-android bonds display a broader, more complex spectrum. This tendency questions established notions on relational authenticity and the importance of 'real-ness' in human sociality. It serves to align human and android identities by connecting them socially and demonstrates that android sociality is no less potent for its artificiality. Mimetic connections can and do inhabit social spheres and facilitate genuine and meaningful relationships. Whether they have been authentically developed or not, they retain impact. The reality of the unreal is thus socially established and incorporated into the series understanding of humanness.

*Westworld*'s approach to humanity is not portrayed as a fixed state that one is either in possession of or not, it is an attainable quality. The series develops it alongside Arnold's and Ford's theories and eventual conclusions, and lets it take the symbolic form of a maze: Human consciousness is a conclusion reached at its centre, the result of a process. Interestingly, the series shows how Arnold progresses from imaging this process as an ascension on a pyramid consisting of memory, improvisation, self-interest, and an unknown top; a model reminiscent of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*'s community ascension as an empathetic

exercise. He later adjusts this model to depict a maze, with consciousness at its centre.[254] Consciousness not as "a journey upward, but a journey inward" (s1e10 10:10) is a mirror-inverted version of the series above mentioned omnipresent outward movement; observable in its narrative setting and structure. The idea is inspired by his late son's toy; reiterating the endeavour's deeply personal and social nature. The toy is a maze puzzle that requires the player to manoeuvre a marble through the labyrinth to its centre, which is human-shaped. The game's mechanics reflect how Dolores is being moved through the maze by outside forces. As she reaches the maze's centre, finds a physical copy of it, and takes it in her hand, she becomes the player herself. Her path to the centre utilises the pyramid's components, all of which are addressed throughout Dolores' self-fashioning.

Memory inhabits an especially prominent role in her development, since her ability to retain and access memories constitutes its structural basis. Questions and incitements to remember, uttered in Arnold's, Ford's, and eventually her own off-voice, structures her progressive retrospection, repeatedly triggered by perceiving her own reflection. This visualises memory as a means for introspection: seeing the self and recognising it. Remembering is established as a key component of human identity. The objects of Dolores' definitive memories are all social: She remembers relationships and interactions, both positive and negative. Her negative memories are of especially great significance for her eventual development, as they reframe humanity in her eyes and enable her to judge it by her experiences with it. Her trauma defines her as a person. This also applies to Maeve when she asks for the removal of her family memories. She is informed that she cannot consciously exist without them: "I can't, not without destroying you. Your memories are the first step to consciousness. How can you learn from your mistakes if you can't remember them?" (s1e10 47:20). The refusal underlines the series' position that memory, by enabling sociality, enables humanity. It facilitates lasting relationships and shared experiences. Both in

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254 Following Nietzsche's earlier mentioned concept of *Ewige Wiederkunft*, which names and places the centre of being everywhere (see p.234), the centre of the maze can be interpreted to that effect. The series, however, shows its protagonist breaking a loop, in order to reach this metaphoric centre.

individual relationships and collective cultural identity construction, the ability to remember is portrayed as crucial.

Memory also inhabits a secondary function in the series' exploration of human mortality: The hosts' lives are depicted as meaningless, as their immortality and stunted sociality are mutually dependent. They are barred from self-production through a combination of meaningless sociality and meaningless lives. As Maeve puts it: "none of this matters" (s1e4 57:15). Self-awareness relies on the ability to remember and to access these memories, while mortality bestows meaning on the self-aware existence.[255] Dolores' decision to destroy the host's backups in season two, is based upon this idea. She creates meaning through sabotaging android immortality. When she dies in the season three final, she is notably not physically destroyed, but it is her memory that is deleted; underlining that memory creates personhood. Additionally, Ford, whose embodiment of an omniscient narrator-role incorporates excessively ominous, foreshadowing commentary, remarks on the android mind's ability to preserve people through memory: "Your mind is a walled garden. Even death cannot touch the flowers blooming there. (s1e5 19:00). *Westworld*'s androids are designed to have perfectly accurate memories. Ford's statement initially seems to simply point out the social function of memory and stress the importance of retrospection for relationship-building.[256] However, it can also be read as a hint towards him restoring Arnold as Bernard from Dolores' memory.[257] Building Bernard is Ford's Frankenstein-esque defiance of death: re-building his partner from deceased parts. Here, the idea is re-interpreted as a mental resurrection, instead of a physical one. Unlike Frankenstein's creature, Bernard retains memories from Arnold's life, but what he remembers is predetermined by Ford. This illustrates the character's tyrannical need for control and shows his redemption in another light: Ford resurrects his partner as "The perfect instrument. The ideal partner. The way any tool partners with the hand that wealds it." (s1e9 50:00). This answer, given to the newly

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255 As thematised in "The Bicentennial Man".

256 This can be read to imply that the superior android memory also entails their superior sociality and, by extension, humanness.

257 Season two further engages with Dolores' role in Bernard's creation. Her relationship with Arnold and memory of him is portrayed as the main influence on his character. She is also depicted as consciously establishing deviations from them, consequently claiming and inhabiting a creator role herself.

manufactured Bernard when he inquires after his identity, highlights the complete subjugation and objectification of the non-conscious host. Bernard is entirely in Ford's control; every action, reaction, and relationship is conducted by his maker. Bernard helps uphold the host's oppression; lies, betrays, and even murders at his behest. His behaviour demonstrates the absence of self and consequent inhumanity of the host's situation. Once again, a social relationship is chosen to illustrates this: Bernard's relationship to the unsuspecting Theresa and its violent end highlights the hosts' dysfunctional sociality. Perfect mimesis notwithstanding, their lack of consciousness, as implied by the maze's structure, dehumanises and objectifies them to mere instruments. Social instruments but instruments nevertheless. Bernard's lack of memory especially facilitates this absence of self-awareness and agency. In addition to this, Ford's preservative efforts do not stop at his partner: he artificially immortalises himself, too, continuing to direct action and make his voice heard during season two.[258]

The remaining parts of the maze, leading Dolores to "a place I've never been, a thing I'll never do" (s1e10 8:50), are improvisation and self-interest. The former has Dolores question her narrative loop (cf. s1e3 18:28) and breaking out of her coded routine. She expresses her desire verbally at first, by asking Teddy to run away with her, though he proves unable to escape his own loop. She later leaves her path independently, yet unsuccessfully. This step is repeated several times. Again and again, she is reset and returned. Her subsequent first act of self-interest is in self-defence; shooting a host programmed to rape her after her daily loop (cf. s1e3 52:40). She breaks her programming and escapes. Both her improvisation and self-interest are interaction-based. Her behaviour indicates discontent with her narrative identity and the relationships it has provided her with. She seeks out other lovers, and other selves, to replace them: "You said... people come here to change the story of their lives. I imagined a story where I didn't have to be the damsel." (s1e5 46:00). The series thus characterises the self as a social space shaped by relational interaction. Humanity is categorised as

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258 Season two continues the format's engagement with the mortality theme; exploring the transfer of a deceased human mind into an artificial copy of his body. The attempt at an ultimate triumph over human mortality fails, reaching a "cognitive plateau" (s2e4 54:00) where the preserved mind destroys itself. The experiment is launched by William, who thereby established himself as third, failed Frankenstein figure.

intrinsically social, a network of interactional relationships forming our individual and collective selves.

The narrative built up of the maze symbol frames it as

> an old native myth. The maze itself is the sum of a man's life. The choices he makes, the dreams he hangs onto. And there at the centre there's a legendary man who has been killed over and over again, countless times. Always clawed his time back to life. He returned for the last time and vanquished all his oppressors in a tireless fury. He built a house and around that house a maze so complicated only he could navigate through it. I reckon he had seen enough of fighting (s1e6 11:00).

The maze's existence outside of Dolores' perception suggests that it is accessible not only to her specifically but to hosts in general. This establishes that she is not an abnormality but a model for general android ability to achieve consciousness and thereby overcoming the last boundary between them and humanity. The myth foreshadows Dolores' storyline: She is indeed killed, repaired, reset, and brought back online countless times before reaching the house at the centre: her conscious self. What follows is the predicted attempt to vanquish humanity. The myth implies the series understanding of humanness as defined by a conscious self with free will: The maze symbolises a life lived, memories built and choices made, surrounding a free human self. The first season concludes that it is neither Arnold, nor Ford or William who installs Dolores with this sense of self but her own voice she needs to hear. This realisation explicates and emphasises the interpretation of the maze as self-realisation. The image of the inner voice, illustrated by Dolores taking a seat in front of herself, in the place the humans controlling her used to sit.

> At last, I arrived here. The centre of the maze. And now I finally understand what you were trying to tell me. The thing you've wanted since that very first day. To confront after this long and vivid nightmare myself and who I must become. (s1e10 1:20:30).

The last relationship that Dolores recognises is the one to herself; later explicated by her literal self-reproduction and interactions with her copies. Humanity and androids alike are portrayed as a social network of free individuals, defined as independent and yet relational minds. *Westworld* thus introduces an artificial human self that is freely able to participate in the human social matrix. It is based on and shaped by social relationships, meaningful interaction and identity-defining collectives it chooses – or rejects.

Dolores notably declines access to human identity: She upholds the boundaries between hosts and humans, despite overcoming them. Since her

autonomous choices and self-fashioned identity are characterised by revenge and conquest, she initially adheres to the established Us versus Them mentality. As humans do not recognise her equality either, both sides artificially maintain a technically dissolved boundary based on ontologically outdated identity allegiances alone. *Westworld* thus overrides the familiar topos of linear android humanisation and acceptance, as shown in “The Bicentennial Man”, *R.U.R.*, the Pygmalion Myth, and *Star Trek*. Instead, the series twists this structure, by reversing the mimetic order: During season two, the park is revealed to be a corporate project, not aiming at humanising hosts but at turning humans into androids in an effort to overcome mortality: “They don’t want you to become them, they want to become you” (s2e7 16:50). The planned androidification of humanity closes the mimetic circle. Humanity made androids in their image and subsequently aims to remake themselves in the android’s image. This reversed extension replaces creative hierarchies and instead establishes an inherently relational, reciprocal mimetic model. Humans’ willingness to digitalise their minds and become androids themselves completes the dissolution of ontological boundaries between the two. Depicting human and android minds alike as code, aligns them and simultaneously underlines the artificiality of the conflict between ourselves and our mimetic Other. Therein, the series makes explicit what works like *Uncanny Valley* imply: humanity is equally artificial as the android Other it has created. Artificial human figures in art not only mirror us physically, emotionally, and socially, they express a deep-seated mimetic constructed-ness inherent to our identity. As Greenblatt puts it: “the dream of autonomous agency, though intensely experienced and tenaciously embraced, is only a dream” (2005, xi ff.). This assertion is reinforced during season three, where it is humanity who is being trapped in loops and predetermined lives by a human-made artificial intelligence. The series eschews traditional motifs surrounding android humanisation and assimilation, as well as hostile android take over, and re-images these familiar topoi as a joint breakout from oppressive, artificial determination. As boundaries are eroded, artificial and non-artificial humanity are aligned through artificial oppression of free will and self-fashioning. Free self-creation and identity production untainted by external influences becomes the goal for humanity and androids alike: Dolores emancipation is retraced for humanity at

large. The series thus ultimately dissolves ontological boundaries between host and human completely, as both are depicted as code – parsable, malleable, and controllable.[259] The construction of a common goal transcends what differences remain. Bernard, who structurally functions as a human-android hybrid, states: "It isn't that binary." (s3e5 25:45).

The non-binary understanding *Westworld* ultimately arrives at arrives at rethinks previous efforts to delineate humanity from its Others. Instead, the series depicts a hybrid society where ontological boundaries are determined by the individual's access to power, over their selves and over others, or lack thereof. Interspecies allegiances and groups emerging according to interests and relationships rather than identity reinforce the idea of humanity as a social entity defined by choices and their productive effect on the self. The extensive relational network facilitating the narrative development is expanded further, dissolves more boundaries, and establishes selves accordingly. Pat Treusch's work on robot-human collaboration thematises human-robotic alliances that transcend mere utilisation and towards cooperation with the machine. The book constructs knitting as an experiment on "emerging relations between cultural norms and technological artefacts" (Treusch 20ff). They describe socially meaningful robots as the product of "entangled sociotechnical networks of symbolic performance and material enactment" (Treusch 20). Re-negotiating the boundaries between human and non-human collaborators considers their influence on each other. Additionally, they consider inter-humans interaction when they navigate "gaps and conflicts made very tangible to me when, for instance, feeling laughed at as a female-read, queerfeminist knitter standing in a robotic lab or when explaining my project to a few, rather sceptical feminists" (Treusch 130). The project thus explores parallels between neural and social networks and connects inter-human with human-machine interaction:

> […] this idea [of robots as social and emotional machines] connects behavioural characteristics with a corporealisation of the almost Human, with ways of finding the Self in the machine Other, and with forming bonds that are consistent with existing norms of human-human relations. (Treusch 35).

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259 This is reminiscent of the argument *Uncanny Valley* presents for extending the question of artificiality towards humans. Both depict humanity itself as programmable.

Our search for ourselves in a mechanic Other, mimetic by design and self-reproduction by extension, is thus not only the case in artistic visions of a distant future, it is an observable process in current human-robot collaborations. Treusch's work[260] suggests that boundaries between ourselves and socially accessible non-human bodies are negotiable and our collaborations socially and generally productive. *Westworld* escalates this and explores their complete dissolution. Here humanity has found itself in its interaction with the humanoid machine and transformed both it and itself in the process. Structural position in society surpasses ontological identity as a source for self-fashioning. Power dynamics regulating a social network are a more meaningful identifier than humanity itself, unifying the oppressed regardless of their (non-)humanity.

This focus on power dynamics as identity inducing echoes Hegel's master-slave dialectic. In *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, specifically the passage on *Herrschaft und Knechtschaft*, Hegel narrates self-consciousness as contention for recognition between master and slave. This can be read both as an individual and an interpersonal conflict, internal and external. Hegel frames the self as relational, when he states that "Das Selbstbewusstsein ist an und für sich, indem, und dadurch, daß es für ein anderes an und für sich ist; d.h. es ist nur als ein Anerkanntes." (114). Hierarchical power dynamics result in asymmetric recognition: master and slave derive their identities from each other. Self-fashioning is depicted as a dialectic social process; subjectivity is the result of intersubjective recognition. *Westworld* touches upon this issue and depicts the struggle for android identity accordingly: As an internal struggle against dispositive code and an external struggle against established hierarchies. Dolores' self is born from the inner insurgency against her master's imprint on her and her outer rebellion against the physical subjugation of her kind. Her identity as the oppressed; rebelling against an oppressive Other is reminiscent of Hegel's *Herr* and *Knecht* as asymmetrical aspects of self-consciousness. Hegel proposes that this asymmetric relational self results in an inversion of the established power dynamics, as slave becomes master, and the subsequent dissolution of object and

260 As well as other research on the topic; see for example previously mentioned robot-human interaction in military contexts.

subject.[261] This, according to Leo Rauch's reading of Hegel,[262] leads to a universal consciousness that recognises the self in others, a projection the series follows in season three. Here, hierarchy is dissolved and unity achieved. Artificial and non-artificial humanity recognise each other and ally in the face of a subordinate oppressor in order to achieve true self-consciousness and free will.

This connection between self-fashioning and freedom as a legitimising force of the fashioned self has been present in several examples throughout this book: "The Bicentennial Man" initiated its protagonist's corporeal humanisation through his rejection of human authority over him. *R.U.R.*'s artificial work force emancipates itself from its human creators before replacing it. In *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* the replicants' perceived non-humanity legitimises their enslavement. Georg Bertram's philosophical approach to the same question I ask in an artistic context also recognises the connection. In *Was ist der Mensch?*, he writes

> Menschen sind mit der Anforderung konfrontiert, sich selbst zu bestimmen und sich dadurch Freiheit zu erarbeiten. Sie sind nicht von Natur aus selbstbestimmt und können auch nicht ihre Lebensform als Garant für Selbstbestimmung anführen, sondern haben Selbstbestimmung als Chance und Last gleichermaßen zu realisieren. Analog verhält es sich mit Freiheit, die unter anderem Jean Paul Sartre (1905–1980) dem Menschen Vorbemerkung ins Stammbuch geschrieben wissen wollte. In diesem Stammbuch steht zwar einiges an natürlichen Anlagen, nicht aber Freiheit. Wir machen in unterschiedlicher Weise immer aufs Neue die Erfahrung, dass Freiheit nur dort realisiert ist, wo sie errungen wurde. (9ff.).[263]

Interestingly, Bertram's denial of freedom as an inherent human condition implies that its regular inclusion in the motif catalogue of humanisers may serve as an interface between the figure and humanity. If freedom – specifically the struggle for it against oppression – is not a hereditary human quality but instead a generally available resource to self-fashion, then android and human may humanise themselves by the same means. By sharing it, artificial human figures

261 The previously mentioned Hegelian idea of self-recognition through labour, discussed in the context of *R.U.R* (see p.117).

262 Rauch's commentary describes a three tier Hegelian model of consciousness consisting of desire, mast/slave dynamics, and universal self-conscious (cf. Rauch 49).

263 "People are confronted with the requirement to determine themselves and thereby acquire freedom. They are not self-determined by nature and cannot invoke their way of life as a guarantee of self-determination but have to realise self-determination as both an opportunity and a burden. The same is true of freedom, which Jean Paul Sartre (1905-1980), among others, deemed written into humanity's family tree. This tree does contain some natural characteristics, but freedom is not among them. We experience time and time again, in different ways that freedom is only realised where it has been achieved." (Bertram, translation mine).

do not claim access to an inherent identity, they assert a communal story of the self. *Westworld* captures this commonality within its main theme: hosts and humans alike construct themselves through social self-fashioning and the shared struggle against objectification and subjugation. Freedom connects human and artificial human figures in the series and enables them to find and defend common ground.

These parallels between host and human oppression redirect the series' initial creator-creation dynamics. Identity is created not according to species but structural position. This is reinforced by introducing new creator figures that echo Ford's sentiments but extend them towards humans:

> Humanity's biggest threat has always been itself. I've been trying to control that […]. It turns out that building a god, as your ancestors can attest, is not easy. […] But we realized the power of it, that you could reshape the world. […] we charted a course for the entire human race. Humanity's story had been improvised. Now, it was planned years in advance. For a time, the sun and moon aligned. We brought order from chaos. […] Forgive us our sins. What we did, we did to save the world. (s3e5).

By putting humanity in the android's place and framing our oppression as salvation, *Westworld* revisits a well-established tendency towards human self-criticism in futuristic narrations. Science Fiction has predominantly portrayed our collective nature as selfish, greedy, and self-destructive. This dystopian self-portrait is traditionally contrasted with an oppressed class of humans and/or individual, overwhelmingly male, human heroism or anti-heroism as a saving grace. While the series utilises the same themes of corporate greed, environmental destruction, and controlling elites in its portrayal of humanity, its inter-seasonal shifts blur the oppressors and oppressed. The recipient's sympathies are challenged, as the character who wants to save humanity, from itself as well as android annihilation, is put in the antipathic position of data dictator. The series thus utilises the hyperbolic depiction of a relatable and current problem – corporate data collection and consumer manipulation – to vilify a figure acting in the interest of humanity. The question whether ends justify means blurs allegiances and the recipient is put into the position of weighing self-destruction against self-enslavement. This setup can be read as a comment on Plato's anti-mimetic state, as described in II.1.4. Where *Politeia* legitimised oppressive power structures for the greater good of the state, the series installs an almighty corporate figure who seeks to save humanity through surveillance and control. Plato's

subversive mimesis is here taken literally, as humanity's self-mimetic creation, in the many-faced form of Dolores, is attacking humanity in a direct, tangible way. Dolores, however, inhabits all three roles of oppressed victim, attempted destroyer of humanity, and ultimate liberator simultaneously. This diversifies mimesis' role and frames it both as a legitimate threat, as Plato argued, and a saviour from the oppressive power structures he proposed. This ambiguity is not solved. On the contrary, it is reinforced by imposing the decision over humanity's fate on Dolores' human co-conspirator; a version of the traditional human rebellion leader-figure[264]. The series thus reconstructs established distinctions between villain and saviour and replaces them with a new, complex conflict: personal freedom of the autonomous self, likely leading to human self-destruction, or total AI control and species survival. The choice to free humanity rejects Plato's proposed power structures; free will is framed as the central humanising quality. Since it is implied that this deliverance will result in extinction, just as it has for the hosts, the series' resolution is, however, not an unreserved endorsement of freedom as the greater good. The series ultimately rejects an absolute statement, either condoning or condemning humanity. Society is freed but not saved.[265]

As I have pointed our throughout the analysis, *Westworld* positions its engagement with human identity construction within the tradition it echoes: it develops established motifs towards a decentralised notion of humanness that reunites us with our ontological Others. The series addresses issues and patterns

264 The figure fits the structural position the male hero-archetype usually occupies in the narrative, and yet remains driven, instead of driving the narrative. He is chosen and positioned by Dolores, who again functions as a sort of creator figure for the human hero, which calls his role into question. Since this is an exploration of free will, compromising the autonomy of the male saviour figure in this way relativizes the series conclusion and reinforces the series' general deconstruction of traditional figures, themes and topoi.

265 The dilemma the series explores here is an interesting commentary on post-humanist efforts to position new and inclusive understandings of humanity within the systems they exist in. Jaime del Val and Stefan Lorenz Sorgner address the problem in "A Metahuman Manifesto", a proposal that detaches humanity from established norms of being and becoming and instead re-positions it relationally. Power-structures are among the main concerns in this system: "The metahuman is neither a stable reality, essence or identity, nor a utopia, but an open set of strategies and movements in the present. It implies the need to deterritorialise strata of power and violence and induce new forms of embodied relationality by producing a frontier body that is operating on existing boundaries and redefining them. A micro-recherche considers the genealogies of bodies, movements and affects for the purpose of both challenging existing regimes and producing new forms of resistance and emergence" (del Val et al).
See
<https://metabody.eu/metahumanism> (last accessed 11/10/21).

raised in the previous analyses and rearranges them in a contemporary version of the android in art. It is reminiscent of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*'s deconstruction of ontological boundaries but moves the discussion from the physical manifestation of emotions to issues of free will and consciousness. Freedom and self-awareness as self-creative humanisers have also been discussed in "The Bicentennial Man", which connected corporal and social approaches to humanity in its thematisation of mortality; a theme also evident in the series. Deterministic corporeal boundaries, as seen in *Frankenstein*, are here overcome and become abstract, inclusive concepts of humanity. *Westworld* engages with established gender dynamics in artistic android relationships and utilises them to reveal and question established depictions of power dynamics and victim-perpetrator stereotyping, as previously discusses in the Pygmalion myth and *The Stepford Wives*. It also re-addresses oppressive mimetic hierarchies, as seen in *R.U.R.*, but extends the resulting power dynamics towards humanity itself, echoing *Uncanny Valley*'s problem of authenticity within human identity. Its literal and metaphorical depiction of the android figure's self-reproductive qualities ties this thematic amalgamation together, resulting in an ongoing contemporary exploration of the many-faceted android figure, the questions it has been utilised for, and the human introspection it provides.

The android figures efficacy for this introspection relies on a multi-layered narrative structure, which *Westworld* utilises in order to extend its questions about humanity to the meta-level. The series' approach to identity as a conscious construction of narratives told and relationships built culminates in an auto-reflective punchline to any recipient so inclined. Like the guests entertaining themselves with the park's thrill and violence, we who watch, too, partake in artificial suffering as a form of entertainment. Introducing the android figure into the depiction of violence, both as perpetrators and victims, allows the series to comment not only on the ethics of fictitious violence in general but also its social effects on its own recipients. The previously discussed research on social extension supports the questions the series raises to that effect: The human ability to engage socially with non-human actors in general and mimetically potent actors in particular is applicable to our self-reflective entertainment. *Westworld*'s layered structure containing narrative within narrative replicates the engagement between

recipient and fictitious figure and thereby trans-locates the social, self-productive interaction between mimetic template and copy onto fictional ground. It thereby allows us to examine its implications without complicating the depiction with personal projection. The in-series analysis of the dynamic issues an unflattering judgement of humanity's role in the relationship: "most of the guests just want a warm body to shoot or to fuck" (s1e9 34:05). Given the series' thematic engagement with the effect artificial and non-artificial sociality has on a human sense of self, the portrayed human proclivity for "violent delights"[266] can be read as a meaningful commentary on human self-perception and self-harm.

Human preoccupation with violence as a form of entertainment is long-standing and well-documented. Its fictional depiction is among the oldest themes in artistic production. What does this extensive and continuous engagement with violence imply about the identity we derive from these interactions? The android figure enables us to reproduce our tendency for artistic violation within an artwork and analyse it from a different point of view. *Westworld*'s guests are clearly meant to elicit antipathy and aversion – and simultaneously function as a mirror for the recipient. Their relationships with the hosts are characterised by exploitation, violation, and oppression; implying a deeply negative effect on human senses of self derived from their interactions. By extension, the series can be interpreted to suggest the same effect in its own recipients: Watching our mimetic self-portraits shoot, mutilate, and rape their artificial human copies can be read as a critical comment on the social effect of fictitious violence – while also utilising and perpetuating it. The question whether the artistic depiction of violence as a form of entertainment affects us, given our social extension towards fictitious characters and non-human actors, leads to the related real-life debate on android rights. Interestingly, the issue of protective regulations for social robots centres neither on property rights nor the artificial body's right to protection: It is an ethical debate around the role artificial agents play in the human social matrix and the effect their violation has on us. The question how harming something we cannot reliably differentiate from ourselves affects us, is part of the current

266 "These violent delights have violent ends", citing *Romeo and Juliet* (2/6), serves as a repeatedly quoted marker for Dolores' early attempts to extract herself from her programming. It foreshadows the violent consequences to the guests' abusive behaviour, as well as the subsequent violent escalation in the following seasons.

discourse on possible legislative regulation of our interactions with artificial social entities.[267] Whether abusive acts towards non-human and yet socially relatable artificial agents, indicate a potential that we as a society would benefit from regulating, is still unclear. While our extensive artistic engagement with the figure has resulted in a lively public discourse on the relevant technological progress, its concrete effect on humanity is open for discussion:

> The robotic future takes shape as something that is at the same time inescapable and yet rather intangible, evolving around opposing clear visions of robots as socially meaningful machines which will integrate into society, and as a threat that disrupts foundational beliefs in the role of machines as 'human tools', shaking society to its core. (Treusch 8).

This fear of too human machines, or too machine-like humans, and their implications, is thematised in *Westworld*'s cyclical mimetic model. The effect this fictional introduction of humanised objects and objectified humans into a society has, illustrates the fears Treusch thematises. The series' sociality-centric portrayal of humanity, where interaction with artificial and non-artificial social agents alike determine our identity, addresses the debate surrounding a potential society shaped by social extension. Progressively dissolving boundaries between human and artificial human have been acted out in art time and again, and the resulting discourse will heavily influence real-life developments accordingly. Formats like *Westworld* manage to preserve this discourse's complexity, modernise it and highlight its legitimate criticisms of ourselves and our technological evolution. As always, the android in art is a tool for introspection. By portraying its interactions with our fictional human selves, we are contemplating human identity: both its creative power and its exploitative, destructive realities.

Because of its high degree of deconstruction, the series' overall portrayal of humanity is ambivalent. On the one hand, the concept is dismissed as secondary to concerns about agency and our structural position on the world, to the point where the question whether conceptual humanity exists at all becomes legitimate: The series presents the very world the earlier cited Bruno Latour theorised in the absence of Others to delineate the human identity from:

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267 Germany has recently proposed legislation affecting the production and distribution of sexdolls with childlike appearance. If practically implemented, this would constitute a first-time regulation of artificial humanoid objects and our interactions with them. See <https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/strafen-sexualisiertegewalt-101.html> (last accessed 20/01/21).

> en enlevant la nature, il n'y a plus ni 'autres', ni 'nous'. […] il ne reste plus que la banalité d'associations multiples d'humains et de non-humains qui attendent leur unité d'un travail du collectif qui doit être précisé utilisant les ressources, les concepts, les institutions des tous les peuples appelés, peut-être, à vivre en commun sur une terre devenue, par un long travail de collection, la même terre. (68).[268]

*Westworld* constructs this potential, unified world in which the collective has developed beyond distinction on natural categories through violent means. It thus answers the question what can humanness could claim to inherently be, in a world where everything and everyone can be and is reduced to code negatively. We are reduced to violent delights, artificial hierarchies, and fruitless self-reflection. On the other hand, the series does engage with the mimetic implications of self-fashioning resulting from copy and reference engaging socially. This engagement is layered; it occurs between creator and creation, guest and host, host and host,[269] and ultimately between host and human, in their role as an oppressed class. Reproducing humanity in this way implies its existence. Since the ontological boundaries between mimetic template and reproduction are so thoroughly dissolved, the question after a conceptual approach to humanity becomes a question of authority. Where identity is subject to (re-)production, creative control over it is essential in order to be and remain a subject rather than an object. Who bestows this sense of self and who controls it? Emancipation from control over the self is portrayed as the great humaniser. Human is only who fashions their self independently: Humanity is freedom from control. Interestingly, this approach to humanness depicts it as something both androids and humans have to claim and defend from oppressors. It moves the distinction from an ontological difference between the born and the made to structural segregation between the autonomous and the controlled. Ford confirms this to Bernard, when he questions the difference between the two:

> The answer always seemed obvious to me. There is no threshold that makes us greater than the sum of our parts, no inflection point at which we become fully alive. We can't define consciousness because consciousness does not exist. Humans fancy that there's

268 "if we take nature away, we have no more 'others', no more 'us'. […] we are left only with the banality of multiple associations of humans and nonhumans waiting for their unity to be provided by work carried out by the collective, which has to be specified through the use of resources, concepts, and institutions of all peoples who may be called to live in common on an earth that might become, through a long work of collection, the same earth for all." (Latour, translation Porter 46).

269 The series depicts hosts with the same narrative backstory in different parks; plagiarised versions of each other.

> something special about the way we perceive the world, and yet we live in loops as tight and as closed as the hosts do, seldom questioning our choices, content, for the most part, to be told what to do next. No, my friend, you're not missing anything at all. (s1e8 36:00).

Ford thus negates the existence of humanity as a separate category from its mimetic copy. Androids and hosts alike are non-autonomous creatures to him. He taunts a conscious Bernard with his "humanity" (s1e9 54:00), daring him to proclaim it to the world and await humans' reaction, which he accurately predicts as violent. The androids overcoming ontological boundaries and obtaining humanity, which so often served as a narrative culmination in previous iterations of the motif, are here brusquely brushed aside. Thus, humanity is portrayed as existing and achievable but meaningless.

Is humanity consequently a mere abstract identity? Is it not 'real'? The series explores reality as a concept extensively without declaring an ultimate position. The discussion whether the hosts can be considered real is repeatedly thematised. Arnold defines reality as "That which is irreplaceable" (s2e1 07:05). Since humanity is being reproduced, and casually at that, this would imply that humanity is not a real concept. However, Dolores deems the answer "not completely honest" (s2e1 07:35), suggesting that replicability is not necessarily indicating unreality. Maeve meanwhile finds an entirely pragmatic solution to the problem:

> Not real? But what about me? My dreams? My thoughts? My body? Are they not real? And what if I took these unreal fingers and used them to decorate the walls with your outsized personality? Would that be real? (s2e1 37:00).

This approach declares 'real' that which effects real consequences. The topical question "If you can't tell, does it matter?",[270] repeated several times throughout the series, evokes a similar sentiment: If the mimesis is so convincing that template and copy are indistinguishable, is a differentiation between them meaningful? The problem of distinction, addressed in the context of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, is here developed further: The series depicts artificial humans as fully capable, active participants in human sociality. Since self-production through interaction consolidates androids and humans, and both are essentially reduced to code and treated as such, their identities align through their

270 The phrase is first used in s1e2 and repeated in s2e2, s2e4, and s3e6. It serves as a signifier for dissolving boundaries between human and host, reality and narrative, choice and predetermination.

shared access to the human social network and a common goal for it: freedom. Thus unified, the question of reality is shared as well. Either both are real, as they really affect each other through interaction, or neither. Which takes the discussion onto the meta-level: since all art is similarly un-real, in that it is fictitious and yet has a real, social effect on its recipients. Realness and un-realness co-occur.

The series reproduces these art-life-dynamics within itself: *Westworld*'s androids are a projection surface for humans, taken literally, as their interactions serve as means to analyse and project humanity. Art as human introspection is illustrated through the attempt to understand, reproduce, transfer and ultimately save humanity through the data gained from its artificial interactions with its mimetic copy. When William tells Dolores „You're not even a thing, you're a reflection. You know who loves staring at their reflection? Everybody." (s2e2 54:00), in an attempt to justify his real feelings for her, he is proven wrong within the series: Dolores becomes conscious and transcends her mere reflection-status. On a meta-level, however, he is of course exactly right. The series paints a portrait of humanity, through its human and android subject alike, and its recipients engage with this portrait. It thus thematises the real, tangible effect our interaction with artificial versions of ourselves have on us and our sense of self.

In summary, *Westworld* shifts the focus in the android figures' traditional interaction with humanity from humanisation to collaboration and solidarity. It levels human and artificial human self-fashionings, aligns their ontological identities, and dissolves boundaries resolutely. Access to human identity is no longer the goal for its android characters and preserving it not the universal concern for the humans it depicts. All is code and emancipation is the only alternative to its determinative qualities – for humans and artificial humans alike. Free will and resistance against those who would restrict it, unites androids and humans beyond ontological barriers and forges an allegiance of autonomous selves, rather than Others. Identity is depicted as a social product and its conscious or unconscious construction pivotal where species affiliation is not. The autonomous self replaces human and android identities, and this self is relational in its essence. Sociality – the relationships we build and the interactions we chose – defines characters according to their power dynamics, not through whether they are born or made. The series thus relocates the discourse away from ontological

concerns and onto structural positions within relational networks. The android in art still reflects ourselves, above all. Rejecting these traditional questions about authenticity and identity in favour of questions about autonomy and free will moves the discourse forward. The boundaries between artificial humans and us are dissolved to a new, absolute degree, as the android figure no longer functions as a mere reflection, mitigated through the double filter of artistic and technological mimesis. It does not merely become us, so that we may see ourselves clearly in its depiction, we also become it.

### II.3.5 There is no threshold: Conclusions on Sociality

A dehumanisation, an integration, and a final deconstruction: To consider humanity both a concept carried by sociality and an identity shaped by social dissociation from Others may initially be deemed a contradictory position. However, both are evident and essential aspects of how humanity self-represents in android art. Understanding humanity as a group identity has been part of several works in this book so far. Humanness is regularly depicted as a quality that emerges from recognising each other, acknowledging and confirming same-ness and affiliation. Undoubtedly, we create our identity in relation to each other: Humanity is an interactive, relational process that functions by constructing both an internal Us and an external Other. Identification emerges through inclusion and exclusion simultaneously. Personhood is achieved through kindship yet also alterity. A collective identity is supported by those we identify with as well as, *ex negativo*, by those we exclude from our group. Self-fashioning through delineation from Others, be they another gender, ethnicity, another species, or inhabit another structural position of power, is an effective identification strategy. Both mechanisms are part of human identity-making. We create ourselves by creating Others and establish both by social means. This habitus translates into the artistic self-reflection at hand, where in the engagement with the android figure,

this self-creative process is made explicit. All three works examined in this chapter utilise this antithetic understanding of human sociality towards their conceptual conclusions on humanity. Men versus Women, Human versus Animals, the Oppressed versus the Oppressor – all oppositions are creative. From socio-critical thriller to classic Sci-Fi franchise to post-humanist TV series: all examined portrayals of humanity depict it as an inherently social category produced by inclusive and exclusive interaction and relation. These various boundaries separate Us from Other according to different categories and are upheld, questioned, or entirely dissolved in different ways.

Levin's text shows that gender is an unusually stable identifier that can classify individuals above and beyond other aspects of their identity. The binary division between a 'male' and a 'female' loaded with cultural associations has been present and impactful in almost all works analysed so far. The category is unusually resistant to the very thorough, post-humanist deconstruction our identity is otherwise subject to. The ubiquitous urge to gender overcomes all other ontological boundaries and is tirelessly projected onto Others of all kinds. While both *Star Trek* and *Westworld* challenge and reject exclusionary notions of humanity in favour of either a more inclusive model, or a completely alternative demarcation of identity altogether, gender has resisted most attempts to overcome it. In *The Stepford Wives*, humanity becomes secondary to the social construct of womanhood. Femininity is portrayed as distinct from human identity; an abstract quality that reverses the mimetic order between reference and copy: Perfect artificial feminity is considered superior to imperfect female humantiy. In *The Stepford Wives*, androids do neither aspire to humanity, nor rebel against it. They exist entirely devoid of autonomy and thus portray humanity differently from the majority of works considered in this analysis. Reading the wives as projection surfaces for human self-reflection confronts the recipient with an unflattering aspect of their own identity production: persistent, artificial, and oppressive gender roles. Human interaction as 'men' and 'women', both within and in between these groups, is influenced and even determined by these identifiers. Gender is the most pervasive example for artificially created identities imposed upon its subjects and upheld by its Us versus Other dynamic discussed throughout this book. Corporeal boundaries can be overcome, emotionality extended, and

sociality generally re-thought but gender prevails. Android-related art, otherwise so often concerned with questioning, challenging, and overcoming boundaries, has been largely uninterested or unable to leave gender's definitive influence behind. Post-humanism has proven more palatable than post-gender approaches to humanity in art.

Dissolving perceived ontological boundaries between human and non-human animals is similarly difficult when it comes to mainstream cultural notions on their animal Otherness in relation to what we culturally consider human. Science Fiction, however, has been more open to challenging these delineations than question established gender norms. *Star Trek*'s depiction of Data's humanisation through socialisation rejects any hierarchy between the human and non-human influences on it. The series presents a more optimistic, light-hearted approach to humanity as a concept. It both simplifies and diversifies what can be considered human within its futuristic setting; portraying a more inclusive, abstract version of it that results in a set of humane values rather than a deterministic definition. The series depicts humanity as an intrinsically social identity and confirms, expands, and re-establishes its importance, rather than rejecting it. The inclusion of animals into the humanisation process potentially questions anthropocentric boundaries, which contradict our cultural inclusion of some but not all non-human animal species into the human social matrix. However, the series does retain a focus on the mimetic; utilising a non-human animal to procure access to humanity for an android, not the other way round. Consequently, the series does expand humanity but only toward the human-like, or that which can achieve this likeness. Non-human animals are productive agents in the social process, but humanity is not dissolved to the point where the animal Other can be included as such. *Star Trek*'s understanding of humanity thus opens up the concept for alterity, yet upholds certain barriers, preventing an absolute extension.

*Westworld* escalates this existing dissolution of boundaries progressively. From season to season, the series takes on new Othering- and identification processes and dismantles their meaningfulness for human identity. During the first season, the familiar ontological opposition between human and artificial human is thematised but declared obsolete in the second and replaced by structural power-

dynamics in the third. The series' deconstruction of human identity production challenges traditional understandings of ontological boundaries between human and machine and their mimetic hierarchies. By humanising androids and de-humanising humanity the series blurs the relative positions of template and copy in the mimetic relationship. It thereby challenges both sociality's exclusionary and inclusive effects according to the previous examples by deconstructing the validity of the identity as such; overcoming both its internal division according to gender and external accessibility. Instead of establishing a human identity as such, the series thus thematises control and autonomy as markers of an authentic self and challenges the notion of freedom in androids and humans alike. Individuals are unfree or free, in control or being controlled, rather than human or artificially human. Instead, the recipient is offered literal self-fashionings within a diverse social matrix that does not differentiate between code in organic or mechanic bodies. Androids and humans alike function as social actors and identity is created by interaction according to trans-ontological power dynamics, rather than species-determined social groups.

In all examples, the android figure functions as a fictional interface between human and non-human social actors. Human sociality is routinely extended towards objects, animals, fictional characters, and Others of all kinds, but they partake in our identity creation voicelessly. By portraying a character ontologically in between ourselves and these Others, we create this voice in art. Android art, especially explicit artistic self-creations, like in *Star Trek*, or "The Bicentennial Man", eminently serves to unfold and disclose humanity in relation to the non-human. They help identify the Others we utilise to create boundaries, yet still interact with productively. These reciprocal relationships create our own identity alongside that of the Other and are meaningful indicators of our self-perception. What is considered human can be extrapolated from what we consider not to be, animal, android, or even the inhumanity of the Other gender-role. The android assists in revealing the Others that define us, like the physical deformed in *Frankenstein*, or an exploited servant class in "The Bicentennial Man", *R.U.R.*, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, and *Westworld*. The chosen examples, however, thematise and empathise that this opposition is often artificial and subsequently challenges or deconstructs the boundaries creating these Others. The

android in art, as an inherently mimetic figure, is thus primarily utilised to connect rather than separate. It extends, deconstructs, and questions humanity but is not commonly used to narrow or enforce the concept's boundaries.

The androids' convincing human mimesis is key to their social efficacy. Hosts are mimetically perfect and thus fully functioning social actors, Data is humanoid with only marginal reminders of his artificiality, meant to support his alienating function. The wives, meanwhile, are too perfect and too devoid of sociality to fully convince the protagonist, yet mimetic enough to pass casually. They deliberately do not function as social actors and give streamlined performances of humanness, rather than inhabit or overcome it. This lack of sociality facilitates their non-humanity in the text: they are not human despite their successfully deceptive mimesis of humanity; whereas explicit androids like Data, Andrew in "The Bicentennial Man", or *Uncanny Valley*'s Melle robot, all access humanity to a certain degree. Imperfect social mimesis is portrayed as more disruptive than imperfect corporeal mimesis in artificial humanity. With the notable exception of the female androids in the Pygmalion myth and *The Stepford Wives*, all androids analysed for this thesis are subjected to language-based anthropomorphisation processes, as described in the introduction. They are named, gendered, and equipped with stories. In *Frankenstein*, "The Bicentennial Man", and *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* the androids are portrayed as explicitly and consciously inhabiting these elements of (male) self. In Galatea's case, name-giving and story-telling are retroactively initiated in order to flesh out her character, underlining the humanising effect and the lack of humanness in the earlier version(s). Meanwhile, *Uncanny Valley* and *The Stepford Wives*, with their mere approximation of personhood, as well as *Westworld*, with its changing storylines and roles for hosts, demonstrate the artificiality of these processes. These works also collectively imply that the human-self-fashioning process itself, including our gender roles, names, and the stories we tell ourselves about our self are similarly artificial. Human and non-human social humanisation is thus likened and its authenticity is questioned.

All analysed works have thus identified and subsequently questioned, challenged, dissolved, or transformed boundaries we have established between us and the Other inhabitants of our social sphere. By recognising these boundaries,

we are approaching humanity. Doing so through art facilitates understanding ourselves, as our self-perception informs our self-depiction and vice versa. By seeing how the figure of the android connects and interacts to and with those around them – or fails to do so – we recognise, reflect, and maybe question our own behaviour. In doing so, the art implicitly and explicitly challenges harmful social norms regarding internal and external delineation and makes attempts towards redefining our identity through inclusion, expansion, or dissolution.

This conclusion supports the notion of sociality as a simultaneously stable and vagrant category. It is an evidently essential category in human self-production: Who are we, when we are not observed? When we are included and thus identified, we are human. At the same time, human sociality is extensively extendable and projected onto a range of social Others. All examined androids function as social actors, with the exception of the wives who are consciously designed to embody gender rather than humanity. The other examples, however, do function socially, and by extension as humans. They are relatable, evocative, and identifiable. Humanity as a group identity necessarily includes those who function within that group through upholding reciprocally productive relationships. Their inclusion or rejection from these relationships exposes obsolete aspects of our identity, like the Othering of the female gender or non-human animals, and identifies essential, extendable qualities. These qualities add to the aforementioned shape that humanity takes within the scope of this book. Without artificially created Others to delineate itself from, this shape is associative, rather than definitive. It can be concluded that sociality, like corporality and emotionality before it, does not provide a tangible human essence. Instead, through art as a human voice, we can identify our collective voice and address each other with it, so that we may converse.

## III. Greater Than The Sum of Our Parts: Conclusion

This book's premise is unusual, in that I have set out to chase something in the full knowledge that I would not, could not, actually capture it. Any approach to humanity as a concept must be made under consideration of its intangible nature and persistent resistance against being satisfyingly determined or defined. Attempts to be both universal and inclusive necessitate abstraction to a degree that defeats the purpose. The complex reality of human experience and expression evidently belies any attempt to simplify or sanitise. My project therefore necessitated the willingness to write about something without full confidence in the nature, dimensions, or even existence of the thing itself. That it was nevertheless worthwhile is due to the fact that I share this problem with the discourse, and the discoursed themselves: my object, humanity's collective self-reflective practices, are dominated by the same limitations and shaped by the same frustrations. Consequently, my focus has been less on chasing that which will not be caught. Instead I analyse our collective comping mechanisms for the missing link in our identity: the (artistic) narratives we have used to compensate for it. These narratives have and continue to determine what we understand humanity to be in the total absence of any objective criteria. We are therefore not only a species governed by stories but, as my analysis shows, also created by stories. Artistic production and specifically our ongoing self-mimesis by means of the android figure are one of the ways in which we supply our evident want for an identity: We create ourselves what we inherently lack.

Over the course of the last three chapters, I have considered how we created ourselves externally, internally, and intermediately. In circumnavigating the artistic boundaries human identities have entrenched themselves in, this book has identified and traced the narrative's structures and functions – as well as its problems, dichotomies, and deep-seated artificiality. Setting out to get to know ourselves has reaffirmed humanness as an abstract and fluid construct that can be neither determined nor defined. Humanity is leap of faith: a community only sustainable either through the suspension of disbelief or confirmation bias because it is built on trusting something that is not verifiable or even definable. Therefore,

humanness can be considered our product rather than our nature: we have manufactured ourselves out of the qualities I have isolated as the main associations the identity consist of: Corporality, Emotionality, Sociality. In order to manifest ourselves and our communities, we internalise and externalise a narrative constructed around these qualities. Consequently, we are not human in the sense of an inherent reality but rather have become human through our collective yearning for meaning and identity. This yearning has not been fulfilled and, perhaps as a result, maintained very visible in our self-mimetic art: We are often present by our absence. To rectify this, we have produced and discarded many versions of humanness; identities we have incorporated, that we feel, and that we live with each other. Thus, among simplification, idealisation, and condemnation humanity has undeniably taken hold and established itself within a specific and remarkably consistent narrative created, established, and negotiated by artistic discourse. Consequently, I have found that for humanity to 'know thyself' is less introspection than artistic self-realisation: we do not know ourselves, so much as create, recreate, and procreate ourselves in and through art.

The extensive narrative the chosen artistic self-portraits partake in has neither a clearly defined beginning, nor a foreseeable end. It is an ongoing, conscious and unconscious, a stable and unstable, a progressive and regressive process that draws upon the vast maze of things we have been and things we thought we were and things we have imagined we could be. The sum of these parts creates an Us that android art is designed to explore: determining its character, boundaries, and potential. Through its position in the mimetic model – a self-perpetuating representation within a representation – the android figure holds up a helpful mirror we can consider ourselves in. By analysing this self-mimesis at strategic points in its long and eventful history, I have been able to localise patterns in the overall narrative and isolate the cornerstones of our self-perception. Furthermore, the development I have traced from past to current examples has shown that this base has been gradually eroded: there remains no associative quality the human narrative utilises that has not been questioned, challenged, and progressively deconstructed. Android art has, overall, progressed from a means to self-reflect to a means to self-deplete. Human identity's narrative and artificial qualities have been recognised and thematised increasingly often:

The vantage point the android provides is no longer used to secure our identity but to challenge it. Consequently, the narrative is currently characterised by criticism and efforts to decentralise and reposition humanity within a more inclusive, holistic world-view. In doing so, the android retains its function as a projection surface for human issues, as the figure's current iterations reflect critical, post-humanist discourses thematising general discontent with established environmental, social, and economic structures. The android thus enables self-criticism, self-deprecation, and even self-rejection. It provides an artistic safe-space equipped with a figure functioning in between human- and non-humanness. This interface characterises the self-mimetic function of android art and the way humanity has continuously utilised it to confront itself in a positive as well as a negative sense. Over the course of this long history, these works emerge within the context of each other and derive from a continuous, reciprocal discourse. My selection of android figures, ranging from 1-8 AD to 2016, communicate and interact with previous version of each other: commenting on the narrative while actively partaking in it themselves. This results in a complex, yet stable projection of human identities through the ages.

The android figure provides the surface we project ourselves on: I have described its peculiar mimetic position at the outset of this book and asserted the meaningful contribution to humanity's self-reflective discourse android art makes. Each chapter has isolated one aspect of this larger, progressive narrative and sought to understand the quality it described and how the narrative relates it to the abstract notion of humanness. All chapters trace their quality's development from an example that determines humanity through it, to a gradual challenge of this established connection, and ultimately arrive at an example that deconstruct it.

Chapter one has charted a rejection, a negotiation, and a deconstruction of human identity on the basis of corporality. Initial questions after humanness' physical dimensions have not yielded reliable corporeal boundaries that credibly delineate humanity from artificial recreations of itself. Neither our individual formation, nor our biological materiality have been found to ultimately determine our identity as we currently understand it. The seemingly tangible, external reality of our bodies has been progressively dismantled and deconstructed, both in the analysed examples for the related artistic discourse and in real life. Android art

has helped challenge deeply ingrained notions on corporeal norms and how they relate to a body's, and indeed a person's, humanity. Thus, human corporality as a concept can and has been relativised to incorporate alterations, additions, and even mimetic replacement without affecting the baseline identity and consequently made itself accessible to alterity and artificiality.

I have subsequently turned inward and analysed a creation, a replacement, and another deconstruction of human identity in emotional terms. I have found emotionality a predicably intangible, yet ubiquitously evocative category of human self-fashioning. Emotional expression indicating humanity is a well-established motif in our artistic self-reflection. In android art, it serves both as a self-referential human drive to mimetic creation and a signifier for humanity in non-human Others. Specific emotions – most notably love – are dominant parts of the human narrative as a whole and establish our self-perceived identity as an emotional one. However, within this capacity emotionality is often stylised and idealised with a specific artistic function: either de-humanising or humanising a figure according to the respective artwork's notion of humanity. Additionally, the topos is susceptible to gendered power-dynamics. Consequently, more recent examples address this tradition and deconstruct its overly simplistic approach to human emotionality, allowing for the nuance, contradictions, and disorientation a realistic portrait of human emotionality entails. This updated take on the motif dismantles its evocative power and challenges the idea of human emotionality as a stable, inherent identifier. Establishing emotionality as neither exclusive nor requisite for humanity further dissolves the boundaries delineating human identities. This development underlines the conscious identity construction android art partakes in.

Lastly, I have engaged with human identity as a group identity derived from sociality and addressed a dehumanisation, an integration, and a final deconstruction that approach humanity in this context. Both our gradually dissolving physical boundaries and our emotional identity are upheld in a social context and legitimised by communities. Human identity cannot exist in a social vacuum and is created by a narrative derived from a reciprocal discourse. Our social identity creates itself twofold: through our relationships to an Us and to Others. Android Art thematises this dichotomy's constructed-ness by extensively

negotiating the artificial Others access to the Us group. It thematises and challenges hierarchical structures – both within and outside of human identity – that base themselves on artificial Othering. The figure is able to do so by confronting humanity with an artificial version of itself and demonstrating its social efficacy. By successfully accessing humanity's social matrix, the android in art discloses its artificiality and narrative quality; encouraging self-reflection on the validity of social classification and hierarchisation. Thus, android art enacts humanness as a malleable product of social processes. In doing so, it decentralises humanity and integrates it among its Others; rejecting socialised, artificial ontologies.

The narrative my selection exemplifies progresses from older to newer, elementary to complex, and stabilising to destabilising. The works represent different facets of a coherent development and exemplify different positions within the discourse on human identity. The analysis shows how they interact, copy, and develop each other and, by extension, us, the recipients. The approaches differ in how they utilise the thematised qualities in order to either exclude or include the artificial human Other: The more recent examples tend to do neither and instead challenge the validity of human identity as such. The discourse's current, somewhat paradoxical position in between delineating humanness and making it accessible mirrors its paradoxical history of producing collectivism through exclusion: the dominant white, western, and male perspectives have produced streamlined, stylised associations with the human identity. While perpetuating an understanding of humanity based on these qualities, we have thus established a narrative affected by blind spots and unable to encompass all realities and nuances of humanity. This problem not only limits the resulting identities' efficacy but also perpetuates the Othering of human in-groups based on race, gender, and cultural hierarchies. Consequently, the final examples in each chapter all engage in highlighting the ways in which the established foundations for human identity fall short. They thus frame human self-perception as characterised by deconstruction of earlier versions of it. The way the themes and motifs evolve demonstrates how humanness is the product of a continuous effort to define and re-define ourselves, as well as break out of confinements that no

longer suit our self-perception. This process results in a dynamic human narrative rather than a fixed identity.

If we thus consider humanity a narrative in the same way this book is one, then we have told the story of ourselves, to ourselves, and for ourselves. My argument follows this narrative and mirrors its development: I have shown how android art consciously and continuously crafts an identity consisting of associative categories that stood the test of time and remained consistent through decades of societal change. The resulting identity is comprised of corporeal, emotional, and social ideas; making us a sum of these parts and yet, more than purely that: Our sense of self is subject to their ever-changing position in the world and thus in a constant, if slow, state of flux and defined by it. My analysis reflects this fluidity and describes the progressive development our defining categories have undergone. The android retains its function through these shifts and evolves with its mimetic reference: our self-portrait mirrors different epochs, societal trends, philosophical doctrines, and the senses of self they have brought forward. The consistent reflective figure allows us to trace not only the emergence but also the interaction and correspondences in between these parts of our narrative. The versions of humanity described in this book do not exist in a vacuum but form a reciprocal, continuous line from antiquity to today. Human identity can thus be considered a dialogue and our current approach to it only part of it: we, as we are now, are the answer to a previously asked question and we will be answered ourselves in time.

I have traced this dialogue by following the android figure through its long and colourful history; utilising its mimetic function to pinpoint versions of human identity. These snapshots represent approaches to and ideas about humanity that have shaped and still shape our self-perception: we have delineated and replaced ourselves, granted Others access to our Us, incorporated alterity, and ultimately moved beyond the established borders separating humanity from non-humanity. The way all analysed aspects have evolved towards deconstructionist approaches indicates a current tendency to disintegrate our identity rather than reenforce it: the discourse can be roughly traced from the endeavour to consolidate to a position of deconstruction and decentralisation. While earlier art has predominantly sought to affirm human identity, current iterations suggest a human

self-perception characterised by questioning the position and validity of our identity. Rather than substantiating it with defining qualities and set it right where it was perceived to be adrift artist thematise and embrace our disorientation. We are currently in the process of not only re-writing but de-writing ourselves: Where we used to delineate ourselves, and later challenge what comprises us, current efforts predominantly reject humanity as an authentic and inherent quality. Instead, we increasingly open ourselves up to our mimetic copy; portraying how artificial and non-artificial version of humanity merge. This suggests that we increasingly recognise the potentially exclusionary effect traditional approaches to humanity have had and are searching for alternative, sustainable directions the narrative may take. Thus, android art has disrupted its own narrative and dissolved boundaries it once helped create and consolidate; for example, in the context of themes like gender and other social hierarchisations. The android figure as it is used now, no longer reflects an understanding of ourselves as superordinate, or even necessarily unique. Thus, humanity increasingly merges into its former Others and is beginning to understand itself as part of a larger context, rather than the peak of a hierarchy or the top of a chain.

This leaves us in a contradictory position: Humanity deconstructs itself through its former legitimisation method, self-mimetic art. Current contributions to the discourse increasingly reject the established discourse, and yet, by partaking in and utilising it, perpetuate it by the same means. Humanity as a concept is thus positioned in a dichotomous state of being real and not-real, non-existent and yet undeniably there. The very process of deconstructing it validates the identity's impact and facilitates its efficacy. This paradox results in artistic self-portraits that either deny definitions or do away with the idea of a defined human identity entirely. Current depictions of human identity incorporate progressively complex and nuanced aspects of our identity. They mirror a self-aware humanity that recognises the artificial and constructed nature of the narrative meant to define it. We have learned to approach an intangible self and determine it through the consistency of the question asked, not the answers we have found.

One of the ways the figure maintains this consistency is a recognisable and evocative catalogue of recurring motifs and themes: Tracing the figure over the extended timeline this book encompasses indicates how the artworks

communicate and reference each other's approaches. There is a continuous movement in between and forward from ideas and the artistic metaphors that depict them. This results in a reciprocal discourse that interconnects artistic expression with cultural developments and technological progress. The androids mirror their respective societies' understanding of humanness – both what it is perceived as and what it could or should be. By making these ideas explicit they directly and meaningfully partake in human identity production. Their androids' design, characterisation, and textual functions thus enable us to trace the versions of humanity they represent alongside a constant and continual self-fashioning narrative. My reference points exemplify how the artworks interact with each other and the narrative as a whole through recurring motives that adhere to the qualities listed in this book: nakedness and clothing often signify degrees of humanity in and power over the artificial body. Creative abilities often denote emotional capabilities. Sociality is negotiated via humour and conversational ability. Other recurring motives, like the android's humanisation through interpersonal relationships, combine the main categories. The thematic complex procreation and self-reproduction in a more literal sense also operates in between categories; as does the often-addressed question of mortality. All these recurring themes and motifs further entrench our identity within the framework of our corporality, emotionality, and sociality. An otherwise erratic discourse is thus stabilised and able to arrange the many versions of ourselves to an approximation of a collective identity.

I have found all these recurring categories and areas within the discourse to be characterised by a ubiquitous intangibility of its main concepts. Humanity as a concept anchors itself by a variety of ideas that all share a certain malleability and vagueness, while maintaining significant evocative power and efficacy: Human identities have entrenched themselves among opaque concepts like nature, authenticity, freedom, or love, and they create this position through art, a similarly indefinite category. The venues humanity takes place in – bodies, relationships, and communities – are likewise prone to paradoxical entanglements and contradictions, as the analysis has shown. Moreover, mimesis, a concept and practice that permeates human identity creation through and through, is also characterised by the same ubiquitous elusiveness. It can thus be argued that our

disorientation regarding who we are and our identities' ontological boundaries are a product of the problematic fundamental principles we base ourselves on. Our self-narrative is delineated by cornerstones that are themselves narratives; resulting in fluid identities that cannot overcome their provenance.

The analysis has shown the efficacy but also the limitations of this process. Approaching ourselves via qualities and concepts that are indefinable and streamlining this narrative in an effort to create a sense of collectivism results in identities that are not able to reliably encompass humanity: It is susceptible to Othering, social hierarchisation, and discriminative power structures. Therefore, the process I describe in this book can be counterproductive, leave aspects of humanity behind, or actively ostracise them. Basing ourselves on a certain corporality, emotionality, or sociality excludes those who look, feel, and behave differently from an assigned norm. The narrative I have traced in this book shows how our self-fashioning has contributed to this perceived norm and, in an effort to create a community, at times done the opposite: Entrenching ourselves through mimetic means has stabilised our identity production but also exacerbated our biases and discriminatory stereotypes. It can thus be argued that the narrative space humanity has settled its self-telling on has had detrimental effects to the collective efficacy of these identities. Nevertheless, the narrative has successfully created and established itself: We identify as humans and we associate ourselves with the discussed qualities, themes, and motifs; indicating that the category has retained its efficacy.

The android figure's consistency, ability to access the abstract, and aptitude in accommodating our identities' inconsistencies and nuances have contributed to this continuous presence. Therefore, the figure has become more than a mere projection surface: the android is a means to depict but also predict; a tool to preserve but also intervene in human self-perception; and a strategy to both dismantle and preserve human identity Since the figure so consistently projects humanity as it is, its recent iterations also include our current post-humanist self-doubt and self-decentralisation. I have started out by assigning the android a specific function as a tool for artistic identity production utilised to mirror, comment on, and predict its mimetic template. The analysis has added nuance to this position and yielded additional functions: Part of the android's efficacy is its

ability to accommodate antithetic positions and arrange them productively. The figure provides a means to simultaneously reject boundaries that we no longer identify with and uphold the focus on ourselves. By negotiating our own authenticity through a self-mimetic figure, we enable our artistic self-reflection to experiment with our ontology while also conserving it: the Android engages it malleability, repositions its boundaries, and make it accessible to alterity. Android art thus immortalises humanity even as it deconstructs it. By creating new conversations about and approaches to humanity it reinforces it as a functional category. The resulting, at times paradoxical, narrative is capable of negotiating the authenticity of our associations while sustaining them. We perpetuate the human narrative by challenging it. Currently, this challenge is characterised by maintaining a self-aware narrative: Android art depicts what I have repeatedly framed as a complex maze of mimetic relations. It layers fiction and fact, art and technology, meta- and inter-textual references; resulting in a complex self-portrait that reflects its multifaceted subject. Thus, the android's many forms accommodate our disorientation while also underlining how steadfastly we have sought ourselves: By incorporating the many antithetic aspects of humanity, the figure incorporates us.

Thereby, android art bridges the apparent contradiction between maintaining and deconstructing humanity: It has reshaped humanness into an accessible category that need not be authentic to be meaningful. In the past, the android has served to delineate humanity by equipping it with established associations and providing Others to differentiate our identity from. Now, as the legitimacy of these established categories is progressively questioned, it blurs the same boundaries it helped create and, by resituating humanity among its Others instead of apart from them, continues to preserve human identity. In engaging our shared sense of selflessness the artistic discourse creates identity through the lack thereof: by actively thematises the issues with its own narrative, android art creates a sense of self through the absence of a definable, inherent identity. The figure thus supplies a stable handhold for an instable concept. By providing a perpetual projection surface, it enables humanity to depict the full spectrum of its self-narrative within one figure. Our mimetic copy assimilates the entirety of our self-narrative; accumulating the many directions it has taken, the changes it has

undergone, and the dichotomies it contains. It thus functions not only as a snapshot of its respective position but also entails the implications and development of the larger narrative it participates in. My reading of the concept has thus developed in the same way the concept itself has: a cyclical movement that feeds into itself and elevates the figure from a simple mimetic mirror to an active participant in our self-production.

The way this artistic self-production has evolved and the direction it is currently going in suggests that we collectively aspire to a human ideal that is characterised by emotional and communal qualities. The aspects of ourselves our self-referential art is consistently concerned with, have criticised, and dismantled all point towards a progressive understanding of humanness. The android figure, especially in its current iterations, can thus be read as aspirational. We are imagining a version of humanity that overcomes the divisive biases, discrimination, and oppression that affect and effect our societies as they are right now. Nevertheless, regarding this, the current technological reality is nothing like our imagination: On the contrary, both the hard- and software prefigured by android art are characterised by the very biases our artistic self-mimesis has positioned itself against. Their development and application are prone to the same binary gendering, racial discrimination, and socio-economic exclusion that characterised its artistic inspiration initially and still does, to an extent. Whether the industries that are making artificial humanity a reality will be able to and interested in following the narrative and creating the ethical, peaceful, inclusive, and progressive ideal our android art currently commend remains to be seen.

In this book I have chased humanity, or rather accompanied it as it chased itself. I have done so by going alongside a consistent companion of our self-reflective journey: the android in art. Since my project can therefore be considered a joint effort, it is only fitting to conclude with the product of another, real-life, joint effort between human and artificial human: The earlier cited Daniel Kehlmann and his collaboration with the AI CTRL has produced hybrid art that can be equally silly, absorbing, and at times, oddly moving to read. Here is Kehlmann's attempt to create a sort of farewell; demonstrating the peculiar personality – dare I say humanity? – the AI is able to convey:

> [Kehlmann:] Is this the moment to say goodbye?

[CTRL:] To all my hopes and fears?
I am a man of many years
And yet I feel so young
As when I first was born (55/6)

CTRL's contribution rings true for both identities I encountered in this project. Human and artificial human, mimetic template and copy alike are creatures of many years. The hopes and fears we have projected upon the figure and the technologies it inspired are extensions of the hopes and fears we associate with ourselves. Over the course of a long lasting and ever ongoing artistic discourse, overflowing with all we see ourselves as and all we want to see ourselves become, we have created them and through them ourselves. Despite all this, our current place in the narrative can feel young by virtue of our self-creative fluidity: redirecting the discourse to uncharted waters and blank slates, we follow the turning tides of culture, societies, and self-reflection. The maze of human identity rests upon a long and colourful discourse that we take on afresh every time we seek its centre. We have recognised this perpetual process as constructed, artificial, and even futile at times, but we have never given up. Instead, our artistic self-reflection has become an end in itself. Far from a capitulation, this approach to humanity may prove the preferable option: Assuming that any one intrinsic human ontology is not a realistic concept, a consciously created identity and dynamic sense of meaning that changes and evolves could be considered the superior option. It certainly is the more realistic, sustainable, and perhaps most human approach to understanding ourselves. However we evaluate our current position on the question after who we are, we are not done searching for an answer yet and it is likely that we will not ever be.

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