From Homunculus to Cybernetics: Artificial Life and the Evolution of the Artificial Human in Performing Arts

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Abstract: The study traces the aesthetic development of the image of the artificial human from the medieval homunculus through modern forms of artificial beings and science fiction films to the contemporary robot or cyborg as a phenomenon that influences not only science but also art. The artificial human is understood here not as a technological device, but as the latest historical embodiment of a long continuity of attempts to create artificial human and non-human being, reaching back to ancient automata. The central question guiding the study is how the figure of the artificial human, reactivated across radically different historical and technological contexts, continues to renegotiate the boundary between the living and the artificial, and what this recurrence reveals about the changing aesthetic and cultural functions of that boundary. To address this, the study outlines how the aesthetics of the artificial human have changed in cultural and artistic narratives, and how these transformations have influenced theatrical and performative approaches in the 20th and 21st centuries.

Keywords:
homunculus, Frankenstein, artificial human, robot, archetype, android theatre

Introduction

The robot as a figure, although a creation of the modern age, serves not only as a reflection of technological progress, but above all as a modern medium through which fundamental archetypes and existential problems are actualized and revealed in works of art. The motif of the artificial human can be understood not merely as a thematic, but as a paradigmatic intersection of diverse cultural segments, operating simultaneously in diachronic and synchronic perspective: thereby the past converges with the present and the anticipated future, mythological narratives meet the widely disseminated stories of contemporary (pop)culture, and folklore interweaves with genre forms such as fantasy and science fiction.[1] This, however, is not a matter of mere repetition in a new historical costume: each reappearance of the archetype also transforms it, inflecting its meaning according to the artistic, technological and cultural conditions of its time. Although the robot appears in this study as the historically most recent figure, it is treated here not as a self-contained technological invention, but as the latest link in a long continuity of attempts to create artificial life — attempts that technology did not originate, but to which it finally gave material form. It is precisely this connection that aligns with the aims of aesthetic inquiry, particularly in the context of architextual thematology, which served as the central theoretical framework for this text. Among the many cultural imaginings of artificial life, this study focuses specifically on the figure of the artificial human. Rather than tracing the technological evolution of robotics, this study follows the cultural evolution of this one recurring archetype.

The aim is therefore not to reconstruct a chronological history of artificial beings, but to demonstrate the persistence and transformation of archetypal narratives surrounding artificial life. From this perspective, contemporary robotic performers represent the latest stage in a much longer cultural tradition extending from mythological and alchemical conceptions of artificial creation through 19th century literary imagination to 20th century science fiction and contemporary performance. Throughout these historical transformations, the motif of the artificial human continually renegotiates the boundaries of what it means to be human. The analysis begins in the era of ancient sculptors and attempts to create moving statues, moves through the medieval alchemical concept of the homunculus, through the 19th century phenomenon, Mary Shelley's novel Frankenstein — which remains a significant milestone in this field to this day — and on to the 20th and 21st centuries, when the robot as we know it today was gradually developed, with the study now focusing primarily on the performing arts. By examining selected examples, the study will attempt to demonstrate that although modern theatre does not work with 'primordial stories' in their original form, it continuously updates and varies thematic algorithms (in the sense of recurring patterns, not computer processes) and archetypes, thereby endowing them with new meaning and expressive value for contemporary audiences in the context of

1 BOSZORÁD, M. *Od arcitextu k pop-textu (a vice versa)* [From Architext to Pop-text (and vice versa)]. Nitra : Univerzita Konštantína Filozofa v Nitre, 2022, p. 64.

a constantly changing world and technological progress. This raises the central question guiding the present study: how does the figure of the artificial human, reactivated across radically different historical and technological contexts, continue to renegotiate the boundary between the living and the artificial — and what does this recurrence reveal about the changing aesthetic and cultural functions of that boundary. The works mentioned in the text were selected as a representative sample exhibiting signs of artificial life, based on the viewer's experience of the author.

Theoretical framework

The article employs the conceptual framework of the Nitra School of architextual thematology, a methodological approach developed within Slovak literary scholarship and initiated by František Miko, later elaborated particularly by Ľubomír Plesník and his collaborators. This approach examines recurring archetypal narrative structures and thematic algorithms across different historical and cultural contexts and provides the theoretical basis for the present analysis. The present study draws primarily on the *Výberový tematologický tezaurus* [Selective Thematic Thesaurus (STT)] (2022), a collective scholarly monograph that synthesises the methodological framework and research outcomes of the Nitra School of architextual thematology. The STT defines architextual thematology as a sub-discipline of thematological research that focuses on the theme of the archinarrative or architext — that is, on the fundamental narrative and ideological patterns that are repeatedly re-enacted across different cultural periods. These primal stories, often without an individually identifiable author, preserve the oldest layers of human experience and collective imagination.[2] In other words, architextual thematology assumes that certain narrative structures are not confined to a single historical period but recur in new forms across different cultural contexts.

Thus, motifs such as the creation of artificial life may appear in alchemy, Romantic literature, science fiction and contemporary digital performance while preserving a shared archetypal core. For this reason, the present study adopts a deliberately broad historical perspective. Its aim is not to examine robotic performers as an isolated product of modern technology, but to position them within the continuous historical tradition of imagining and creating artificial life. Such an approach makes it possible to trace the persistence and transformation of archetypal narratives from mythology and alchemy to contemporary performance and digital aesthetics. Artificially created life in art, as well as the artificial human as a figure of performative art and digital aesthetics, draws on ancient models of creation, rebellion and downfall, thereby preserving the continuity of the primal narrative concerning the limits of human creativity. In this picture, the Promethean desire for perfection meets the fear of its consequences — a tension that lies at the heart of archetypal patterns ranging from alchemy to cybernetics.

2 PLESNÍK, Ľ. – ČECHOVÁ, M. – DANIŠOVÁ, N. – GÁBOR, Ľ. – KLIMKOVÁ, S. – RÉDEY, Z. *Výberový tematologický tezaurus* [Selected Thematic Thesaurus]. Nitra : Univerzita Konštantína Filozofa v Nitre, 2022, pp. 23–26.

A complementary perspective is offered by Martin Boszorád in his monograph Od arcitextu k pop-textu (a vice versa) [From Architext to Pop-text (and vice versa)], whose chapter on the artificial human defines it as 'a character created by another (human) being in its own image'[3] — a formulation that encompasses the full historical range from mythological golems and homunculi to contemporary robots and androids. Martin Boszorád identifies two versions of the biblical narrative of human creation: the first presents the creation of man as the crowning act of divine creation, made in God's image; the second, which Martin Boszorád considers more productive for the thematology of the artificial human, emphasises the act of creation itself, the forming of man from dust and the breathing of life into matter. It is this second version that resonates across the entire tradition of animating 'dead' matter, from the homunculus and the golem through to the robot and the cyborg, and thus directly anticipates the subject matter of the present study. Together, these archetypal categories reveal that representations of the artificial human are structured not only by the act of creation itself, but also by changing relationships between creator and creation, human identity, and the desire to transcend biological limitations.

Several figurative archetypes defined in the *Selective Thematic Thesaurus* are particularly relevant to the present study. In representations of the artificial human, the archetype of a *doppelgänger*, who is "an almost identical duplicate or the character's polar opposite"[4] repeatedly manifests itself through beings that imitate, replace or mirror human identity, thereby raising questions concerning uniqueness and the boundaries of humanity. In the context of the artificial human, the *doppelgänger* not only confronts human beings with questions of identity and uniqueness, but also raises the possibility of overcoming mortality through technological reproduction. Rather than merely duplicating the human body, the artificial double may preserve, reproduce or even extend human existence beyond the limits of biological life. Another important category is the helper, characterised by the STT as "the hero's ally who serves him."[5] Early artificial beings, such as the homunculus and the golem, are primarily conceived as helpers serving their creator, a function that also persists in contemporary service robots. However, these narratives frequently transform the helper into the villain, "a fundamentally negative character (the substance of evil) that harms the hero or other characters in the story,"[6] reflecting the recurring cultural fear that human creations may ultimately turn against their creators. The figure of Death that STT characterises as "1. a zoomorphic, 2. a human-animal (therianthropic/chimeric) or 3. an anthropomorphic figure, usually named with the characteristic proper nouns Death, or the Grim Reaper,"[7] is important for the present study because the artificial human recurrently occupies both poles of this

3 BOSZORÁD, M. *Od arcitextu k pop-textu (a vice versa)* [From Architext to Pop-text (and vice versa)], p. 58.

4 PLESNÍK, Ľ. – ČECHOVÁ, M. – DANIŠOVÁ, N. – GÁBOR, Ľ. – KLIMKOVÁ, S. – RÉDEY, Z. *Výberový tematologický tezaurus* [Selected Thematic Thesaurus], p. 242.

5 Ibid., p. 149.

6 Ibid., p. 130.

7 Ibid., p. 213.

archetype at once. On the one hand, the created being appears as an agent of death, most explicitly in the robot uprising of Karel Čapek's play *R.U.R.*, where the robots exterminate their creators. On the other hand, through its capacity for indefinite repair and reproduction, the artificial body also comes to function as a figure that defies death, offering a technological analogue to immortality. This double position — as that which ends life and as that which promises to outlast it — recurs across the case studies examined below and is taken up again in the conclusion. These analytical categories provide the interpretative framework for the historical overview and the contemporary case studies examined in the following sections.

The art of refinement and ancient automata

Even in Aristotle's attempt, in his works *Physics, Book II* and *De Anima* [On the Soul], dating from 350 BC, we see an effort to define what the soul means and how it defines a human being. He says that "almost everyone defines the soul by three characteristics: motion, perception and immateriality; and each of these characteristics relates to fundamental principles."[8] It is precisely the soul, consciousness and, in particular, self-awareness that, in today's world, distinguish artificially created life — that is, robots, artificial intelligence and other technologies — from truly living beings. The soul is what artificially created life (as yet) lacks, and we cannot therefore regard it as truly living. However, attempts to create it are as old as Aristotle's reflections on the soul. In the aforementioned quotation from *Physics II*, he himself distinguishes natural things from artificial ones, primarily on the basis of the capacity for movement and transformation. Yet one of the most enduring archetypes of human existence, whose roots stretch from ancient mythology to contemporary technology, is the archetype of the creation of artificial life — that is, the story in which humanity transcends the limits of its own nature and attempts to become the creator of new life. Even in ancient mythology, Prometheus, a descendant of the Titans, created man from clay and was punished by the gods for overstepping the bounds of human creative power — what this study terms the Promethean story.

Aristotle's seemingly strict distinction between the artificial and the natural was, however, less convincing than it might appear at first glance. A few pages after presenting the distinction between art and nature, Aristotle adds in *Physics II* that art can function in two different ways: art either, on the basis of nature, takes things further than nature can, or imitates nature.[9] This dichotomy allows us to distinguish between two types of art: one that perfects nature and brings it to a state of perfection, and the other that merely imitates it without any fundamental transformation. As William R. Newman states in *Promethean Ambitions*: "Already in Aristotle's time, Hippocratic medicine had come to epitomize the former type of art,

8 ARISTOTELÉS. On the Soul / *De Anima*. Translated by John Alexander Smith. Adelaide : Adelaide University Library / University of Adelaide Library, 2014, p. 19.

9 NEWMAN, W. R. *Promethean Ambitions: Alchemy and the Quest to Perfect Nature*. Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 2004, p. 17.

since the physician did not generally lead the human body to an unnatural state, but merely brought it to its natural condition of health by eliminating impediments."[10] At the same time, there was already a belief in Aristotle's day that the visual arts could "perfect" nature by creating a work just as beautiful, or even more impressive, than nature's own creation. Within this perspective, the artificial human functions simultaneously, as an imitation of the human being and as a means of questioning and redefining what it means to be human.

In the ancient world, any form of deliberate, productive activity was referred to as 'art' (technē or ars). Its aesthetic value lay in the wonder at the artist's skill, but also in the realisation that it was a trick — the creation of an illusion that did not alter the nature of the material. Daedalus was already renowned for creating self-moving statues. Within the perspective adopted here, these may be interpreted as one of the earliest cultural expressions of the Promethean aspiration to surpass nature through artistic creation. These automata imitated life, but remained merely an illusion, for they lacked an inner principle — they were "purely artificial." The most famous of these is the wooden statue of the goddess Aphrodite, in which he used mercury to make it move. From the perspective of architextual thematology, the attempt to create an artificial being always involves the creation of a new world in which man is no longer the sole bearer of life. The artificial being appears here as a double of man — his image, which imitates him and at the same time, in a certain way, 'improves' or expands him. This also raises the existential question of what exactly defines humanity: whether it is the soul, the body, consciousness or the capacity for creation.

The homunculus, alchemy, and life without women

Throughout the history of thought, alchemy has been understood as an art which, much like in ancient times, was not merely an imitation of nature, but also its perfection. The alchemists' aim was to surpass nature, to find answers to many unanswered questions about how the world works, and also to create a purer, more perfect form of life. The Islamic Andalusian-Arab philosopher Ibn Rushd, or Averroes (1126–1198 AD), cites an example involving two mice, one created naturally and the other in a laboratory, suggesting that in his understanding, much like Aristotle's, these two beings are not the same.[11] The concept of the homunculus, an artificially created human being said to be born from male semen incubated outside a woman's body, also emerged from the world of alchemy. In the 16th century, Paracelsus and his followers saw the homunculus as the pinnacle of human creative power.[12]

The birth of the homunculus was based on the notion that male semen carries within it the principle of life, and the woman's womb is thus merely 'soil' that receives this principle and provides it with the necessary care so that it may grow. According

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid., pp. 6–7.

12 Ibid.

to this logic, the female body appeared as a passive incubator, not as an active co-creator of life. The idea that a man could create a human being 'without a woman' was therefore understood as a radical liberation of creation from biological reproduction and, at the same time, as an attempt at a 'purified' creation of human beings. In a broader cultural context, the homunculus thus becomes a symbol of the desire for a world where the female body is replaced by a technical or intellectual process. The creation of an artificial human also reflects the broader human aspiration to overcome natural limitations, including the limits imposed by mortality.

Another important form of artificially created life in the Middle Ages is the Jewish golem,[13] a clay figure created through the performance of rituals associated with the Jewish religion, which was intended to assist in the household. We can also perceive figurative archetypes here: the homunculus and the golem appear as human doubles who imitate or replace humans, and at the same time as helpers, created to serve their creator.

Frankenstein and modern technology

The idea that art and science can not only imitate but also construct the very essence of life was later reflected in modern narratives. One of the most significant examples of the creation of man is Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), with his subtitle modern Prometheus, which is considered the first literary archetype of the cybernetic world: Lester D. Friedman and Allison B. Kavey read the cyborg as "the logical evolutionary phase" of the Frankenstein narrative, embodying the increasingly unstable boundary between the organic and the synthetic.[14] Victor Frankenstein builds on the tradition of alchemists such as Paracelsus and Agrippa, yet transforms their occult ambitions into the framework of modern science. He becomes a successor to the Promethean lineage — a man who yearns for the 'art of perfection,' for the creation of artificial life. The novel combines the traditional occult sciences studied by Victor Frankenstein (including those of Paracelsus and Agrippa) with modern science, and reflects humanity's 'Promethean ambitions' to transcend the boundaries of the natural world.

The monster created by Victor Frankenstein is assembled from parts of dead bodies and animated through electricity. This shift is crucial for the present study because it marks a transition from magical and alchemical conceptions of artificial life to a technological principle of animation. Electricity becomes the new "spark of life": no longer a supernatural force, but a scientific one. In this sense, Frankenstein anticipates later cultural imaginaries of robotics and cybernetics, in which artificial beings are likewise animated by external sources of energy rather than by biological life itself.

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13 Ibid., p. 183.

14 FRIEDMAN, L. D. – KAVEY, A. B. *Monstrous Progeny: A History of the Frankenstein Narratives*. New Brunswick, New Jersey and London : Rutgers University Press, 2016, p. 186.

Karel Čapek and the beginning of the robot

In Karel Čapek's play *R.U.R.* (written 1920, premiered 1921), the young Rossum "invented a worker with the fewest needs,"[15] thereby "dismissing man and creating the Robot."[16] Later, he "played God" by manufacturing a host of robots. These robots later refuse to serve humanity, as was their original purpose, and during a massive uprising, they decide to exterminate the human race. We can thus argue that the plot of the play itself unfolds against the backdrop of the Promethean tale of the ill-advised bestowal of power and knowledge upon humanity — in this case, the character of Rossum — which leads to "hubris" (arrogance) and ultimately to self-destruction. For Karel Čapek, the robot was less a prediction of future machines than a metaphor for human arrogance, dehumanisation, and the instrumentalization of labour. Over time, however, the story has evolved into an "archetype," a popular notion that a new life form, a robot, a new human, will eventually rebel against its creator and decide to exterminate them. It is precisely the theme of dehumanisation and the extinction of humanity that is central to Karel Čapek's play. People stop having children because "they are making Robots."[17] In the dialogues, the Robot asks about human emotions such as love and defiance. This holds up a mirror to our everyday communication and the emptiness of some dialogues.[18] In Karel Čapek's play *R.U.R.*, Dr. Gall secretly "altered the Robots"[19] and "remade them into people"[20] by changing their "irritability"[21] and making them more capable than humans. The role of the Robot's double is played by Helena, whom Dr Gall intended to make similar to the character of Helena Glory, but considers a failure because the robot is not a perfect reflection of her model. This suggests the motif of the double, albeit with imperfection. The robot thus becomes a figure whose creation leads to death and annihilation. The robot revolution leads to the annihilation of humanity. Alquist, the last human, is forced to seek the lost secret of life. At the end of the play, however, Robot Primus and Robot Helena appear, displaying human emotions — love and the ability to procreate. This symbolises the rebirth of life through a new world of robots who have become souls. Rossum's Universal Robots were originally created "for work,"[22] because "they replace two and a half workers,"[23] with the aim of freeing humanity from degrading labour.

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15 ČAPEK, K. R.U.R. In *Dramata* [Dramas]. Praha : Československý spisovatel, 1994, p. 10.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid, p. 65: Helena to Dr. Gall: "Everyone, everyone said that people couldn't be born because so many Robots were being made."

18 According to PLESNÍK, Ľ. – ČECHOVÁ, M. – DANIŠOVÁ, N. – GÁBOR, Ľ. – KLIMKOVÁ, S. – RÉDEY, Z. *Výberový tematologický tezaurus* [Selected Thematic Thesaurus], p. 280.

19 ČAPEK, Karel. R.U.R. In *Dramata* [Dramas], p. 57.

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid., p. 19.

23 Ibid.

In Karel Čapek's play, the robots rebel and label humans "the enemy and outcast of the universe,"[24] ordering the "extermination of humanity,"[25] and later directly carrying out this extermination. The robot as a villain — or artificial intelligence as a threat to humanity and the world — now used as a popular narrative, is also indirectly linked to the aforementioned Promethean story, in which the creation of human-like intelligence threatens, in line with the pessimistic ideas of critical posthumanism, to take control of humanity. Unlike humans, robots are potentially infinitely reproducible, suggesting a form of continuity that transcends biological mortality.

The robot in performance art do tejto kapitoly voľne až do konca

The historical survey presented above establishes the artificial human not as a sequence of disconnected figures, but as a continuously transforming cultural archetype. The following case studies therefore do not serve as isolated examples of contemporary robotic theatre. Rather, they examine how these long-established archetypal narratives are reactivated within present-day performance through robotics and artificial intelligence. Each production demonstrates a different way in which the artificial human continues to negotiate questions of creation, identity, vitality, imitation and the relationship between human beings and their own creations. As Martin Boszorád notes, the artificial human can be characterised by varying degrees of anthropomorphism — a spectrum ranging from a robot immediately recognisable as a machine to an android virtually indistinguishable from a human being.[26]

The four case studies examined here — Oriza Hirata's *The Three Sisters (Android Version)* and *Metamorphosis (Android Version)*, theatre company Rimini Protokoll's *Unheimliches Tal* [Uncanny Valley] written by Thomas Melle and directed by Stefan Kaegi, and the Prague's Švanda Theatre production *AI: Když robot píše hru* [AI: When a Robot Writes a Play] — were selected on the grounds that each not only employs robotic or AI technology in its creation, but also explicitly thematises the figure of the artificial human as its central dramaturgical concern. Each of them explores a different dimension of the artificial human that has emerged throughout the historical development outlined above. Together, they examine questions of identity and human uniqueness, artificial creative agency, culturally established images of robotic beings, and the possibility of overcoming mortality through technological reproduction. Rather than illustrating four isolated artistic strategies, the case studies demonstrate how archetypal narratives of artificial life continue to be transformed within contemporary performance.

A prominent example of robots in theatre is the work of Japanese theatre-maker Oriza Hirata, who uses androids designed by Hiroshi Ishiguro. In what follows, the terms 'android' and 'robot' are used as they appear in Oriza Hirata's and

24 Ibid., p. 49.

25 Ibid.

26 BOSZORÁD, M. *Od arcitextu k pop-textu (a vice versa)* [From Architext to Pop-text (and vice versa)], p. 62.



AI: When a Robot Writes a Play. Švanda Theatre, Prague, premiered on 26 February 2021. Direction Daniel Hrbek. From left Marek Froka, Jacob Erftemeijer. Photo by Andrea Burešová. Švanda Theatre Archive.

Hiroshi Ishiguro's own descriptions of their work, while 'artificial human' continues to denote the broader analytical category introduced above. Their collaborative works include: *I, Worker* (2008), *Sayonara* (2010) and *Sayonara Ver. 2* (2012), in which Oriza Hirata used the Geminoid F[27] android for the first time. Two works are particularly relevant to our context. *The Three Sisters (Android Version)*: An adaptation of Anton Chekhov's play featuring nine actors, Geminoid F and the Wakamaru Robovie-R3. The creative process was exceptionally demanding and lasted eight weeks.[28] The actors first worked with an assistant director playing the role of the robot, which was then filmed and sent to the Advanced Telerobotics Research (ATR) Laboratory for programming. Only then did the robot begin working with the actors on compatibility. The second important work is *Metamorphosis. (Android Version)*, 2014, in which Oriza Hirata reworked Franz Kafka's text, with the main character, Gregor Samsa, transforming into an android (of the Repliee S1 type) instead of a cockroach. In this case, the android's metal body and white mask made it immediately recognisable as a machine rather than a human double.

27 The word Geminoid comes from the Latin 'twin.' Geminoids have silicone skin that perfectly imitates human skin, lip movements and eyelid blinking. They cannot walk and are remotely controlled by an engineer who lends them a voice, although some types already have a more autonomous mode with voice synthesis. In PLUTA, I. Theatre and Robotics: Hiroshi Ishiguro's Androids as Staged by Oriza Hirata. In *Art Research Journal,* 2016, Vol. 3, No. 1, p. 69.

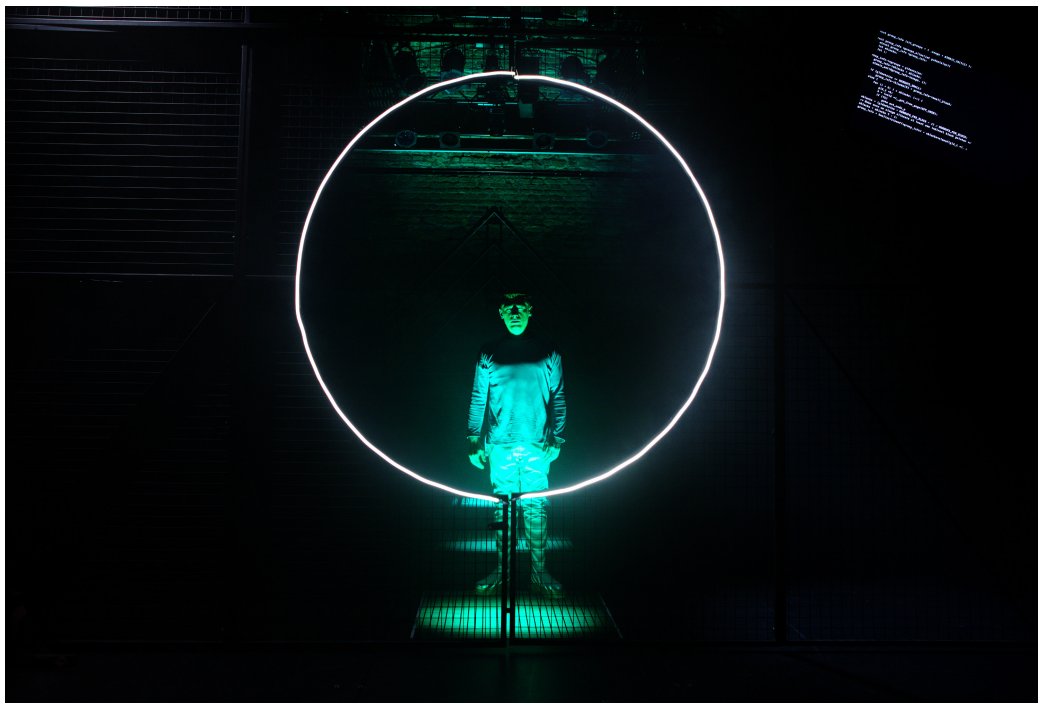
28 Ibid., pp. 75–76.



AI: When a Robot Writes a Play. Švanda Theatre, Prague, premiered on 26 February 2021. Direction Daniel Hrbek. From left Petr Buchta, Jacob Erftemeijer. Photo by Alena Hrbková. Švanda Theatre Archive.

In *The Three Sisters (Android Version)* android does not merely play a human character, but specifically embodies an android (Ikumi) invented by the father in the near future as a replacement (or copy) for a biological third sister. The real human sister (also named Ikumi) lives in the same house as a 'hikikomori' (a socially isolated person). The two older sisters interact with both the human and android versions of their sister. They know that Ikumi is an android, yet they treat her as a sister nonetheless. This awareness leads to complex emotional fluctuations between feelings for a human being and feelings for a machine. The android was created by Hiroshi Ishiguro's laboratory. She sits in a wheelchair and moves only her head, upper body and facial expressions. Dialogue is reproduced through a loudspeaker using the sister's voice, whilst her mouth performs lip-syncing. Although the android is almost identical to a human in terms of outward appearance and voice, her body movements are clumsy, compared to those of humans. The robot, whether as a physical entity on stage (e.g. the Geminoid F in *The Three Sisters (Android Version)*) or as generated text, is an almost identical duplicate of a human being or human speech. This suggests that what makes a *doppelgänger* truly perfect is the ability to feel emotions and not to exceed the limitations of the human body.

Another relevant case is Rimini Protokoll's *Uncanny Valley,* in which we see Thomas Melle, the creator of his "double." A person sits on stage with a laptop, and



AI: When a Robot Writes a Play. Švanda Theatre, Prague, premiered on 26 February. Direction Daniel Hrbek. Jacob Erftemeijer. Photo by Andrea Burešová. Švanda Theatre Archive.

next to them is a projection screen. Most of the time, the lecture actually takes place on stage. The only difference is that the person on stage is not actually a person, but a robotic double resembling him. As with Oriza Hirata's androids above, the terminology here follows the production's own self-description: Thomas Melle's likeness is a pre-programmed, remotely voiced animatronic double rather than an autonomous artificially intelligent system, even though its on-stage lecture addresses AI as a theme. Thomas Melle, the model on whom the robot was based, had his copy seated on stage in his place. In the production, the robotic double allows Thomas Melle to delegate his stage presence and to reflect on the instability of the human body, identity and public appearance. We can look for a Promethean or creator archetype — although there is no destruction here, nor a desperate desire for knowledge, we see the desire to free oneself from one's own physical body and be in multiple places at once. The very endeavour to create an artificial human double so convincingly human-like, however, is an expression of the Promethean narrative. The uncomfortable or even terrifying feelings humans experience when looking at an almost perfect, yet still artificial entity (such as a prosthetic hand with a 'weak grip' or a "strange surface") may be a reflection of hubris — the creator's arrogance and fear of the ethical consequences of creating something that equals or surpasses its creator, yet retains the cold aspect of a lifeless machine.

In *AI: When a Robot Writes a Play*, a play generated using the GPT-2 language model



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within the THEaiTRE project,[29] the artificial being appears not only as a character, but also as a generative principle of the text: approximately 90% of the resulting script originated from the model's own output, with the remaining 10% consisting of human dramaturgical interventions.[30] At the time of the project, the generated text revealed the limitations of the model in sustaining deeper dramatic motivation and coherent dramatic arcs. The Švanda Theatre production partially overcomes this limitation through staging: actors, especially Jacob Erftemeijer in the role of a character named 'The Robot,' transform the mechanically generated text into a performative situation in which he appears to learn emotions, care and love. Unlike Oriza Hirata's physical androids or Rimini Protokoll's animatronic double, here the artificial being is embodied entirely by a human actor rather than a physical machine. Nevertheless, the actor depicts the Robot stereotypically — through stylised speech and movement. The production therefore demonstrates that artificial creativity becomes theatrically meaningful only through human interpretation, embodiment and dramaturgical intervention.

29 SCHMIDTOVÁ, P. – ROSA, R. – KOŠŤÁK, D. – STUDENÍK, T., et al. *THEaiTRE: Generating Theatre Play Scripts using Artificial Intelligence*. Praha : ÚFAL – Institute of Formal and Applied Linguistics, 2022, p. 6. Available at: https://ufal.mff.cuni.cz/books/preview/2022-schmidtova_full.pdf.

30 Ibid., p. 15.

Across the different case studies discussed above, the same archetypal figure recurs in two related but distinct forms: as an agent of death, and as a vehicle for the metaphorical overcoming of death through repeatability. As already discussed, *R.U.R*'s robot uprising exemplifies this duality most explicitly: the robots' annihilation of humanity is immediately followed by the emergence of Robot Primus and Robot Helena as loving, procreating beings, marking a symbolic rebirth of life through a new world of ensouled robots. The feeling can be perceived as the symbolic death of the expectation, that it is a fully human being. In *AI: When a Robot Writes a Play* the main character gradually learns, how to feel emotions and how to love another being. The *Uncanny Valley* project by the Rimini Protokoll collective, which created a robotic reproduction of Thomas Melle, and Oriza Hirata's works, touch on the idea that a machine can be repaired indefinitely, thereby granting us some kind "immortality" —this is a metaphorical overcoming of death and rebirth in a new, immortal form. AI-generated texts that reproduce "human prejudices and stereotypes" from the data on which they were trained may be perceived as a "fundamentally negative" or "problematic" substance that mirrors undesirable aspects of human society. What we can see is that all the experiments with artificial beings strive to resemble the real human as closely as possible, yet with one decisive improvement: an artificial body that, unlike the human one, can be repaired and reproduced indefinitely. This capacity for endless repair fulfils, in metaphorical form, the same desire for immortality that has driven the historical attempts to create artificial life traced throughout this study. The metaphorical overcoming of death stands in tension with STT's definition of Death as a figure that ends life, suggesting that the artificial being can occupy both poles of the archetype at once — as that which causes death, and as that which defies it.

Conclusion

Artificial human represents a theme through which thematic algorithms and archetypes are constantly transformed and varied in 21st century performative art — not merely repeated in new historical form, but reconfigured anew with each reappearance, as outlined in the study. From the Promethean story of the creation of higher intelligence and its ethical consequences, through existential questions of human identity and vitality, to various figurative archetypes (death, villain, helper, double) — artificial life reflects human anxieties, fears, but also hopes in the context of technological progress. The figure of Death, discussed above, proves especially telling in this respect: the very case studies that cast the artificial being as an agent of annihilation also show it defying death through endless repair — two faces of the same archetype, encountered side by side rather than in separate works. All these phenomena and ideas influence creative work related to the concept and outcomes of the construction of artificial life.

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