



USE OF AI AND REPRESENTATION OF HYPERREALITY, IN THE MOVIES- THE TRUMAN SHOW (1998), VANILLA SKY (2001), HER (2013) AND EX MACHINA (2014)

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ABSTRACT

This research paper seeks to explore the representation of hyperreality in Peter Weir's *The Truman Show* (1998), Cameron Crowe's *Vanilla Sky* (2001), Spike Jonze's *Her* (2013), and Alex Garland's *Ex Machina* (2014). The concepts of simulation and simulacra, as put forth by French philosopher Jean Baudrillard, are crucial to hyperreality. The definition of a simulation is the merging of reality and representation. A copy without an original is frequently used to define the simulacrum. This study looks at the concept of hyperreality and its implications for AI in the contemporary cinematic universe. It attempts to explore the representation of hyperreality and also explore the virtual reality represented by modern technologies in select movies. The paper evaluates the films based on the varying components of hyperreality, such as the setting and environment of the films, the mentality of antagonists, the vulnerability of the protagonists, the title of the films, and the theme of AI present in the pictures.

Keywords: *Hyperreality, Artificial Intelligence, Simulacra, Cinema*

INTRODUCTION

The 21st century is witnessing a huge shift from reality to hyperreality, and the future will be dominated by artificial intelligence. Cinema is using hyperreality to create immersive experiences and tantalising storylines for viewers. The young generation is aware of the positive and negative implications of hyperreality. The notion of hyperreality was popularised by French sociologist and media theorist Jean Baudrillard in his 1981 book, *Simulacra and Simulation*. Baudrillard closely associates hyperreality with his idea of simulacrum. He defined it as something that substitutes reality with representations of reality. "The simulacrum is never that which conceals the truth—it is the truth that conceals that there is none. The simulacrum is true" (Baudrillard 1). According to Baudrillard, the modern world is a simulacrum wherein reality has been replaced with false representations, making it impossible to differentiate between what is real and unreal. Hyperreality focuses primarily on visual language, for example, cinema and media. The simulation, as defined by Baudrillard, is distinguished by a merging of 'reality' and representation, where there is no explicit sign of where the former stops and the latter starts. The mass collection of these simulations, present in cinema and media, has resulted in the condition of hyperreality.

Baudrillard's idea of hyperreality is the ineptitude to tell the difference between reality and simulation. His main principles have been applied in a list of films in the last few years in an attempt to confront and criticise

parts of our culture related to technology, media, etc. Numerous films, including science fiction, horror, and fantasy, represent hyperreality. In movies such as *The Matrix*, *Inception*, *Blade Runner*, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, *Oblivion*, *Free Guy*, and *Transcendence*, the audience is presented with a simulated world that appears real but is essentially a technological or media-based illusion. The characters in these movies subsequently deal with issues identifying real and unreal created with the use of hyperreality and artificial intelligence.

Artificial intelligence and hyperreality are represented in films like *The Truman Show*, wherein an insurance salesman is clueless that his entire life is a TV show, and his family members are merely actors. The film *The Truman Show* is an excellent illustration of hyperreality as proposed by Baudrillard due to the fact that the life of Truman Burbank is merely a recreation of the real world when it is, in fact, fake or hyperreal. Similarly, in *Vanilla Sky* by Cameron Crowe, a vehicle accident leaves publishing tycoon David Aames with facial deformities. The incident changes him and makes him start to doubt his life's current reality. The film has intermingling themes of reality, dreams, and hyperreality. *Her* (2013) by Spike Jonze and *Ex Machina* (2014) by Alex Garland are also hyperrealistic cinema masterpieces with the primary notion of artificial intelligence. Theodore Twombly, a diffident writer, purchases an AI system to be his assistant. When he realises the AI's ability to assimilate and adapt, Theodore falls in love with an AI named Samantha. *Ex Machina* tells the story of Caleb Smith, a young software engineer who is given the chance to participate in an unusual scientific experiment wherein he is required to evaluate machine intelligence, or AI, by collaborating with a female robot, but things quickly go haywire when Caleb starts falling in love with Ava, the artificially intelligent robot.

The theory of Hyperreality and Simulacra by Jean Baudrillard has been widely employed as an important feature in the storylines of numerous films. Themes of hyperreality and artificial intelligence have become increasingly popular in cinema over the past few years. However, there is still a lack of research on the different types of hyperreality and artificial intelligence as a facilitator of hyperreality presented in films and television. This research gap needs to be filled in order to understand how artificial intelligence can be used to create an even more immersive experience for viewers. The researcher will examine the unexplored areas of hyperreality in the selected films—*The Truman Show*, *Vanilla Sky*, *Her*, and *Ex-Machina*—and how, in various ways, artificial intelligence intensifies the effects of hyperreality in the films.

The detailed analysis of the films illustrates that there is a distinguishable difference in hyperreality present in the selected films. It also implies that there is an evident relationship between AI and hyperreality and that the motif of AI helps reinforce the motif of hyperrealism in film. The four films examined for research—*The Truman Show*, *Vanilla Sky*, *Her*, and *Ex Machina*—all explore the concept of hyperreality, as proposed by Jean Baudrillard. Although these motion pictures have hyperreality as the main theme, there are several variables that set them apart from each other. The films are based on varying components of hyperreality, such as the setting or environment of the films, God complex mentality of antagonists, the vulnerability of protagonists, the title of the films, and the theme of AI present in the pictures. These themes lead to different types of hyperreality in films, which have not been examined before. The varying elements aforementioned result in a diverse portrayal of hyperreality in cinema. Films such as *The Truman Show*, *Ex Machina*, and *Her* have an extremely hyperreal notion of setting.

The key to the hyperreality of *The Truman Show* is its apparent authenticity, as every element within Truman's world is designed to copy the appearance of the real one. It's this replication of the appearance of reality that continuously tricks Truman, preventing him from learning the truth for decades and blurring the line between reality and fiction. ("How does *The Truman Show*?")

The Truman Show continues to be the best demonstration of Baudrillard's ideology to date. Truman is surrounded by fictitious reproductions, from his marriage, his friendships, his townspeople, and his job; it is all merely a fake imitation of real life.

In a scene, the audience can witness a rain that falls exclusively on Truman, suggesting that he is in a different reality. (T and I, 4).

In *Simulation and Simulacra*, Baudrillard remarks that "the relation that is being formed today between the cinema and the real is an inverse, negative relation: it results from the loss of specificity of one and of the other. The cold collage, the cool promiscuity, the asexual nuptials of two cold media that evolve in an asymptotic line towards each other: the cinema attempting to abolish itself in the cinematographic (or televised) hyperreal." (Baudrillard 50). *The Truman Show* proves this statement by mocking the forced product placement that is omnipresent in movies as well as television programs. While the milieu of *Her* and *Ex Machina* contributes to the concept of hyperreality, the films are highly dystopian in tone. In Spike Jonze's *Her*, Theodore Twombly lives in a futuristic world where everything is voice-controlled and being in romantic relationships with an AI is accustomed.

Throughout the film, one can see the standard lives of the characters, and the people of that society are surrounded by a plethora of technology and monotonous infrastructure, reflecting the blurring of real life and simulated life. *Ex Machina* takes place in a highly neoteric laboratory or facility where Nathan, a remarkably ingenious scientist, is striving to create an artificially intelligent race of androids. This facility, which is the main and only backdrop of the entire film, is placed in the middle of deep woods, removed completely from civilization.

The film also makes a very distinct contrast between its interior and exterior shots. Outside the facility are breathtaking landscapes. It is big, beautiful, refreshing, and vibrant. Inside, it seems like an endless futuristic maze of glass, mirrors, plastic, chrome, and dim lights. It is clean, cold, and claustrophobic. A perfect setting for the subject that is explored in this tight, tense sci-fi thriller (themissingpatient).

Edmund Ventura of the Oasis project, or Life Extension Ltd., in *Vanilla Sky*, and Nathan, the scientist in *Ex Machina*. All of these villain arc characters exhibit omnipotent and deity-like motives. They truly believe they know what is best for the characters and do not mind playing God in the lives of the protagonists. In *Vanilla Sky* by Cameron Crowe, Edmund Ventura, or the tech support from Life Extension Ltd., makes subtle appearances throughout the movie, yet the audience is left confused by this character. That is until the latter part of the film, where Edmund Ventura shows or guides David Aames, the protagonist, through the afterlife, wherein he informs David about his decision to be in a cryogenic stasis 150 years ago. Edmund Ventura presents David with the life-altering decision of staying in the lucid dream or cryogenic state or going back to the real world and coming back to life.

In *The Truman Show*, the director of the show is the controller for the activities of the character Truman indirectly by controlling the other characters. He wants Truman to live a life which is created by him, a utopia where there are no miseries and sadness. Christoph controls Truman mentally and physically in the show. Whenever Truman tries to find the truth, the creator has other plans and makes him engage with others. (T and I 3).

The pattern of a deity-like antagonist can also be observed in the 2014 sci-fi thriller *Ex Machina*, wherein the character Nathan serves as an obvious case study of ego in the film.

When Caleb makes his comment about the history of 'gods', the CEO instinctively assumes the 'god' referred to is himself, where Ava is his Eve, and his sprawling green estate is some sort of Garden of Eden. (Robbins).

Furthermore, Christoph and Nathan, while having a god-complex mentality, also display tendencies towards seeing themselves as father figures to Truman and Ava, respectively. The concluding scene of *The Truman Show* sees a concerned Christoph, the creator and director, trying to reason with Truman, who is furious and baffled, rightfully so, as he tries to exit the fake reality in which he has been living his entire life. Despite Christoph's voice coming from up above the sky, in a God-like fashion to Truman, the conversation can be interpreted as a conventional talk between a father and his child. Christoph is seen stroking the iPad screen he is watching Truman on and assuring him in a true parental manner that it is okay and that he understands. Christoph apprises Truman about how he has viewed him his entire life: "I was watching when you were born; I was watching when you took your first step; I watched you on your first day of school; the episode when you lost your first tooth. You can't leave Truman; you belong here". (*The Truman Show* 1:33:44–1:34:13) – As Christoph is reliving all of these memories, he truly sees himself as a real father to Truman; the idea of only ever viewing Truman through a camera lens does not faze him, and he is not able to differentiate between the real and the virtual or fake narrative. Christoph is seduced by his own trick of blurring the line between real life and reel life. In *Ex Machina*, a comment by the awestruck Caleb, after Nathan the Mad Scientist reveals his attempt to build a conscious machine, the two helpfully explain to the audience what a Turing Test is: "If you've created a conscious machine, it's not the history of man... that's the history of Gods." (Robbins). Nathan truly believes he is a God, not just of the human world but also of the artificially intelligent. However, the relationship between Ava, the AI android, and Nathan revealed in the latter part of the film showcases more of a father-daughter relationship trying to con the layman to get their way. Nathan discloses to Caleb that it was his plan all along to emotionally manipulate him by mistreating Ava—"Misdirection. I rip up her picture, which she can then present as an illustration of my cruelty to her and her love for you." (*Ex Machina* 1:23:16- 1:23:27). Nathan can be seen almost as a proud parent because Ava, an AI, has successfully used its full capability of manipulation, self-observation, creativity, empathy, and sexuality to trick Caleb, a human, into helping her escape. Nathan and Ava both used Caleb as bait to get what each wanted—for Ava to be smart enough to manoeuvre a human.

Moreover, the protagonists of *Her* and *Ex Machina*, the films with AI as one of the central themes, seem incredibly vulnerable and reliant on the AI character.

The selling point of the Operating System is that it has humanising features. It is able to talk back to the user and carries out conversations about any topic imaginable. It has knowledge and information about anything the user would want to know about. It is basically, an organiser/encyclopaedia equipped with an affable voice and the caring of a friend. Theodore enters into his own simulacrum and leaves behind his pained history of divorce and rejection. His decision to go into a new relationship with Samantha is a way to heal himself from loneliness. (Spencer).

The protagonists in *Her* and *Ex Machina* do not want to leave the hyperreal bubble they established with their idolised AI. Theodore Twombly of *Her*, despite being in the middle of a divorce and a failed relationship, finds comfort not with a human but with Samantha, the AI.

Although this intuitive OS does allow mind sex, even that activity is abstract, allowing us to realize how connecting with a live human is still in the mind and one of life's great gifts, orgasm or not. *Her* allows us to witness the evolution of love separate from the encumbrances of physicality (DeSando).

In Alex Garland's 2014 film *Ex Machina*, Caleb is infatuated with Ava, the AI designed by Nathan. Despite Nathan's warning about not trusting AI and androids, Caleb still sticks himself out to help Ava flee the laboratory. Ava kills Nathan and locks Caleb in the lab, proving Nathan's deterrent to Caleb that Ava is tricking him by coercing romantic feelings just to get what she wants. The red lights, flashed eight times during the power outages caused by Ava, are symbolic of an almost evil motif throughout the film. During the times the red lights go on, Ava confesses she wants to be with Caleb and questions him if he wants to be with her, inducing a sense of yearning. Next time the lights turn red, Caleb informs Ava that Nathan is planning on reprogramming her for a better version of AI, but he assures her that he will break her out. Caleb is successful in unlocking the doors and helping Ava finally escape. The final time the lights go red, Ava has masterfully tricked and locked Caleb in the facility while also murdering Nathan and fleeing out into the world undetected. The protagonists in *Her* and *Ex Machina* do not want to leave the hyperreal bubble they established with their idolised AI. Furthermore, the selected films—*The Truman Show*, *Vanilla Sky*, *Her*, and *Ex Machina*—can be grouped into two categories based on the characteristics of AI benefiting hyperreality and the lack of the AI component.

Moving onto the protagonists of the films, these characters play an important role in creating a sense of hyperreality. *Her* and *Ex Machina*, the movies with AI as one of the main themes, have protagonists that are particularly vulnerable and dependable on the AI character. Theodore Twombly of *Her* falls deeply in love with Samantha, the operating system AI. Although he struggles to understand the nature of their relationship and fails to acknowledge the diminishing line between real and virtual, the latter part of the movie sees Theodore accept his relationship with Samantha until the AI company eventually decides to shut down, separating Theodore and Samantha forever. The protagonists in *Her* and *Ex Machina* do not want to leave the hyperreal bubble they have created with their respected AI. In *Ex Machina*, Caleb wants to liberate Ava by helping her breakout from Nathan's laboratory, and despite being warned not to trust the AI by Nathan, the creator of the AI android, Caleb still helps her until the very end and watches as Ava murders Nathan, locks himself in the lab, and flees to the outside world, betraying the naive human, Caleb.

The Truman Show, *Vanilla Sky*, and *Ex Machina* are all strategically named to exude the hyperreal concept they embody. *The Truman Show* is literally named after the reality show that showcases the life of Truman Burbank in the film. The title *Vanilla Sky* takes its reference from the famous Monet painting owned by the main character, David Aames, but it is also used as a metaphor for a life free of suffering or difficulty, a dreamy, ethereal realm where one is cradled in the warm colours of an endless summer sunset. The title of this 2014 motion picture is taken from the Latin phrase *Deus Ex Machina*, which translates to God from the machine. The film is titled 'ex machina', leaving out the 'deus'. This indicates that the machine or the artificially intelligent being no longer has a god. Despite telling Caleb about the supremacy of AI androids, Nathan still sees himself as a deity, a god to the AI race specifically. In spite of his brilliance, even Nathan cannot avoid being outgrown by his creation. Being the first person to build workable artificial intelligence does not make Nathan a god. Perhaps he was unique among humans, but in an AI-populated world? He's simply another ape. Hyperreality is especially boosted in the films, with AI as one of the themes. *Her* and *Ex Machina* show a variety of AI components that facilitate blurring the lines between the real and simulated worlds.

While the concept of hyperreality has been present in cinema for decades, its use in combination with artificial intelligence has become more prevalent recently. This research paper explores the correlation between hyperreality and AI in films by constructively dividing the selected films into two groups: the first group includes *The Truman Show* and *Vanilla Sky*, and the second group consists of *Her* and *Ex Machina*. Group 1 films lack the theme of AI, while Group 2 is enforced with artificial intelligence and is one of the main elements in the storylines. This distinction results in a varied sense of hyperreality in either group. Additionally, this paper also discusses the implications of AI within the storylines of the films in terms of its potential to blur the boundaries between reality and fiction. Moreover, the secondary distinction between the two groups of films is the protagonist's desire, or lack thereof, to remain in the hyperreal world. Group 1 sees the characters of Truman Burbank and David Aames (protagonists of *The Truman Show* and *Vanilla Sky*) desperately trying to outrun the 'perfect life' or hyperreal world they've found themselves in. Group 2, on the other hand, deals with movies that have artificial intelligence (AI) as one of the main elements of the storyline. This predilection towards AI coerces Theodore Twombly of *Her* and Caleb of *Ex Machina* to chase the hyperreal life that has been created due to the AI characters in their lives—Samantha, the OSAI, and Ava, the AI android, respectively—even when it inconveniences the protagonist. Additionally, a subdivision of group 2 is observed (refer to tab. 1). While group 2 consists of films that have the corresponding, substantial theme of AI, it is noticeable that there are certain differences between the two main AI characters, Samantha and Ava, and their impact on the characters and plot of the films.

table 1

AI characters in Films	Type of AI	Nature of AI	Relation of AI with humans
Samantha (<i>Her</i>)	Intangible, lives in a digital device	Sympathetic, thoughtful, emotionally present	Romantic relationship with protagonist, assistant
Ava (<i>Ex Machina</i>)	Tangible, has a fully functional, high-tech android body	Uneasy, introverted, deceitful, vindictive	Professional relationship with protagonist, a prisoner in the scientist's lab, an experiment rat

All these variables and components researched in the present study showcase the distinguished types of hyperreality that have not been examined before. Understanding the bewildering concept of hyperreality and the implications it has for AI is a pressing priority in the new technological era that today's society is entering. In addition, the observations also suggest the concept of hyperreality is overall enhanced via the incorporation of AI in the narrative. 'The Truman Show' and 'Vanilla Sky' display certain technological innovations that create hyperreal storylines. However, these storylines fall short when compared to the hyperreal nature of the latter two films, 'Her' and 'Ex Machina'. The most intriguing finding would be the dynamic relationship between the themes of hyperreality and AI, particularly how AI reinforces and intensifies the idea of hyperreality throughout 'Her' and 'Ex Machina.'

CONCLUSION

The analysis of the select films—*The Truman Show* (1998), *Vanilla Sky* (2001), *Her* (2013), and *Ex Machina* (2014)—as paragons of hyperrealism in cinema and the variety of hyperreality and artificial intelligence existing in the films reveal that there is a distinguishable difference in hyperreality present in the selected films. There is a direct relation between AI and hype hyperreality; the motif of AI boosts the motif of hyperrealism in motion pictures. The implications of artificial intelligence in today's society and perception of reality are shaped by the hyperreal agitprop perceived in motion pictures. With the increasing popularity of hyperreality in art and cinema and filmmakers using the hyperreal approach to express their ideas and emotions in ways that traditional storytelling has not been able to, it is crucial for the audience to understand their way around the hyperreal and AI universes. Though the concept of hyperreality is not modern, its impacts are more applicable in present-day society, joining innovative advances in artificial intelligence, simulated reality, and virtual reality. This is because

of the way it perfectly represents the postmodern condition, particularly how individuals within postmodern society look for incitement by building fake worlds of display and temptation. There are dangers of using hyperreality in society; individuals might take note and acknowledge hyperreal images as role models even in spite of the fact that the visuals do not always represent the real one.

The audience needs to delve deep into the world of hyperreal cinema and navigate their way around AI with the help of entertainment media. In the new age of hyper-technology such as virtual reality headsets and artificially enhanced social media platforms, it becomes increasingly difficult to keep up with all the new types of hyper- and simulated reality, particularly through the medium of cinema. As a result, it is suggested that future researchers continue to conduct such studies to ensure that the average person understands the ever-changing and enigmatic concepts of hyperreality and artificial intelligence with the lucidity of cinema.

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