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The Pleasure Bot, the Gynoid, the Electric-Gigolo, or my personal favorite the Romeo Droid are just some of Science Fiction's contributions to the development of the android as sex worker. Notably (and as any Sci-fi aficionado would remind us) such technological foresight is often a precursor to our own - not too distant future. It will therefore come as no surprise that the development of artificial intelligence and virtual reality are considered to be the missing link within the sex industry and the manufacture of technologically-enhanced products and experiences. Similarly, many esteemed futurologists are predicting that by 2050 (not 2049) artificial intelligence will have become so integrated within society that it will be commonplace for humans to have sex with robots... Now scrub that image out of your head and let's remind ourselves that all technology (if we listen to Charlie Brooker) should come with a warning sign. Sexnology (that's Sex + Technology) is probably pretty high up there on the cautionary list, but whether we like it or not people 'The robots are coming' – no pun intended!

Actually the robots (those of a sexual nature) have already arrived, although calling them robots may be a little premature. Especially when considering how film has created expectations of human resemblance, levels of functionality and in this context modes of interaction.

The pursuit of creating in our own image has historically unearthed many underlying questions in both fiction and reality about what it means to be human. During such times, moral implications may surface although history also tells us that human traits such as the desire for power and control often subsume any humane/humanoid considerations. The creative application of these traits is explored by the Tyrell Corporation in the 1982 Sci-fi film *Blade Runner*. A cult classic that introduced us to the bioengineered synthetic human or replicant - that continued our preoccupation with extending ourselves in technological terms. Interestingly the robot and replicant have resulted in two types of human reflections. These reflections might be best described as images that emanate from a curved mirror surface; a looking glass that distorts or magnifies our image. Here the former enlarges us, and the latter mimics us - or perhaps surpasses us when considering the Tyrell Corporation's motto of '*More human than human!*'

It is also worth noting that the depiction of the android has taken many forms, albeit one that has often been dominated by the male gaze. The subsequent design is often one that is largely heaped in stereotypes where the blueprint would appear to align with populist notions of desire, pleasurable aesthetics, visual attraction and interaction – the ones that generally forego companionship. Whether female or male, the attainment of human likeness or mimicry in both fiction and reality is considered to be a design summit and a key measure of the Pleasure Bot's sexual acceptance... or is it?

From the perspective of a visual speculator, I thought it would be interesting to employ a speculative theory. A theory that is 'programmed' within our subconscious and received through visual stimulus. Ladies and gentleman, robots and replicants I bring you the Uncanny Valley.

The uncanny valley maps 'our' emotional response to the peculiarities associated with human resemblance in otherwise non-human beings / forms. The aesthetic theory suggests that we (as humans) become increasingly unnerved (to the point of repulsion) when a humanoid posits an 'uncanny likeness' to that of our own. The graphic depiction of the term 'valley' is the result of plotted responses on an (x, y) graph that (funnily enough) mimics the curvature of a valley. The lower we delve into the valley (towards organic mimicry and the replicant) the greater the repulsion, and the higher we climb from the base (towards mechanisation and the robot) the more acceptable the relationship becomes. The usage of the word 'relationship' in this context has less to do with sexual relations, but to quote the unconventional thinking of the replicant Roy Batty 'I had in mind something a little more radical'.

What if the 'resemblance = revulsion' theory became more than just a theory? What if, in the pursuit of technological perfection, our own image became redundant? So much so that any physical resemblance of the human form lost all significance within the designing of pleasure-based surrogates. In this extended hypothetical context, the re-imagining of the fictional association with the pleasure bot, gynoid or electric-gigolo would become obsolete or abstracted. Instead we would see an ascent from the base of the Uncanny Valley, towards (and perhaps beyond) a summit of simplification - somewhat subverting today's association with a technological upgrade! Consider it a fertile (or infertile) testing ground for the redesign of the fictional pleasure bot. So without further ado lets consider a floor plan, lets get back to basics, gather some bits for the bot and think 'pleasurable' thoughts in an age of dematerialisation. Interestingly, any speculative return of the

physical (post information age) will inevitably be anchored to the ideas and sensibilities of a particular period in time. In 1982 Ridley Scott applied some foresight to this inevitable situation by creating a film that was set "forty years hence, made in the style of forty years ago."

Not wanting to mimic Mr Scott's approach, there does appear to be a durational parallel. In 2018 a translated concept from forty years ago ('The Uncanny Valley' in Jasia Reichardt's *Robots: Fact, Fiction and Prediction* 1978) was applied visually by a forty-year old human (or thereabouts). Hence I got to say forty years twice and perhaps offer a subtle, material nod to the time in which we live now.

And finally, I thought it would be appropriate to also acknowledge the film industry's crediting system by recognising all those who have assisted in the realisation of the article.

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