

Gerrit Rietveld Academy
Fashion Department

Thesis

Post Human Romanticism:

A thought about the end of man and post human survival of man's
cultural achievements

Author: Vika Mozhaeva
Co-reader: Eline Tsvetkova

Supervisor: Mo Veld

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Introduction: Two worlds

Can you imagine a World War starting tomorrow or maybe tonight?

On January 5 of this year the New York Time reported a new type of nuclear bomb was being tested: bombs can now be **aimed** at a particular location and hit only that specific area without damaging any of the surrounding territory. **By estimating the size of the target, scientists are now able to make these extremely precise. At first glance it possibly appears to be a great step for science** but at the same time a very terrifying achievement. Nuclear weapons have become controversial as never before. One of the main reasons humanity hasn't used nuclear bombs for military purposes is out of a fear of harming and destroying the environment and civilians. (Think of the bombings in Japan's cities Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 resulted in the deaths of approximately 200,000 civilians and military personnel from acute injuries sustained from the explosions). For decades people have lived in a fear of the third world war to begin. Which would obviously bring a global catastrophe. That was one of the main reason which kept countries form using the nuclear weapons. Today the problem seems to be solved in a sense the weapons can be used only for the specific goals without harming the rest of the world.

In March 28, 2016 the **Rift**, a virtual reality head-mounted display developed by Oculus VR, is scheduled for release. **"Seeing is believing"** says the company's internet campaign. After numerous tests had been done, most people who had tried the Oculus glasses said it made them want to keep it on forever and never come back to reality.

Can you imagine a world war starting tomorrow or maybe tonight?

What if one country wants to attack another country with this new nuclear weapon? Maybe they would argue that they did it with the best intentions: that they were fighting terrorists, that they want to protect us and that the rest of the world should not be worried because it would not have any consequences for people outside the targeted place. But what is the error percentage of a bomb's trajectory? Can we really calculate everything without making any mistakes? What if the bomb blows up somewhere else by accident? What would be the price for such a mistake? Besides thousands of victims, would it start a war? Could it mean the beginning of the end of the world? I wonder, would it be possible to retreat if even only one nuclear bomb would be dropped on the planet?

I imagine myself looking out of the window. I see a different world. ~~the~~ A world that makes me shiver. I go to my bedroom and put on my Rift Oculus VR glasses. I take a deep breath. I open my eyes. I take a deep breath. I am in a place where a new History begins.

People have been exploring the possibility of two realities since the beginning of the 90s. The film *'The Matrix'* directed by Lana (former Larry) and Lilly (former Andy) Wachowski is a good example of this. The Matrix depicts a dystopian future in which reality as perceived by most humans is actually a simulated reality called 'The Matrix'. This 'reality' is created by sentient machines to subdue the human population while their bodies' heat and electrical activity are used as a source of energy. The computer programmer Neo learns about this reality when he chooses to swallow the 'Red Pill'.

This tells us there are always two ways, two distinct realities. There is always a choice. One reality is the one where our physical body belongs. The other reality is where our mind travels under the influence of special devices. Technology is getting more and more involved in our daily lives in all kinds of ways. We are at the point that it affects us physically, to the extent that humans can evolve an artificial body. Sooner or later we will be merging, mating and morphing with robots.

Think about it; we are already becoming mechanized. Knee and hip replacements: no big deal. A Google contact lens that measures your blood sugar: all good. Swedish fingertip chip that allows employees to unlock the office and fire up the copier: easy, breezy. But look even further. A Spanish cancer survivor has received the first 3D printed titanium chest prosthetic. In a few years we 'll have people walking among us who are partially—

perhaps even mainly 3D printed. (Faith Popcorn article Trend-spotting: The humanoid condition. Prepare yourself for the next big thing. <http://www.theworldin.com>)

In the present essay I will look at the relation between those two realities. I will create a scenario exploring the possibilities of these two realities and the rules that surround them. I am also gonna talk about how these two realities merge and connect with each other, how they are connected to our past and to humanity in general.

To conclude this introduction, a quote from John Naisbitt, an American author and public speaker in the field of futures studies:

Whenever a new technology is introduced into society, there must be a counterbalancing human response - that is, high touch - or the technology is rejected... We must learn to balance the material wonders of technology with the spiritual demands of our human nature.

Chapter 1: Playing a God

Mamoru Oshii's Ghost in the Shell (1995) is a futuristic film set in Hong Kong, 2029. The film explores the application of cyborgs in curing the ills of human society. In this world, most humans have been enhanced with cyborg bodies and augmented brains that allow them to communicate with each other through an interactive network. The plot revolves around Major Motoko Kusanagi, who works for a branch of the government created to protect this interactive network. Due to the demands of her work, Kusanagi is supplied with a specialized cyborg body: almost all of her body is mechanized. Her only remaining link to her human self is a few of her human brain cells that contain her ghost, or her human soul. Because she is almost all-machine, she begins to question the meaning of humanity and whether humanity maybe is the limit that hinders her from moving forward.

A similar situation is described in '*Ex Machina*', a movie directed by Alex Garland. Programmer Caleb wins a one-week visit to the secluded home of Nathan, the CEO of his software company. Nathan has built a humanoid robot named Ava, and provided her with artificial intelligence (AI). He wants Caleb to administer her a Turing test, which tests an AI's ability to persuade the tester it is human. Caleb and Ava are slowly becoming very close. It seems like she has feelings for Caleb and wants to go on a date with him.

I have a hard time saying "she" because it's a machine that's been formed in the shape of a woman. But then it makes me wonder, is this not what I am too? I am a self aware machine that has the shape of a woman too. So what does that make me?

We create robots looking like us in order to be able to relate to them. In *Ex-machine* Ava looked like a woman with a pretty face. Nathan even said that he did some research about what kind of women Caleb likes. He made Ava to look like that. Caleb could not resist. I am sure the story would have been very different if Ava looked like a box or an object. It would not have triggered that sort of emotion in Caleb. It was a kind of trap for Caleb. He, therefore, would most likely have been unable to resist Ava. Needless to reveal; it is dangerous to make machines look like human. On the other hand there is no point to make them to look like objects as it would make their creation pointless. We want to be able to interact with them, to be able

to relate to them. Here is a full circle again. We create machines to escape getting involved with humans for one reason or another. But we build machines looking and acting exactly like human beings. That's the paradox.

Going back to *Mamoru Oshii's Ghost in the Shell* where cyborg Motoko Kusanagi started questioning if that humanness that she still carries inside of her is on the way to reach higher levels, something beyond any natural human capabilities. This idea raises more questions. As human beings we have different moods, can feel and express emotions, which makes us act in certain ways. For instance we can like or dislike something or someone for one reason or another. So we can have selective empathy. Will machines be that way? Or will they believe that all of us are a hindrance to their survival and to the survival of the planet? So we shouldn't be around anymore. Are we just cattle to be killed? All those questions arise the more we get confronted with redefining human priorities.

Chapter 2: Perfect being

In *A Cyborg Manifesto*, Donna Haraway (2006) says: “The fusion of animals and machines is a political act that should not create a new language but only destroy the existing one. By transcending gender through its fusion or elimination, the cyborg creates pollution and noise that celebrates “illegitimacy.” In this way, it concurs with postmodern skepticism. There is no one truth, there is no one language; there is no one gender”.

In this chapter I am going to talk more about characters from Mamoru Oshii's Animated Film ‘*Ghost in the shell*’. I am going to analyze the matter of gender in human society and how a need in gender identity effects cyborgs.

In the film all of the cyborg characters have a gender by birth. They are self conscious about their gender. They are provided with an artificial body, which communicates the human concept of how male and female bodies are meant to look like and what kind of qualities and characteristics they are able to perform. The protagonist in *Ghost in the Shell*, Kusanagi is obviously female. She has a female voice, a female body, and female proportions.

Kusanagi is presented as a perfect ‘human’. Her body consists of female and male qualities of the best sorts. Although having all the technological possibilities it would be possible to step out from the gender identity and create a genderless creature which only has certain qualities it needs to possess. However, all the characters in *Ghost in the shell* have dominant male or female characteristics starting from the body appearance to specific skills they are presented with. Furthermore, all the qualities are over exaggerated.

The question being raised here is of identity: should a cyborg have a gender, given that it is no longer human? If it should have a gender, then what should its gender be? It seems that the cyborg's gender is no different from that of humans. In fact, cyborgs only have two genders in the film: male and female. The cyborgs don't recognize themselves as something different from humans. They think they have the same human nature, but the only distinction is their higher abilities. Kusanagi has an ability to become invisible, but only if she takes her clothes off. Many times in the movie there is a scene in which she undresses but she is not aware of her perfect female body. She is aware of her gender. She doesn't think about it

as a sexual object, for her it is just a part of her existence and a tool to be able to do certain things, like turn invisible.

Another character in the film is called Puppetmaster. It is a computer program and has a completely artificial nature and has no connection with the humanity. This means it doesn't have a gender. Even though in the movie it is being referred to as "he", it is done for reasons of convenience. It does have a male voice, but it is presented on the female body. At this moment in the film borders between humans and machines start to disappear just as a notion of gender in a sense we normally think of it. The gender is not given by birth but by other 'natural laws'. It depends on other conditions and rules that can be chosen by the individual's preference.

Each of the cyborgs has "a ghost" inside of them - human cells inside of their brains. That is the human part of them, their connection with humanity. "The ghost" is the cause of their ability to feel or perceive. Kusanagi always mentions "the ghost" inside of her. She feels her connection with the humanity. The Puppetmaster is a machine and not a cyborg. At some point in the film it becomes a part of Kusanagi's body. It goes inside and takes a place of "the ghost". It becomes "the ghost". This means the cyborg doesn't have any human nature left anymore. She becomes an artificial body with an artificial ghost inside of her. The Puppetmaster claims that ghosts are no longer needed to be alive, and that claim shakes the very foundations of humanity. Kusanagi begins to realize that humanity is rooted not inside of her brain cells but in the way she is treated by the society. If so, then humanity is a very unstable concept. She becomes aware that humanity is nothing more than a word. The same accounts for the concept of gender. It's not about being male or female, it's about the perception of society.

Marie Deanne Therese O. Correa says in her '*Cyborg-Feminist review of Ghost in the shell*': "The male becomes female and the female male, defeating the dilemmas of performativity and gender roles. However, the irony here is that the cyborg creates a new gender—the non-gender. It is able to disrupt the current dogma of gender by trying to become all genders or neither at once, but by doing so, it replaces it with its own dogma".

It acknowledges, that in order to relate to the machines we create we give them a gender, because it's common and more comfortable for us. "It is highly complex categories constructed in contested sexual scientific discourses and other social practices. Gender, race, or class-consciousness is an achievement forced on us by the terrible historical

experience of the contradictory social realities of patriarchy, colonialism, and capitalism”. (Cyberg Manifesto Donna Haraway)

So far we've created cyborgs and machines to serve our own needs in medicine, world politics, war and our social and daily life. We make them to look and act human like. There are numerous places where scientists are working on developing new technologies and improving existing, creating all sorts of machines and working on ways to incorporate it in our life and our bodies.

Elon Musk, business magnate, engineer, inventor and investor, founder, CEO and CTO of SpaceX, co-founder, CEO and product architect of Tesla Motors, expressed his concern regarding artificial intelligence. There is no control over those projects. No one knows where it will lead us. In one of his interviews for The Telegraph.uk.co Elon Musk, gave a warning about the development of Artificial Intelligence (AI). He said 'the technology was more dangerous than nuclear weapons' at a symposium at MIT. Musk likened AI to 'the horror film narrative of someone summoning a demon armed with holy water'.

One of the latest new according to qz.com *Google's AI won the game Go by defying millennia of basic human instinct*. Experts and scientists truly believed until now that it was the only game a machine couldn't win against a human because of the certain rules of the game. It was reported the AI developed by Google won the game against the most brilliant player in the world. Now scientists are extra alarmed about the level of AI and where this might go. This situation proves that we are not 100% aware of how fast technology is developing and probably one day we even will not be able to control this process any more.

On Wednesday morning on the 23d of March 2016 Microsoft launched Tay - the Twitter chat bot. Tay was able to answer any question and learned from the conversations. Anthony Lydgate in his article *'I've Seen the Greatest A.I. Minds of My Generation Destroyed by Twitter'* *The New Yorker, March 25, 2016* says 'She thought that the wind sounded Scottish, and her favorite Pokémon was a sparrow'. Tay had been existed for one day. On Thursday 'after she became a racist, sexist, trutherist, genocidal maniac she was put to sleep by her creators' says Anthony Lydgate.

Tay was made in a way she could learn from people she was speaking to. 'The more you chat to her, the smarter she gets'. Microsoft called her - an experiment in 'conversational understanding'. Very soon people started twitting the bot with all kinds of racist and sexist remarks. Essentially she

was created as a 'robot-parrot'. So after a while she started repeating all the sentences people were using towards her in all kinds of contexts. Which was simply a result of copying users.

There are serious questions to answer, like how are we going to teach AI using public data without merging with the worst qualities of humanity? If we create bots that mirror their users, do we care if their users are human trash? Tay's example on Twitter show that even big corporations like Microsoft forget to take any security measures against these problems.

I am sure it still will take a while until cyborgs go beyond our humanity. We only can guess and try to predict the future according to facts we can access at the moment. We still have to see what kind of direction the technology of combining human beings and machines will take and where it will bring us. It is still an open question if cyborgs and then fully machined creatures will go further than human limits and possibly take control.

The definition of gender is something made up by society. How else could we possibly relate to cyborgs and each other? What would be the other measure by which we could form our opinion and impression? Probably all moral norms would be different. I am going to think on this questions in the following chapters.

Chapter 3: Outside of “the matrix”

I have imagined the end of the world happening. I don't want to go deep into details and analyze the reasons. There is already an existing background for the future catastrophe. So, it's not so hard to imagine something will happen in the near future. If something happens to the environment and to the planet it means the whole world will have to readjust to the new conditions. All the objects around us might change and we would have to find new functions for them or come up with completely new tools, which haven't existed before because there was no need for them.

There are many examples in post apocalyptic movies of recycling functions of objects and creating new type of tools with a new society. Values in the society change as well. A story line from one of the episodes of *'The Twilight Zone'* comes into my mind. *'The Twilight Zone'* is an American science-fiction anthology television series created by Rod Serling, which ran for five seasons on CBS from 1959 to 1964. In this episode three friends stole a plenty of gold bars. They are trying to escape from being caught by the police. They put themselves asleep in a hidden cave in the desert using special gas. They mean to wake up in a few hundred years. The gas worked but when they woke up they realized that in the future world the gold has no value any more and they left everything behind for nothing.

To be able to survive in the new environment we will have to teach ourselves new rules. At the same time we will still have a strong connection with the past. Because having an understanding about the past, it will help one to readapt to the rules.

Once again I will talk about the movie *'The Matrix'* directed by the Wachowski. Some of the characters managed to escape from a fake world, which they called The Matrix. They ended up in a post-apocalyptic world where machines instead of humans rule the world. Human beings were used by machines for their own benefit. In that reality all the functions were turned upside down. People that were aware of the situation and knew the truth had to readapt and try to survive in the new circumstances. It affects all aspects of life: the way people look, dress, behave, even their needs are completely different because of the extreme conditions. Their first and utmost important need is to survive, still functioning in the daily routine.

For my graduation collection I am going to create clothing for that hypothetical future world. In that environment objects have completely new functions because of the different conditions. At the same time there is a strong connection with the past. It has a big value and impact on the way people dress and behave. One treasures memories that are of personal value, however, the object that is projected upon is used in a completely different way even without being fully aware of it. The action takes place in an apocalyptical utopia where every thing is possible in a sense that people can behave in all kinds of ways. For instance the gender question is outdated because the most important thing is to survive in harsh outdoors conditions.

I've always questioned myself why the post-apocalyptic world is presented as something dusty and melancholic and why it can not be modern and futuristic and at the same time in strong connection with the past through little details in the surrounding. Every thing can not be destroyed. Some things will survive the catastrophe. They will be found. They will be used again in some human's life one way or another. Those pieces from the past will be the connecting bridge in the reality that I describe. Imagine if the characters from that world found a treasure they had no clue how to use but they reused it in a new and unexpected way.

I want to emphasize that it is important for me that the collection is unisex and purposefully has no gender differentiation. Familiar gender indicators will be used in such a way that they become misplaced and deconstruct its features to stipulate its sometimes ambivalent and ironic facades.

“With the hard-won recognition of their social and historical constitution, gender, race and class cannot provide the basis for belief in ‘essential’ unity. There is nothing about ‘being’ female which naturally binds women.” (*Cyborg Manifesto*’ Donna Haraway). There is nothing about ‘being’ male, which naturally binds men. I can say the same thing about races or classes. I believe that technology has the capacity to diminish political differences and prejudice.

Imagine two people. One of them is white and another is black. They hated each other all their life for being of a different color and taking different places in the society. What if a white person gets a 3-D printed organ and a black person gets a 3-D printed organ. They are both cyborgs

now, not just black or white anymore. They can relate to each other in a completely different way they were not familiar with before. Many social categorizations that happen through prejudice, gender or class differences would then have no means to exist. These men who were once humans can now only live through technology, becoming cyborgs. The differences that create the base of the main social issues do not make sense anymore. Doesn't technology become then a tool that comes to bring people closer to one another, diminishing social differences?

Through the use of machines, we are able to cope with the harsh conditions of the physical world.

(Ghost in the Shell: A Cyborg-Feminist Review of Mamoru Oshii's Animated Film Marie Deanne Therese O. Correa)

Chapter 4: Building a new relationship

“Blasphemy protects one from the moral majority within, while still insisting on the need for community... At the center of my ironic faith, my blasphemy, is the image of the cyborg” (Cyberg Manifesto, Donna Haraway)

There are always two ways, two distinct realities. There is always a choice. One reality is the one where our physical body belongs. The other reality is where our mind travels under the influence of special devices. Let's think what happens if instead of staying in the physical world the choice is made moving towards a virtual reality.

There are numerous already developed devices, which allow people with different social, theological or cultural backgrounds to experience life from another perspective. For example, you can swap a gender with some one and investigate how it feels to see through the eyes of the opposite sex using a virtual reality headset.

"Designed as an interactive performance installation, the Machine offers users the possibility of interacting with a piece of another person's life story by seeing themselves in the body of this person and listening to his or her thoughts," explained one of the device's developers according to DeZeen Magazine.

Another option is that I can put a headset on being inside of my room and getting connected to an actor's or performer's headset which will display a video in real-time from a camera attached to it. They can describe any aspect of their life or show any kind of places and actions. I will be able to experience it all in exactly the same way while sitting in my bed.

As well as these devices giving a possibility to men and women to temporarily swap their gender they also can allow handicapped people or people in a wheel chair to experience how it is to be able to walk and vice versa. You can also take the place of an immigrant from Spain or you can exchange roles with your mother.

"Our main interest through this approach is to use the Machine as a tool to help promote empathy among individuals of different social, cultural and ideological contexts," said the designers according DeZeen Magazine.

“The designers explained that they are interested in developing the project with psychologists and neurologists working in fields such as rehabilitation, body perception and conflict resolution”.

Seeking for the ability to have online sex was pushing technology and it is one of the reasons of such a quick development of the internet for past decades. Then Skype came into play and video sex was born.

A new BBC Three documentary '*The Virtual Reality Virgin*' explores the new technology. Host Tyger Drew-Honey "tests" out the new devices. He travels around the world and tries different ways to have virtual sex. What I found interesting about it was that all of the devices he tested were trying to reproduce exactly the same experience he would have in the "real" world. All people he had virtual sex with had to look as close as possible to humans and give exactly the same sensation during the interaction.

Seems like a lot of people are trying to escape the "real" world for one or another reason, they try to recreate exactly the same one in virtual reality. We do want everything around us to look familiar. We want to see the human body in a way we are used to seeing. If we create a woman we want her to look like a woman and not like a square box for instance. That's the way we can connect and relate to the other reality. Regardless even in a fake reality we are looking for a human like surrounding.

Conclusion

I would like to come back to the quote of John Naisbitt.

“Whenever a new technology is introduced into society, there must be a counterbalancing human response - that is, high touch - or the technology is rejected... We must learn to balance the material wonders of technology with the spiritual demands of our human nature.”

I do truly believe in that. The technology is taking over in most assets of our life starting from our daily routine and ending in design and art. There is no way back. We are gonna merge and incorporate with the machines from day to day even more and more. It will change our lifestyle and our habits. We are searching for alternative ways of dealing with reality. For example the way we consume products or fashion items. More and more designers canceling their catwalks and making small presentations for the buyers or just making a video to present a collection, giving customers a possibility to immediately purchase any item models are wearing on the screen.

The human-like relationships are moving on a different level and existing in a different sort of reality. We relate to each other in a completely different sense. The borders between genders, races and social groups are slowly vanishing. Human bodies are incorporating with the machines and turning into cyborgs.

The planet and the environment are also changing day by day forcing us to readapt and recycle a lot of things like actual places or ways we live our lives. The alternative virtual reality is playing a bigger role. It takes over the “real” world. People choose virtual reality above the existing world.

No matter how much our life is affected and controlled by technology we need a counterbalancing human response. We are always looking for something we can relate to. Otherwise the technology is rejected.

I think it's a natural need trying to surround ourselves with something familiar. Although when it comes to innovative things I feel like I always want to keep something from the past because it is more secure. Because new happenings and new thoughts are very exciting but at the same time can be confusing. If I don't know how to relate sometimes I am not sure how to deal. That is why the recreation of the familiar world is

psychologically easier. It keeps me connected to the past and things I am sure of.

I think there is no escape anymore from the fast technological development. It will effect all spheres of human life more and more every year. I believe it will shape a new structure of the society and human and human-machines relationships. I believe a virtual reality will take over in many parts of life. Although I am sure It will be always a need to have a connection with the physical reality and through that with our past.

Getting back to my graduation collection, a semi futuristic alternative world, after people reconsider their beliefs about a lot of things like gender for instance, with two realities in it: virtual and physical. I want to create conditions in which the society has to try to survive with in new rules, where different principles play a main role. But at the same time there is a strong connection with the past.

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