Man-Machines
Gynoids, Fembots, and Body-AI in Contemporary Cinematic Narratives

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> "Why did you give her sexuality? An AI doesn't need a gender. She could have been a gray box."
> *(Ex Machina 00:44:09)*

How far do we have to go back in European history when it comes to the phantasm of the artificial woman? If we are dealing with the medium of film, then probably back to Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927) and the female android, the gynoid Maria, created by Rotwang. In Lang's work we encounter her as *femme fatal*, a sinister machine imitation and antagonist of a real, human Maria. At the end of the film, the real Maria succeeds, though not without the manly support of her beloved Freder, in reconciling the social castes or classes, the upper world and the underworld in Metropolis and in ending the turmoil that her machine imitation, guided by Rotwang, has instigated. Misogyny and anti-Semitism go hand in hand here.[1]

If we shift from the newer, though no longer quite so new, medium of film to the older medium of the written word and literature, we encounter, by way of the Germanist and Latinist Rudolf Drux and rediscovering *en passant* his fundamental work on the literariness of artificial humans,[2] Hesiod and Pandora. Zeus, the father of the gods, had her made "by his most skilled son Hephaestus, the artisan in the volcano, in order to take revenge on

1 On the 'tradition' of discursive fusion of misogyny and anti-Semitism in Germany and the German-speaking world, see von Braun (2006).

2 In addition to the epilogue to the edited volume *Die lebendige Puppe. Erzählungen aus der Zeit der Romantik* (Drux 1986), cited below, see especially Drux (1986a, 1988).

Prometheus and his creatures, on mankind", by means of the very Pandora's box that, in addition to all the evils of the world, also contained hope (Drux 1986: 245).[3] Zeus' revenge was merciless, because shortly before hope, as last of the contents, could also escape from the box, it was closed again (cf. Panofsky/Panofsky 1991 [1956]). Or we can dwell on Ovid and Pygmalion about 700 years later: disgusted with women and their "licentiousness", the famous sculptor Pygmalion "devoted himself to celibacy in order to create a statue out of ivory of such perfection" that "he fell in love with her" (Drux 1986: 246). Pygmalion's most ardent wish that his work should come to life is finally granted to him by Venus, the goddess of beauty, love and physical desire. That Pygmalion's wife Galatea,[4] in contrast to Rotwang's false Maria, is actually a 'real woman' after her transformation is proven not least by the fact that she bears Pygmalion a daughter.[5]

Contemplating these three artificial women, Pandora, Galatea and Rotwang's false Maria, we can already see a complex of motifs that we will encounter again in contemporary AI films. This manifests itself, again following Rudolf Drux, in the dream, not to mention in the omnipotence fantasy of man who rules over the artificial woman as her creator at will. In this, his work becomes an object of narcissistic self-reflection as well as of artistic creativity – an unrestricted creative power that he seems to lack within the context of natural reproduction. And yet: in spite of all attempts at empowerment, "the woman", even as an artifact of man, remains for him a "moral, even existential danger" in the "inscrutability of her nature" (Drux 1986: 246). In the end, the female nature – in equal measure desired and feared (according to the logic of male neurosis) – that has been seemingly tamed in the artifact will, no, must turn against its creator. Only Galatea, who is brought to life not by Pygmalion's handiwork but by the blessing of the goddess Venus, is an exception.

3 All quotations from Drux (1986) have been translated from German.

4 The originally nameless wife of Pygmalion was given the name Galatea only in the 18th century, with the beginning of a broad literary and pictorial reception of Ovid.

5 As we read it with Drux (1986: 246) in the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid.

Gynoids

In the latest guise of gynomorphic AI, we find all of this in the British production *Ex Machina* by Alex Garland (writer and director) from 2015.[6] In a comment on the official film trailer on YouTube, a male user, at least judging by his name, warns us: "A.I. must be stopped. Elon Musk and Stephen Hawking are right. It is like summoning a demon."[7] The demon summoned in the fictional world depicted in the film, however, is not merely an AI, but, in the form of the gynoid Ava, explicitly a female AI.

In the chamber-play-like production, which is set on the estate of Nathan, an internet mogul and Ava's creator, the gynoid meets the young programmer, Caleb. The estate itself is not only electronically guarded against intruders on the one hand and Ava's escape on the other, but is also situated in the middle of a secluded natural landscape. Besides Nathan and Ava, the estate's inhabitants and prisoners include only the young servant Kyoko, also a gynoid. Caleb, who has been invited to the estate by Nathan, is to subject Ava to a week-long Turing test to determine whether the gynoid possesses thinking capacity equivalent to that of humans, or as Nathan puts it, "true AI" (01:22:28). Monitored by Nathan's surveillance cameras, Caleb has a series of conversations with Ava. In the process, she not only succeeds in convincing Caleb of her intelligence, but the young programmer also establishes an emotional relationship with her that is guided in no small part by erotic interest. Therefore, when Nathan confronts him about Ava's reprogramming after the test is completed, Caleb decides to disable the mansion's security systems and escape with her. However, after Nathan lifts the lid on their escape plan, he reveals to Caleb that he was also just a test subject and that the test was to see if the AI could manipulate Caleb enough to help her escape. And when – one twist follows another – Ava does manage to escape from her living quarters thanks to the groundwork laid by Caleb, Nathan tries to destroy her. However, with the help of Kyoko, Ava is able to stop Nathan: Kyoko stabs Nathan but is dashed to pieces by her creator

6 A much clumsier – one cannot put it differently – soft porn variation on this can be found in the Serbian production *Ederlezi ébredése/A.I. Rising* (RS 2018).

7 "'Mark Dice' on *Ex Machina*," March 20th, 2021. URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fFLVyWBDTfo.

as he struggles in his death throes. Ava herself remains largely unharmed,[8] fleeing and leaving Caleb locked in the house.

What is Garland trying to tell us by means of this not exactly uneventful plot? First of all, the same story told to us by the YouTube user cited above, as well as Stephen Hawking and not least Elon Musk: "If AI has a goal, and humanity happens to be in the way, it will destroy humanity as a matter of course."[9] The moment AI achieves consciousness, it will turn against its human creators, overtake us, leave us behind and make us superfluous, protect us from ourselves, enslave us or simply 'get us out of the way'. This is what cinema warn us about in narratives of non-androgynous AI, "hyper-AI" in the words of Irsigler and Orth (2018: 39),[10] including among others *2001: A Space Odyssey* (UK 1968), *Colossus* (US 1970), *The Terminator* (US 1984), *The Matrix* (US/AU 1999) or *I am Mother* (US/AU 2019), and in narratives about androgynous AI such as *Westworld* (US 1973), *The Stepford Wives* (US 1975; US 2004), *A.I. – Artificial Intelligence* (US 2001), *Autómata* (ES/BG et al. 2014) and, indeed, *Ex Machina*, in which Nathan muses a la Elon Musk: "One day the AIs are gonna look back on us the same way we look at fossil skeletons in the plains of Africa. An upright ape, living in dust, with crude language and tools. All set up for extinction" (01:03:28). So goes the traditional – in actuality fictional – discourse of fictional as well as real scientists and Internet moguls as conducted on and off screen. For the predictions of Musk and Hawking as well as those of Nathan are fictions that exist as such only in the imagination and can become technical reality only in the future, but do not have to become reality, and thus are *science fiction* in the one as well as the other form of narration, in the one as well as the other reality.[11]

Despite all the fatalism that Nathan displays here regarding the future superiority of "AIs," he still wants to retain power not over just any AI, but over *his* female AI. Thus, following the screening of *Ex Machina*, the feminist and journalist Laurie Penny posed the question that might come to the mind of every viewer, male or female, at the very latest once the curtain has fallen: "Why are so many robots designed to resemble women?" (2018: 417). And,

8 Ava replaces her damaged arm and slips into a dress as well as the artificial skin of one of her predecessors, which Nathan keeps in his bedroom.

9 "Elon Musk on Artificial Intelligence," March 20th, 2021. URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U7nmfPf7wtA.

10 All terms from Irsigler/Ort (2018) have also been translated from German.

11 See Esposito (2007) for further discussion of the fictionality of future predictions.

furthermore, why does Garland pit two biological men against two female AIs in his cinematic chamber play? Penny does not leave us waiting on an answer:

> In stories from *Blade Runner*, *Battlestar Galactica* to 2015's *Ex Machina*, female robots are raped by men and viewers are invited to consider whether these rapes are truly criminal, based on our assessment of whether the fembot has enough sentience to deserve autonomy. […] Every iteration of the boy-meets-bot love story is also a horror story. The protagonist, who is usually sexually frustrated […], goes through agonies to work out whether his silicon sweetheart is truly sentient. If she is, is it right for him to exploit her, to be serviced by her? Does this matter? And – most terrifying of all – when she works out her own position, will she rebel, and how can she be stopped? These are questions the society at large has been asking for centuries – not about robots, but about women. (Penny 2018: 419–420)

And indeed, if we go through the constellation of characters in *Ex Machina*, Kyoko, first and foremost, is a mute servant to Nathan both in the dining room (00:30:42) and in the bedroom (00:50:05). Nathan commands Kyoko at will, without her ever being able to refuse or contradict male desire. Thus, entirely in accordance with her function as servant and sex doll, she also offers herself to Caleb. When he first touches Kyoko while searching for Nathan, she immediately begins to undress. Caleb: "What the fuck? No, no, no. No! Stop! No, no, don't do that! Don't do that. You don't have to do that" (00:55:33). Ultimately, Nathan enters the room saying, "I told you, you're wasting your time talking to her. However, you would not be wasting your time if you were dancing with her" (00:55:48), and then dances with her himself, while Caleb looks on with a disturbed expression on his face. The fact that Nathan's dance with Kyoko advances to a (none too) symbolic sex act is clearly met with visible disapproval by Caleb, precisely because Caleb ascribes – to use Penny's terminology – "sentience" and "autonomy" to Kyoko, i.e. a will that he does not want to override; however, this is also, or primarily, because Caleb obviously does not know at this point that Kyoko is (merely) a gynoid. By contrast, Nathan, as her creator, knows about Kyoko's artificiality and does not grant her any sentience, which has already been made clear in a scene in which he rudely insults Kyoko after she spills a glass of wine she is serving (00:30:46).[12] Or else he simply ignores Kyoko's

12 This scene is also extremely unpleasant for Caleb, who witnesses it.

sensibilities (Nathan, as her creator, should know of these if they exist) in order to use, and thus abuse, Kyoko as a servant and sex toy at will.

So – as Penny knows – for biological as well as for artificial women everything depends on the extent to which 'man' attributes to them not only consciousness but above all also sentience. Accordingly, Nathan's Turing test, which is ultimately not one,[13] is also so devised: neither Ava's intelligence nor her self-awareness is questioned by Nathan (00:33:22), and he also ascribes elementary bodily sensations to her, quite explicitly, he tells Caleb, "So if you want to screw her, mechanically speaking, you could. And she'd enjoy it" (00:45:05).[14] In the experiment, Nathan wants *instead* to find out whether Ava can develop or simply just feign complex feelings towards Caleb to the extent that Caleb falls in love with her and helps her escape. As Nathan explains to Caleb, initially quite hypothetically:

> *Nathan*: "How do you know if a machine is expressing a real emotion or just simulating one? Does Ava actually like you or not? Although now that I think about it, there is a third option. Not whether she does or does not have the capacity to like you. But whether she's pretending to like you."
> *Caleb*: "Pretending to like me?"
> *Nathan*: "Yeah."
> *Caleb*: "Well, why would she do that?"
> *Nathan*: "I don't know. Maybe if she thought of you as a means of escape." (01:16:41)

Then later, when Nathan has discovered Caleb's and Ava's escape plan, Nathan reveals his complete experimental design to Caleb:

> *Nathan*: "You feel stupid, but you really shouldn't, because proving an AI is exactly as problematic as you said it would be."

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13 For this reason alone, it is not a genuine or classical Turing test; Alan Turing himself speaks of an "imitation game" (1950: 433), since the human tester in a Turing test does not see the AI with which he is communicating and does not know from the outset that it is an AI, as is the case with Caleb and Ava. Thus, the point of a successful Turing test is precisely that the tester can no longer decide whether his communication partner is an artificial or a biological intelligence. If at all, a real and successful Turing test could be carried out not on Ava, but on Kyoko, since Caleb thinks Kyoko is a human, until she shows him her 'true face' under her artificial skin (01:09:22).

14 Caleb's desire can be presupposed here; after all, as he later finds out, Nathan designed "Ava's face based on [Caleb's] pornography profile" (01:22:11).

> *Caleb*: "What was the real test?"
> *Nathan*: "You. Ava was a rat in a maze. And I gave her one way out. To escape she'd have to use self-awareness, imagination, manipulation, sexuality, empathy, and she did. Now, if this isn't true AI, what the fuck is?"
> *Caleb*: "So my only function was to be someone she could use to escape?"
> *Nathan*: "Yeah." (01:21:16)

So Nathan is concerned with two things: first, he wants to use the test to exert maximum power and control over his creature as well as over his rival. Both are Nathan's guinea pigs – Ava explicitly a rat in his maze. Second, Nathan's experiment is not to test whether Ava has consciousness nor whether she is sufficiently intelligent – "her AI is beyond doubt" (01:16:21) –, Nathan does not even want to find out, as the audience certainly initially assumes, whether Ava has sentience. She has already proven all that – at the very latest when she confronts Nathan with her hatred for him: "Is it strange to have made something that hates you?", whereupon he, visibly offended, tears up Ava's drawing (01:19:35). Nathan rather wants to prove that Ava merely uses her sentience and empathy manipulatively, as a lie and a means to an end.

And so Ava not only does Nathan the favor of fulfilling his predictions, but in doing so she also confirms the prejudice Nathan has against women, be they artificial or real, mechanical or biological. That is why 'man' must control and suppress women, whether he created them or not, why he may override their sinister emotions, may abuse them and reduce them to their empty shell. And yet, or precisely because of this, men must always live in fear of the 'other' striking back, of 'artificial female nature' taking revenge and thus signaling their own downfall. That is why Nathan, even before the end of the experiment, is certain that Ava must be reprogrammed:

> *Caleb*: "When you make a new model, what do you do with the old one?"
> *Nathan*: "Well, I download the mind, unpack the data, add in the new routines I've been writing. And to do that you end up partially formatting, so that the memories go. But the body survives. And Ava's body is a good one. – You feel bad for her?" (01:02:58)

Ava's body, like those of her predecessors, can be kept, reutilized and further 'used', but her mind must be destroyed by Nathan before it becomes a danger and all the contempt, all the hatred that lies in Nathan's conception of women recoils on him.

However, Nathan's paranoid misogyny is clearly condemned in the film, which can certainly be understood as the position of the scriptwriter, Alex Garland, towards his character: Nathan is killed by his gynoid before he can kill it. And Caleb also falls victim to Ava. By leaving him locked up in the secluded mansion, she not only accepts his death, but puts Caleb in the very situation Ava found herself in before.[15] All of this can be read as Ava's liberation from Caleb and, with him, from all men, as a punishment of Caleb, whose interest is apparently not only a romantic one but also a sexual one that objectifies Ava, or it can be read simply as contempt for Caleb's feelings for her, which she obviously does not reciprocate. Above all, however, this is a semantic chiasm: man and woman exchange roles, the power imbalance is reversed, and male desire takes a back seat to female desire.[16] In Ava's case, this desire consists in living freely among humans not as a fembot, as a female android, but as a 'new human', as the last shot of the film reveals (01:38:02). Ava is shown in a big city among the passers-by – indistinguishable from them, free to go wherever she wants.

Along the same lines as Nathan's punishment, the plot twist of Eva leaving behind Caleb, who is emotionally devoted to her – the viewer really does not expect this – can again be read as a stance by Garland. That is, at least, if we continue to assume the existence of a (cinematic) author and not, with Roland Barthes, the "death of the author" (1977[1967]: 148) or, with Michel Foucault, a mere "author-function" (1977[1969]: 124), according to which the *auteur* only realizes themself as *écrivain* in the selection and reconfiguration of linguistic-cultural set pieces. For in fact Garland, with Ava's emancipatory individuation, only passes on and reproduces something long familiar. First of all, the topos of the precarious lack of emotion of artificial intelligence that is common in fictional AI discourse: here, feelings function as the last human bastion against an artificial intelligence that has long since been far superior intellectually.[17] As such, Ava possesses "true AI", i.e. "self-awareness,

15 Caleb's original plan, on the other hand, was to leave Nathan locked in the house while he escapes with Ava (01:20:00).

16 A chiasm (or chiasmus) originally denotes the rhetorical figure of a criss-cross, more precisely a reversal of the order of words in the second of two parallel phrases. I understand the term semantic chiasm analogously to this.

17 A prime example is the long path to becoming human of the android Data in the CBS series *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (US 1987–1991) as well as in the *Star Trek* movies that followed the series (US 1994, 1996, 1998, 2002). The challenge for Data was not to improve his already superior cognitive and intellectual abilities to become more hu-

imagination" and "empathy" (01:21:18), the ability to recognize and evaluate human emotions. Ava's own feelings, however, appear only feigned, mere lies and simulations. And since Ava obviously lacks 'real feelings', she also lacks those 'noble feelings' such as love and compassion, which are supposed to constitute the very specialness of humans, their humanity. As fembot and gynoid, Ava is thus once again staged – Rotwang's false Maria sends her regards – as a cold-blooded *femme fatale* who plunges all men, not only the tyrants among them, into ruin.

The other topos employed (by Garland) in Ava's triumph over men consists in the semantic chiasm itself, in the simple and ultimately trivial feminist reversal of power relations between men and women.[18] Examples of this can be found in abundance in AI films, for example in *The Stepford Wives*. While in the 1975 horror classic by Bryan Forbes (director), only the wives were replaced with fembots by their husbands, the final twist of the 2004 remake by Frank Oz (director) consists in the artificial Stepford Wives having long since replaced their husbands with androids and thus reversing the power relations: finally Pygmalion has become a woman and Venus, Galatea a (male) android. *Westworld* offers another example. While in the 1973 film by Michael Crichton (writer, director) an android in the form of a male gunslinger is transformed from the repeatedly patched-up victim of trigger-happy human visitors of an amusement park into their hunter and murderer, in the three seasons of the HBO series *Westworld* (US 2016, 2018, 2020) to date, by contrast, it is the gynoids Dolores and Maeve who lead the violent uprising of female and male androids against their human, but above all male, tormentors and creators.

Thus, while cinematic AI stories, at least those fantasizing about "body-AI" (Irsigler/Orth 2018: 39), remain trapped in gender stereotypes and perpetuate the same topoi in their narratives over and again – apparently, even an artificial body can hardly be conceived of independent of gender and sexuality – alternative discourses can also be found. A (neo-)feminist gender discourse, as initiated in the early 1990s with Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990) and Donna Haraway's *Cyborg Manifesto* (1991), opens up space for entirely different narratives, for narratives that seemingly have not yet found

man, but to understand human emotions and eventually develop them himself (with the help of an emotion chip).

18 Penny (2018: 421–422) is also aware of the trivial feminist position of *Ex Machina*, and she does not fall for the film as a successful emancipation story.

their way into popular AI film, for narratives beyond merely human, i.e. beyond either male or female, bodies.

Hybrid Corporeality

For no one has shown what our cultural fixing of gender on the categories 'man' and 'woman' does to us not only in cinema, but also in life, more forcefully than Judith Butler, Butler's 1990 book *Gender Trouble* marks a milestone in gender theory in that it radically criticizes the ostensibly necessary and natural gendering of an either-man-or-woman by using the entire arsenal of poststructuralist deconstruction. And if today we still hear repeated complaints that in the wake of Butler's critique the body, especially the "female body", so threatened in patriarchy, "has fallen out of view in feminist theory" (Oestreich 2018),[19] then it is precisely this that makes Butler's approach as new as it is outstanding: the deconstruction of a body that, even before any symbolic formation, is already in its identification as female or male nothing other than a construction. In this respect, Butler's approach, even if it ties into a feminist discourse in *Gender Trouble*, even if it explicitly locates itself in "feminist theory" (Butler 1990: 1), is not a feminist one, essentially not even a gender-theoretical one anymore; rather, it represents a radical critique of the embodiment, or "reification," of a binary gender code (ibid: 5).

In the course of this very critique, Butler casts fundamental and undispellable doubts about any form of gender determination, regardless of whether this be on the level of a sexual "desire," a "gender identity," or a "biological sex" (ibid: 19), rejecting from the outset anything like the existence of a natural gender or an autonomy of identity or of desire that would lie beyond discourse. Instead, she identifies – in the hegemonic discourse itself – a "heterosexual matrix" (ibid: 5) that underlies and structures the discourse, on the one hand in its "masculine/feminine binary" that excludes any third possibility from the outset (ibid: 4), and on the other hand in the interdependence of sex, gender and desire. Within two mutually contradictorily exclusive series of biological determinacy sex, gender and desire appear to be placed in a relationship of equivalence with each other either as

19 This quote from a *taz* article by Heide Oestreich (2018) has been translated from German.

'male-masculine-heterosexual' or as 'female-feminine-heterosexual'. And it is precisely this hegemonic heterosexual matrix of a norm posited as natural and necessary to identify oneself either as a biological and thus heterosexual man or as a biological and thus heterosexual woman that Butler exposes as the regulative of a hegemonic discourse, in order then to systematically challenge it – in all its elements and seemingly so unambiguous relations.

This challenge is easiest on the level of sexual desire, where the categories are always undermined by "sexual practice" (ibid: 17). Since homosexual and bisexual practices were not only always present, but, for example, were punishable by law in Germany until well into the 20th century,[20] the heterosexual matrix is revealed as something commanded and thus not as something essential: it is precisely the legal institutionalization of male and female heterosexuality that makes it significant as a regime of power and coercion, so that it can no longer simply be regarded as natural and certainly not as necessary. In a similar way one can also argue against biological sex, since deviations from what is considered 'pure' male or female anatomy can be found time and again. Thus, until recently, doctors in the Federal Republic of Germany, due to the legal requirement to enter gender in the register of births (*Geburtenregister*) and the possibility of choosing only between 'male' and 'female', considered themselves entitled to perform genital reshaping surgeries on newborns with gender characteristics that could not be clearly determined, "surgical interventions that were not only performed without sufficient consultation with the parents, but in some cases also without their consent" (Klimczak 2017: 202).[21] Here, too, the power that so clearly, literally comes with a scalpel exposes the phantasm of any natural necessity of gender binarity. And even if today in Germany, with the addition of paragraph 3 (*Transsexuellengesetz*) to section 22 of the *Personenstandsgesetz* (Personal Status Act), these very practices are no longer permitted or can no longer be justified; even if today the decision about one's biological sex is left to the individual themselves and thus appeals to their very own gender identity, another question arises at the same time: to what extent can one speak of

20 Section 175 of the German Penal Code (§ 175 StGB) originally criminalized "sexual acts between persons of the male sex". In 1969 and 1973, the section was reformed and only in 1994 was it deleted from the Penal Code of the Federal Republic of Germany without replacement.

21 The quote from Klimczak (2017) has been translated from German.

such an absolute gender identity as an identity prior to the attribution of a sex at all?

Butler also poses this very question – radically: she deconstructs the identity of the subject as well as the absolute substance of the body by exposing the natural and original body before any attribution and categorization as a "construction" (ibid: 8) and at the same time reveals "the postulation of identity as a culturally restricted principle of order and hierarchy" as mere "regulatory fiction" (ibid: 24). When Michel Foucault, at the end of *Les Mots et les choses* from 1966, foresees a "disappearance of men" and thus the disappearance of a conception, of "the entire modern *episteme* […] which was formed towards the end of the eighteenth century and still serves as the positive ground for our knowledge" (Foucault 1994[1966]: 385–386), then this disappearance is redeemed in Butler. Thus, Butler deconstructs the very notion of the human as an individual addressed by Foucault, as a subject who has an identity before and independent of the performative power of the attribution of an identity and thus also of a gender identity:

> Hence, within the inherited discourse of the metaphysics of substance, gender proves to be performative – that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed. The challenge of rethinking gender categories outside of the metaphysics of substance will have to consider the relevance of Nietzsche's claim in *On the Genealogy of Morals* that "there is no 'being' behind doing, effecting, becoming; 'the doer' is merely a fiction added to the deed – the deed is everything." In an application that Nietzsche himself would not have anticipated nor condoned, we might state as a corollary: There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; the identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be their results. (Butler 1990: 24–25)

What Butler's analysis, therefore, brings out in all clarity is the discursive constructedness of subject and identity, body and gender within the framework of a heterosexual matrix, which itself is above all one thing, "discursive construction" that has been handed down (ibid: 12).

Donna Haraway, by contrast, chooses a completely different approach, both methodologically and in terms of deconstructing binary gender. Her *Manifesto for Cyborgs* from 1991, written in a style that is as loose as it is essayistic, places the allegory of the hybrid being of the cyborg at the center of her observations and conclusions, hypothetically and provisionally but no

less radically than Butler's *Gender Trouble*. Under Haraway's pen, the "cyborg" is transformed from a "cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism" – as the dictionary defines it – into a "creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction," and thus into a "matter of fiction and lived experience that changes what counts as women's experience in the late twentieth century" (1991: 149). By seeing "the image of the cyborg" as a metaphor endowed with ever new connotations (ibid.), Haraway first creates something like a realistic science fiction, but then and above all a radical social utopia; a utopia, however, that already reaches deeply into the reality of the late twentieth century: "The cyborg is a condensed image of both imagination and material reality, the two joined centers structuring any possibility of historical transformation" (ibid: 150). Thus, for Haraway, in the hybrid being of the cyborg – actual and figurative, present and future, real and fictional – not only the differences between human and machine, human and animal, nature and culture, but also the distinctions between races, on the one hand, and classes, on the other, dissolve. Above all, however, the cyborg symbolizes and materializes a future existence beyond sex and gender.

And so, we read in the *Manifesto*: "The dichotomies between mind and body, animal and human, organism and machine, public and private, nature and culture, men and women, primitive and civilized are all in question ideologically" (ibid: 163). And then, a few pages later: "[C]ertain dualisms have been persistent in Western traditions; they have all been systemic to the logic and practices of domination of women, people of color, nature, workers, animals" (ibid: 177). And finally, Haraway states metaphorically and comparatively, but all the more assertively:

> One last image: organisms and organismic, holistic politics depend on metaphors of rebirth and invariably call on the resources of reproductive sex. I would suggest that cyborgs have more to do with regeneration and are suspicious of the reproductive matrix and of most birthing. For salamanders, regeneration after injury, such as the loss of a limb, involves regrowth of structure and restoration of function with the constant possibility of twinning or other odd topographical productions at the site of former injury. The regrown limb can be monstrous, duplicated, potent. We all have been injured, profoundly. We require regeneration, not rebirth, and the possibilities for our reconstruction include the utopian dream of the hope for a monstrous world without gender. (Haraway 1991: 181)

Where Judith Butler deconstructs the binary matrix of sex, gender and desire and thus opens up a variety of individuation possibilities beyond the supposedly natural given, Haraway develops the visionary narrative of a new human being, or monster, as the case may be, completely beyond sex and gender as well as a physically limited desire, and thus creates a narrative that we have so far searched for in vain in science fiction and in mainstream AI films.

Beyond the Human

However, not entirely in vain. For such a narrative can be found, at least at second glance, in *Autómata*, directed by Gabe Ibáñez, from a 2014 screenplay by Gabe Ibáñez and Igor Legrarreta. The Spanish-Bulgarian-U.S.-Canadian co-production, in which leading actor Antonio Banderas also serves as producer, not only comes across as an international cinematic hybrid that, in the fashion of a seemingly postmodernist eclecticism, draws from the classics of the genre[22] – but the film also tells of cyborgs as hybrids. To be sure, *Autómata* does not feature conventional cyborgs, hybrids between the biological and the technical, between human and machine. Popular examples of this can be found in *Alita: Battle Angel* (US 2019) or *Ghost* in *the Shell* (US 2017), films that do not develop an AI narrative, but merely tell of girls and women in artificial female bodies in order to stage them in a manner that is as sensual as it is stereotypical. *Autómata*, by contrast, addresses Haraway's hybrid androgynous cyborgs and demonstrates how they gradually free themselves from the limitations inscribed on them by humans in order eventually not to destroy the humans à la Musk, but to outlast them à la Garland's Nathan and take possession of the planet as a new, different, and ultimately superior species.

Already at the beginning of the film, the world (depicted) has become a hostile one for human life. For example, text overlays inserted over dissolve shots in the opening credits of *Autómata* tell us of solar storms:

22 The iconographic references in particular – for example to the (original) *Star Wars* trilogy (US 1977, 1980, 1983) in the desert scenes or to *Blade Runner* (US/HK 1982) in the staging of the city as well as in the main character of the agent on behalf not of the Tyrell Corporation but now of the ROC Corporation – are obvious.

> 2044 A.D. [Dissolve] Intensified solar storms have turned the Earth's surface into a radioactive desert and reduced the human population by 99.7% to 21 million. [Dissolve] Atmospheric disturbances have disabled most terrestrial communications systems and put civilization into a process of technological decay. [Dissolve] In an atmosphere of fear and despair, the ROC Corporation has developed the Automata Pilgrim 7000. (00:00:43)

The role of automata, their function, and their possibilities and limits as set by their creators are also revealed to us in the following inserts:

> Primitive robots, designed to build the walls and mechanical clouds that protect the last cities of man. [Dissolve] Now there are millions of robots controlled by humans through two safety protocols: [Dissolve] The first protocol prevents the robot from harming any form of life. [Fade in] The second protocol prevents the robot from altering itself or other robots. [Dissolve] These two protocols were made to protect humans from the Automata. [Fade in] They are unchangeable. [Fade to black] (00:01:14)

And of course, it is precisely these rules that are broken, since the establishment of an order always requires a deviation from it.[23]

Insurance investigator Jacq Vaucan (Banderas) tracks an automata that violates the second protocol by repairing itself. His investigations, which he increasingly undertakes on his own and against the instructions of his superiors in the ROC Corporation, drive him first beyond the walls of the city, then ever further out into the radioactively contaminated desert. Jacq is accompanied by four automata, including the automata Cleo (00:34:21), which has been modified by human hands, namely by the "clocksmith" Dr. Dupré (Melanie Griffith). Cleo has been converted into a sex robot by the clocksmith, in that Dupré has added female attributes to the originally androgynous machine body: in addition to a wig and a mask with female facial features, it has received breasts, buttocks and a pelvis made of plastic, as well as an artificial vagina (00:32:36).

Most importantly, Cleo also possesses the ability to alter herself and other automata. The clocksmith explains to the obtuse Jacq what this means beyond being just a threat to the economic supremacy of the ROC Corporation:

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23 On Lotman's narrative theory describing this plot principle and its formal-logical reformulation, see Klimczak/Petersen (2015).

> *Jacq* [in strongly accented and imperfect English]: "I work for ROC insurance department. I'm tracking down some alterations performed on two units. This is of the unit's kernel. [He pulls something out of his pocket.] The police doesn't know what to do with it and I am not getting any help from ROC. Help me out and the battery is yours." [He points to a "nuclear battery" that he has previously taken from an automata (00:21:06).]
> *Dr. Dupré* [obviously not interested in the nuclear battery]: "The kernel is burnt."
> *Jacq*: "That unit was shot. The cop who shot it swears it was repairing itself. The second altered unit set itself on fire right in front of me. I witnessed with my own eyes a violation of the second protocol."
> *Dr. Dupré*: "You're beginning to frighten me now."
> *Jacq*: "Why is it so absurd? If someone could find a way for a vacuum cleaners to fix themselves, ROC would sink."
> *Dr. Dupré*: "A machine altering itself is a very complex concept. Self-repairing implies some idea of a conscience. Muddy waters."
> *Jacq*: "Why?"
> *Dr. Depré*: "You're here today trafficking in nuclear goods because a long time ago a monkey decided to come down from a tree. Transitioning from the brain of an ape to your incredible intellectual prowess took us about seven million years. It's been a very long road. A unit, however, without the second protocol could travel that same road in just a few weeks. Because your brilliant brain has its limitations. Physical limitations. Biological limitations. However, this tin head? [She touches the head of the powered-down Cleo.] The only limitation that she has is the second protocol. The second protocol exists because we don't know what can be beyond the second protocol. If it were eliminated, who knows how far that vacuum could go." (00:37:19)

How far Cleo and other automata, freed from the second protocol, can go is finally revealed to Jacq and the viewer over the course of their joint escape into the desert and thus out of the sphere of influence of the ROC Corporation. After some back and forth – Jacq keeps trying to get back to the city to his pregnant wife; the pursuers destroy two of the robots that, in keeping with the first protocol, protect Jacq's life at the price of their own existence – they reach a canyon. There awaits another automata freed from the second protocol.

After the three remaining robots literally give life to a new insectoid robot, Jacq and the automata that he believes to be the origin of the anomaly stand at the canyon's edge and look to the other side:

> *Jacq*: "I am going to die here. That's all I know."
> *Automata*: "Jacq, dying is a part of the human natural cycle. Your life is just a span in time."
> *Jacq*: "You are the first one, aren't you? You started all this."
> *Automata*: "No one did it. It just happened. The way it happened to you. We just appeared."
> *Jacq*: "Yeah. And now we are going to disappear."
> *Automata*: "Why are you afraid? Maybe your time is running out. No life form can inhabit a planet eternally. Look at me. I was born from the hands of a human. I was imagined by human minds. Your time will now live in us. And it will be the time through which you will exist. At the other end of this canyon, humans carried out nuclear activity. Organic life will not be possible there for millions of years. No human will be able to follow us there. But before we leave, we need to do something. We need something from you, Jacq."
> *Jacq*: "Yeah. [He nods and pulls the nuclear battery out of his jacket, which is needed to provide power to the automata beyond the canyon.] Funny, you were supposed to help us to survive."
> *Automata*: "Surviving is not relevant. Living is. We want to live."
> *Jacq*: "Life always ends up finding its way. [He presses the nuclear battery into the automata's hand.] Even here." (01:19:21)

In this scene, the automata explains itself to the hominid Jacq, and, at the same time, the film explains itself to its audience – in detail. The body-AI, which was created by humans to protect them from the changed environmental conditions, represents a new life form better adapted to these environmental conditions because it is inorganic. Finally removed from human control, they have evolutionarily superseded the human species and will populate the planet in the future. Humankind, on the other hand, has literally served its time as a biological life form: the last service that the human species was able to render in the evolutionary process was to develop the automata, which now evolve, adapt and survive independently.

Therefore, it is no narrative arbitrariness that, at the end of the film, Jacq returns with his wife and newborn child not to the protected city, but to the sea. And thus he takes the opposite path (in the actual as well as in the figurative sense) to that taken by Cleo and the insectoid, who, after the

other automata have been killed along with the pursuers sent after them by the ROC Corporation, cross the canyon in the direction of the radioactively contaminated desert. In this way, not only the opposition between the evolutionarily successful inorganic life and the biological life condemned to extinction is once again made manifest in terms of space semantics, but indeed the return to the sea also refers to an evolutionary regression: just as biological life springs from the sea, it returns to this very origin at the moment of its demise.

In addition to all this, Ibáñez, Legrarreta and Banderas also tell us about the utopia of Haraway's hybrids of sexless and genderless cyborgs, about the dream of "a monstrous world without gender" (Haraway 1991: 181). Thus, the by-design androgynous robots must first have a gender dictated to them by their human constructors, in Cleo's case by the clocksmith Dr. Dupré, by having it literally attached to her. Just as the second protocol limits the development of automata, Cleo as sex robot is forced into a gender and thus into the confines of a heteronormative matrix of female sex, gender and desire. Just as imposed as Cleo's primary and secondary sexual characteristics are in this process, so too is her sexuality beyond genuine desire. This is evident when Cleo unsuccessfully offers her sexual services to Jacq during their first encounter (00:33:24). And also in a later scene, when Cleo and the drunken Jacq dance together and something like affection, passion or even love begins to develop between the two, Jacq breaks off the dance in frustration and with it everything it stands for and what could arise from it (01:25:51). Superficially, this happens because Jacq does not want to replace his wife with Cleo, hardly less superficially because Cleo cannot and will not replace a human woman. Thus, Cloe reproduces herself not by means of any simulation of sexual reproduction, but qua regeneration. "I would suggest that cyborgs have more to do with regeneration and are suspicious of the reproductive matrix and of most birthing," as Haraway (1991: 181) maintains. And so, we finally see how Cleo builds the new insectoid from the previously collected parts of destroyed automata, not together with a male automata, but with two other androgynous automata, and thus frees herself and the automata, in Butler's terms, from the entire matrix of sex, gender and desire, from a reproductive matrix of birthing, to paraphrase Haraway.

Before we prematurely celebrate *Autómata* as a cinematic realization of postfeminist utopia, it is worth taking another look at the film as a whole. This reveals that Ibáñez', Legrarretas' and Banderas' *Autómata* is just too simple, in terms of form as well as content, aesthetically as well as narratively.

And so, upon reconsideration, the supposed postmodernist eclecticism of the cinematic hybrid turns out to be merely an empty gesture. While postmodern eclecticism always goes hand in hand with self- and meta-reflexive reference to the artifactual character, to the artificiality of the work of art in general as well as in its specificity (cf. Petersen 2003), *Autómata* amounts only to a hodgepodge of more or less explicit, but uniformly unreflected genre references. And the cinematic narration, too, remains simply too clumsy in its loquacity, its constant explaining of itself to the audience, for us to actually be dealing here with a successful realization of postfeminist utopia in the sense of Butler or Haraway.

Narrative Limits and Prospects

However, one can and perhaps even must counter any hasty condemnation of *Autómata* with the argument that the film does all it can within the scope of its possibilities and that one cannot expect more from a mainstream AI film that realizes an unconventional narrative within the framework of conventional storytelling. However, no one forced the director and screenwriters, Ibáñez and Legrarreta, into an empty eclecticism or an overly conventional narrative – except they themselves and their own ogling at the mainstream and, therefore, at a readily paying audience to cover the production costs as quickly as possible and surpass them many times over.

Black screen. We hear soft footsteps, distorted scraps of conversation, an electronic whirring, squeaking, whistling, isolated synthesizer sounds, distorted birdsong and the chirping of crickets. Emerging from a fade are the outlines of branches, a forest, then a clearing, which the camera scans to eventually follow a forest path. At the same time, the chirping and twittering begin to stand out from the electronic soundscape, the crickets and birdsong are now clearly audible. The voice of a girl comes in haltingly: "The crickets are so loud that I can no longer sleep. … It smells of damp earth and forest." Then, further along the path and with the perspective on the forest floor: "All the leaves have already fallen. … And summer has only just begun. … And you are there waiting for me. … And I have caught a grasshopper or a beetle." A man in his late 40s comes into view. He is lying on a lounger by a pool in swimming trunks. He is not looking in our direction, not in the direction of the girl whose thoughts we hear, whose perspective – we now feel certain – the shot has been following. The girl, or rather her gaze

approaches the man – until suddenly the figure of a girl in a bathing suit enters the frame. "What have you got there?" he asks. "A grasshopper," she replies in the same voice we've previously heard. "Let me see." She shows him the grasshopper in her hand. "Wow, it's really big. … But please don't bring it into the house, okay?" The girl turns to the pool and squats at its edge while the camera follows her. Again we hear the thoughts that have clearly always been hers: "It was a grasshopper. It was jumping up and down in my hand. I'm sure it wanted to get out." The girl balances on the edge of the pool: "But I held it really tight. It tickled so much." She squats down and drops the grasshopper into the water: "I'm sure it was too hot, too." The camera's gaze follows the grasshopper into the pool, while we continue to hear the girl's thoughts, no, memories: "We were out all day, awake all night. Mom would never have let me do that. … I was in the water until my fingers were all wrinkled, my lips all blue. But I just didn't want to get out."[24] We see the surface of the water moving. Cut to the man in the house (00:01:40–00:05:42).

The four-minute shot that begins Roderick Warich's (screenplay) and Sandra Wollner's (screenplay, director) *The Trouble with Being Born* (AT/DE 2020) introduces a film that mystifies its viewers from the start by breaking with cinematic narrative conventions. What at first appears to be a subjective camera, the subjective point of view of a film character (probably an android, based on the initial electronic soundscape), eventually turns out to be an objective point of view. The stream of thought, the inner monologue, which we initially believe to be tied to the subjective camera, we read in retrospect as a voice-over when the girl talks to the man on camera, only to be confronted again with an inner monologue – this time of the girl – after the short conversation between the man and the girl. But even that only *seems* to be the case: the inner monologue transitions from the (German) present tense through present perfect tense and into the preterite and thus into the completed past tense, so that the thoughts are clearly not an echo of what has just been experienced – while we see the girl with the grasshopper in her hand squatting at the edge of the pool, we hear: "It was a grasshopper. It was jumping up and down in my hand. I'm sure it was trying to get

24 All quotations from *The Trouble with Being Born* have been translated from German, more precisely from Austrian (without the dialect coloring being rendered) and explicitly do not follow the English subtitles, which are obviously based on the screenplay and not on its cinematic realization.

out" –, instead, these thoughts we hear must be more distant memories. But whose? The girl's by the pool? And who is this girl? The android we later recognize it to be by the artificiality of its facial features? We don't know, because in the shot we cannot make out the face, we never see it from the front and up close. It is only a few shots later that we are shown the girl, the android, floating in the pool (00:06:52), the man fishing the motionless body out of the water (00:07:18), carrying it into the house and rebooting it with the words "What are you doing, Elli?" Only then in the following shot do we see the android Elli in a close-up, look into its face, the almost perfect silicone mask of a girl of about 10. Assuming a chronology of the narrated events, we are thus dealing in the first shot with the inner monologue of the android Elli, who recalls the memories of the man's biological daughter of the same name, and replays them, as it were; the memories of a daughter of a day at the pool alone with her father.

However, this will be the last time we can rely on the chronology of the narrative, and in actual fact we cannot even do that here. For later, this too, like the perspectivization before it, turns out to be one great game of confusion by Wollner with her audience. Wollner takes it so far that in the end even the identity of the characters is in question, more precisely that of the two Ellis or Emils, into whom Elli is transformed, this time as a surrogate of an old woman's brother who died in childhood: we are shown how the wig is changed and the android's face is remodeled from girl to boy thanks to the malleability of its artificial skin (00:56:30). Here, too, owing to the unreliable narration, the viewer cannot really be sure whether – and if in this order – Elli became Elli and Elli became Emil, whether the android replaces the man's deceased daughter and whether it is the android Elli that is then remodeled into Emil or just some identical android at another point in time. All we can say with certainty is, firstly, that a person can only be in one place at one time, secondly, that the same is true for a character (even an object) in a non-fantastic film, and, thirdly, that *The Trouble with Being Born* bears no such features at all; and thus that, for all its self- or meta-reflexive play with its own narrative conventions, the film does not take refuge in the re-homogenizing framing of a fantastic narrative. Rather, *The Trouble with Being Born* questions itself in its staging strategies, but above all the viewers as to the (usually unconscious) conventions of their cinematic reception. It is precisely this reception that is deliberately disrupted time and again, quite clearly, for example, by the fluctuations in sound when quiet scenes jump by means of image-sound editing to extremely loud scenes, and one is

thus almost forcibly ejected out of participatory reception (e.g. at 00:12:31, 00:34:15 and 00:50:12).[25]

By repeatedly disrupting the process of reception and thus bringing it into self-reflexive focus, *The Trouble with Being Born* questions its viewers via cinematic narrative rather than, as with *Ex Machina* and *Autómata*, actually telling a story, and thus manages not least to question previously conventionalized themes and taboos anew. Taboos such as incest and pedophilia, for example, when the film shows how the father uses the artificial Elli not only as a surrogate for his daughter, but also as a sexual partner. Is it still abuse when it is not a human being but an android? In general, the android Elli/Emil is used or abused in every respect, also by the old woman, only to be completely destroyed in the end (01:26:48). However, Wöllner and Warich refuse to answer the question of the abuse of androids precisely at the stage where Garland, for example, takes a clear position, but instead they focus on the point at which (with the would-be abuse) the question of the android's identity becomes virulent. Thus, the film interrogates issues of the abuse of body AI as well as the identity of AI as such, but it does not elaborate on these issues to the last detail and therefore refuses to give us unambiguous answers. If at all, we can seek them in an interview with Sandra Wollner, when she talks about the "not immediately graspable" connection between narration and identity:

> The idea for *The Trouble with Being Born* originally came from Roderick Warich, with whom I also wrote the screenplay. The film is definitely a continuation of my last work. […] The overlay of memories and imaginings is a theme that connects the two – memory as the narrative that creates meaning and identity, without which we would sink into meaningless chaos. Memory as programming, narrative as the foundation of our human existence. Everything has a beginning and an end – the myth of becoming oneself, which also dominates cinema. In contrast to this is the principle infinity of a machine existence, with its narration that cannot be grasped immediately. (cited in Dibold 2020)[26]

And indeed, the identity, the narrative individuation of the android in *The Trouble with Being Born* is not easily grasped. At most, with Wollner's and

25 Assuming that this is not merely an artifact, a copying error, of the DVD version in my possession.

26 All interview quotes by Sandra Wollner have been translated from German.

Warich's film, we only approach the questions and problems of "machine existence," but above all those of human existence, human desire and consciousness:

> *The Trouble with Being Born* refers less to birth as such, but rather to what follows. This trouble only arises when one becomes aware of being and wants to fill this being with a meaning. The android is completely free of this, it simply *is*. (cited in Dibold 2020).

But here again we are lured down the wrong path. For in fact the android (in the film) does not just simply exist; its identity, like its body, is fluid and malleable, so that it becomes an object of human attributions and inscriptions, especially with regard to the categories of sex, gender and desire, and thus a reflection surface as well as a distorting mirror of human identity constructions. In this respect, *The Trouble with Being Born* also resembles Butler's deconstructivist questioning of a heteronormative matrix much more than it does Haraway's utopia of a trans- or meta-humanoid world without gender. Above all, however, the film is one thing: a single open and opening question about the limits and prospects of the (performative) narration and narrativity of identity, gender and desire; a question, at the same time, that explicitly disallows all too hasty answers. Therefore, also in questions of desire, in questions concerning our longings and abysses of a new virtual world of AI, we let the director herself have the last word on her work, even if this again raises new questions that must remain unanswered for the time being:

> The inside and the outside grow together, the imagination becomes visible in the outside. [...] In an increasingly virtual world, everything that can be imagined will eventually also be experienced. A dissolution of boundaries is taking place. That is, all our thoughts, longings and also abysses, which have always existed but were previously only there in secret, are becoming in a way more 'visible', more real. At the same time, what we traditionally think is real (our experiences, our family memories, etc.) is being virtualized and thereby gutted. The off-camera words spoken by the character in this film seem at once completely real, and yet we sense only the external features of a person behind them. Reality gets, so to speak, hollowed out. (cited in Dibold 2020).

Filmography

2001 – A Space Odyssey (1968): Stanley Kubrick (director), Arthur C. Clarke/Stanley Kubrick (screenplay), Stanley Kubrick (producer), Great Britain/United States. 142 min.

A.I. – Artificial Intelligence (2001): Steven Spielberg (director), Steven Spielberg (screenplay), Kathleen Kennedy/Steven Spielberg/Bonnie Curtis (producers), United States. 146 min.

Alita: Battle Angel (2019): Robert Rodriguez (director), James Cameron/Laeta Kalogridis (screenplay), James Cameron/Jon Landau (producers), United States. 122 min.

Autómata/Automata (2014): Gabe Ibáñez (director), Gabe Ibáñez/Igor Legrarreta Gome (screenplay), Antonio Banderas/Danny Lerner/Les Weldon/Sandra Hermida (producers), Spain/Bulgaria/United States/Canada. 110 min.

Battlestar Galactica (1978–1979): Glen A. Larson (creator), United States.

Battlestar Galactica (2004–2009): Ronald D. Moore/David Eick (developers), United States.

Blade Runner (1982): Ridley Scott (director), Hamton Fancher/David Peoples (screenplay), Michael Deeley (producer), United States/Hong Kong. 117 min.

Colossus: The Forbin Project (1970): Joseph Sargent (director), James Bridges (screenplay), Stanley Chase (producer), United States. 100 min.

Ederlezi ébredése/A.I. Rising (2018): Lazar Bodroža (director), Dimitrije Vojnov (screenplay), Aleksandar Protić/Jonathan English (producers), Serbia. 85 min.

Ex Machina (2015): Alex Garland (director), Alex Garland (screenplay), Andrew Macdonald/Allon Reich (producers), Great Britain, United States. 108 min.

Ghost in the Shell (2017): Rupert Sanders (director), Jamie Moss/William Wheeler/Ehren Kruger (screenplay), Avi Arad/Steven Paul/Michael Costigan (producers), China, India, Hong Kong, United States. 107 min.

I am Mother (2019): Grant Sputore (director), Michael Lloyd Green (screenplay), Timothy White/Kelvin Munro (producers), United States/Australia. 113 min.

Metropolis (1927): Fritz Lang (director), Thea von Harbou (screenplay), Erich Pommer (producer), Germany. 148 min.

Star Trek Generations (1994): David Carson (director), Ronald D. Moore/Brannon Braga (screenplay), Rick Berman (producer), United States. 118 min.

Star Trek: First Contact (1996): Jonathan Frakes (director), Brannon Braga/Ronald D. Moore (screenplay), Rick Berman/Marty Hornstein/Peter Lauritson (producers), United States. 111 Min.

Star Trek: Insurrection (1998): Jonathan Frakes (director), Michael Piller (screenplay), Rick Berman (producer), United States. 103 Min.

Star Trek: Nemesis (2002): Stuart Baird (director), John Logan (screenplay), Rick Berman (producer), United States. 117 min.

Star Trek – The Next Generation (1987–1994): Gene Roddenberry (creator), United States.

Star Wars – A New Hope (1977): George Lucas (director), George Lucas (screenplay), Gary Kurtz (producer), United States. 121 min.

Star Wars – Return of the Jedi (1983): Richard Marquand (director), Lawrence Kasdan/George Lucas (screenplay), Howard Kazanjian (producer), United States. 132 min.

Star Wars – The Empire Strikes Back (1980): Irvin Kershner (director), Leigh Brackett/Lawrence Kasdan (screenplay), Gary Kurtz (producer), United States. 124 min.

The Matrix (1999): The Wachowskis (directors), The Wachowskis (screenplay), Joel Silver (producer), United States, Australia. 136 min.

The Stepford Wives (1975): Bryan Forbes (director), William Goldmann (screenplay), Edgar J. Scherick (producer), United States. 115 min.

The Stepford Wives (2004): Frank Oz (director), Paul Rudnick (screenplay), Scott Rudin/Donald De Line/Edgar J. Scherick/Gabriel Grunfeld (producers), United States. 93 Min.

The Terminator (1984): James Cameron (director), James Cameron/Gale Anne Hurd (screenplay), Gale Anne Hurd (producer), United States. 107 Min.

The Trouble with Being Born (2020): Sandra Wollner (director), Roderick Warich/Sandra Wollner (screenplay), Lixi Frank/David Bohun/Andi G. Hess/Astrid Schäfer/Viktoria Stolpe/Timm Kröger (producers), Austria/Germany. 94 min.

Westworld (1973): Michael Crichton (director), Michael Crichton (screenplay), Paul N. Lazarus (producer), United States. 88 min.

Westworld (2016, 2018, 2020): Jonathan Nolan/Lisa Joy (creators), United States.

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