

## SYNTHETIC PLEASURES | Script

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Director's Warning: The sp dialogue list is just a guideline to the film. Obviously all the cynicism, subtext can get lost when the words are not accompanied by the moving pictures, but I still want the net surfers to have access to the statements. Here it goes, enjoy the info overload. Stills will be added later, so the reader will be able to experience an illustrated script of SP.

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BARLOW

You know, I think the thing that sets human beings apart from other creatures is a built in dissatisfaction. There's an itch that we have that can't be scratched.

BARLOW

Our efforts to scratch it have created civilization, which is essentially the practice of trying to adapt the environment to us rather than adapting ourselves to the environment.

LANIER

We decided long ago that we were terrified by nature and that we needed to be more powerful so that we weren't threatened by nature so much ... and technology means power to us. It symbolizes potentially immortality. This is the fantasy: that somehow we can transcend our horrible condition of being human through these shiny black boxes.

FRAZIER

You become a god. You have the power to change reality. You have the power to create reality. When you look on the TV, is anything you see real? Nobody knows anymore. With some of the digital imagery, with some of the retouching, some of the 3D animation - what you see, it isn't real. And with this technology, it lets me be a god and it lets me create my reality.

VEGAS LADY ONE

We like the idea of a controlled environment, only

because you can control whether there's pollution, you can control what's in the ocean ... control what's on the sand, the beach. It's just a cleaner environment, they've had a lot of experience to change things.

BUKATMAN

In a sense, tourism begins as a kind of controlled environment. Middle class people could now travel and see the world. It used to be that going to exotic places required a certain hardiness of spirit, and now it was a more controlled experience, less random, with guides to take you. And now that's been brought home ... I mean, you don't have to go to the pyramids anymore, the pyramids can come to you.

BUKATMAN

At Epcot Center, at Disney World, or in Las Vegas, you can see reproductions of all those things, and they're ever so much nicer than what you can see in the real world.

BUKATMAN

I mean there, you can have a nice sort of dinner in a Mexican pyramid and watch the volcano explode at just the right time. And, you know, you're guaranteed of having the experience that you are expecting.

GURLAND

It seems to me that now what we have is the capacity to literally create the environment that we want to be in. That is, to make available environments that would not be normally available to most people.

GURLAND

I mean, it's an extension of something like a shopping mall, or something like the Metrodome.

GURLAND

We create a microscopic representation of nature, optimized and sanitized so that it is precisely as we want it, and it becomes exceedingly available.

GURLAND

It's all packaged for me. Our world is packaged. I just have to consume it.

GURLAND

In a sense what you've done is filtered all the hazards out of the natural experience, and just distilled those parts of the experience which are pleasant, positive, danger-free ... I guess the next step is literally to sit in a booth and not be on skis at all, not wear a parka.

GURLAND

The virtual reality issue is tremendously seductive, fascinating. You know, you can create not only an indoor environment that replicates this, but you have a kind of virtual reality where you sit yourself down in your chair and somehow or other you're strapped in ... and you enjoy the experience of skiing without ever skiing. You never mastered a technique; you just gained the experience.

BARLOW

We're trying to figure out ways to reduce the sense of separation that having bodies gives us.

BARLOW

If we start to inhabit an environment where we can't take our bodies, I think the difference between mind starts to go away and I, you know, personally, view that as being a positive development.

BARLOW

The term was originally defined to mean that thing

that you could create that would become immersive, through the use of computers, eye phones, and some kind of physical mapping system like a data glove or body suit.

BARLOW

I always tell people if they want to understand what virtual reality is, they should take a look at Las Vegas.

BARLOW

Las Vegas is a real clear case of the map having gotten so substantial that people can walk around in it and feel like they are in full, immersive, three-dimensional reality even though the whole thing is created.

WEDDING LADY

Hello, my name is Charlotte Richards, here at the Little White Wedding Chapel in Las Vegas, Nevada. I've been performing weddings for the last thirty-five years, and as I see technology advancing, I decided a drive-up wedding window would be a very up-to-date way of getting married. My next step is by television, where I will be sitting at a television monitor and the couple will be monitored, and ... I think television's great, don't you?

BUKATMAN

There's this odd blurring between the reality of marriage and the simulation of Elvis impersonators. It sort of blends in some strange way and creates some sort of hyperreal environment.

RHEINGOLD

Is this a natural thing? Well, not much about our society is natural anymore.

RHEINGOLD

The town square has been replaced the mall, and the friendly, neighborhood coffee shop has been replaced by the fast food outlet. A lot of things have contributed to the kind of rootless, alienated society we live in.

RHEINGOLD

We are in an era in which the natural world is threatened by human activity.

RHEINGOLD

We can't drink from our rivers, the air is polluted, the food chain is suffering.

RHEINGOLD

At the same time we can retreat into a synthetic world, in which we have artificial trees and artificial skies and artificial animals.

RHEINGOLD

I think the day might come when some of those worst science fiction fantasies come true. Uh, the electricity goes off and you discover you're not living in paradise, you're living in hell.

OCEANDOME COMMERCIAL V.O.

Let nature take you away

from the real world ...

experience something beyond

your wildest dreams ...

come and escape from

everyday life ...  
come and visit paradise ...  
Phoenix Resort, Seagaia,  
Oceandome in Miyazaki.

#### VEGAS LADY TWO

I'd like to be able to get the sun on a beach and all that, but not have any of the pollution, and any of the bad things that are on there. Not have to worry about the sharks, or the jellyfish, or anything like that.

#### BUKATMAN

I think there's been a long standing dream of rediscovering paradise. So that if we have urban space which has sort of separated us from nature, then our dream of technology will be about technology giving us a pristine natural environment again within the city.

#### OCEANDOME P.A. ANNOUNCER

Typhoon 7 is now approaching ...  
heavy winds and rain will hit

Miyazaki around 5 pm.

#### GURLAND

It's really a kind of manifestation of our capacity to control the world, and to control nature. Outside, we don't have that control. Nature still shows that it can do us in at any moment. Inside this encapsulated reality, we are in control.

#### GURLAND

I guess there are interesting questions that arise as a result of this. I've always thought in some ways, that the ecological problems, problems of ecology, are essentially problems of transformation ... we might in the end transform the world in such a

way that we won't be able to adapt to it ... that is, we literally won't be able to live in the world that we create.

BUKATMAN

With Imax films and computer data bases and the unbelievable ability we have to store information, in a sense we can set about cataloguing nature. And my dark nightmare of that is that once we've catalogued it, we won't need nature anymore, because after all, we can always summon up an image of these great extinct species, so that, you know, I will never miss them when they're gone. I won't even know about it.

REGIS

If we do get the ability to have complete control over the structure of matter, will we in effect become omnipotent?

REGIS

It sounds like this is true because if we can build anything that we want to build, then what is going to stop us from doing just absolutely anything at all?

REGIS

Technology doesn't mean any one thing in that it's not giving us a flawless universe, but it's allowing people to create what it is they want to create. Some people may want to live in a space station in which everything is controlled down to the last molecule.

REGIS

There'd be no bugs, rats, mice, anything ... there'd be nothing up there that you didn't want. And not everyone is going to want to do that; however, I certainly wouldn't. I tend to like planet earth with all of its imperfections.

#### SILVER SUIT CLUB KID

Life on earth has always been very boring for me. That's why I started going to the clubs, 'cause it gives me a chance to be whatever I want. And that's why I hope in the near future, there will be, like, colonies on other planets, where hopefully there will be other people like me. Where everyone is accepted no matter what they are.

#### MORE

I think we need a new Enlightenment, a new humanism or a trans-humanism, as I prefer to call it. A humanism which looks beyond current human abilities and limits, and applies reason and science, and objective truth and research to improving human's possibilities.

#### MORE

I personally think we're gonna have to wait until we have cheap space transportation so we can get off the planet and into space where there's plenty of room, and then we can start whole new societies.

#### MORE

Not having the physical bounds of the earth and the excuse of limited space, people will want to try all kinds of different social experiments.

#### BUKATMAN

In the absence of geography, since we've explored the world, now there's a construction of new geographies through the computer, or through simulation, or through digitalization, or through replacement of the body.

#### ORLAN

My work is really a fight against nature, the image of God, the inevitable, the programmed, DNA based

representation

ORLAN

And that's why I went into cosmetic surgery, not looking to enhance or rejuvenate, but to create a total change of image, even of identity.

CRAMER

The most avant-garde thing I did for Orlan was to put implants in her forehead-temple area. This is not something that's described anywhere. It's something that she and I devised. She wanted to have a prominence there that looks like the forehead of the Mona Lisa. And they look actually very interesting, and not quite anatomically like anything, but it was part of this sort of work-in-progress that she and I devised.

ORLAN

I claim that I gave my body to art, the idea

is to raise the issue of the body, its role in society and in future generations,

via genetic engineering, to mentally prepare ourselves for this problem.

CRAMER

I think a lot of the questions that she asks are very troubling. You know, what exactly is a body? How much can you change it? What is the relationship between the mind and the body? These things upset people and disturb them, and so people say 'Oh, this nonsense, she shouldn't be doing it.' But without advocating that everyone should go out and do performance art, I think that it plays an important role.

BUKATMAN

One of the issues here is turning the body into a controlled environment, and of course the ethical questions become massive. I mean, if we can control the body, does it necessarily mean that we should? In a way it becomes a moot point: if we can, we will. But where does that stop?

BUKATMAN

And of course this has found a massive popularity with adolescents, who are casting themselves as mutants who somehow need to control their own bodies through mutant-stigmata of piercings and tattooings and ways of turning the body into a sign.

MIKE REHDISH

I guess I'm a body artist because I always change, like, the way I look and the way I, like .... whatever I do to myself, I just change all the time.

MIKE REHDISH

I do get bored with how I look. Like, one day I look in the mirror, and I'm like, 'Oh, I looked like that yesterday.' So then I change. Change is an art form, I guess.

ARMAN RAY

This is my art. I live it every day. I'm a walking work of art. If you saw what I really look at, you'd agree (laughs). I'm actually completely plastic. Here's my battery pack! But as long as someone replaces the batteries once in a while, I'll be okay.

MIKE REHDISH

My favorite piercing, by the way - in case you're wondering - is my tongue. I have it pierced twice. And my most hide-able face piercing is my nose. It's right there. It's all sneaky, hide-away, but I

usually, actually wear a big silver ring in it, but I'm job hunting today.

#### R.U. SIRIUS

It's the 'cyborgization' of humanity. We're taking the machine inside us and uniting with it. And on some level, we would all like to have replaceable parts. We already do. We have artificial hearts, kidneys, and so forth that ... we're waiting for the time when those things are actually improvements over the original, and you'll be able to ... put your parts in and take your parts out at leisure. Perhaps experience being the opposite sex without making permanent, surgical changes, and so forth. Yes, love of technology, love of those hyperreal surfaces, and so forth, is a major theme of these times. It's a love/hate relationship, too.

#### ORLAN

Our skin is disappointing, but that's all we are given in life. It is unfair because one never is what one has.

One always feels odd when

looking in the mirror, and at times feel odd when looking at ourselves in the mirror, and at times this feeling grows into estrangement. By changing, one attempts to minimize these odd feelings

#### TRANSSEXUAL AMANDA LEPORE

When I was very young I started on female hormones, and that changed my body to what my mind thought it should be. I all along wanted to become a woman, and I had a boyfriend pay for my sex change operation. And I had that done and I've been happy ever since.

ARMAN RAY

It's very important for a transsexual and people of 'gender confusion' to have a way of escaping being trapped in a body. But I personally would like to remain as natural as possible ... and be gorgeous.

FRAZIER

Nothing is natural; nothing is naturally occurring. Everything deals with the chemicals in your body, and the way you are programmed from the time you are a child. Everything you saw, everything you heard programmed you just like a computer ... that programming can be undone.

ASTRO EARL

The mind is changing, through the computers, they're artificial. The mind itself is expanding, like through virtual reality through other projects ... you are experiencing new experiences. It's not, it's not drugs--

DESI MONSTER

... at all.

ASTRO EARL

It's just, like--

DESI MONSTER

... smarts.

ASTRO EARL

It's just ... in genius

DESI MONSTER

Right.

ASTRO EARL

And we ... and people like us understand that. And we--

DESI MONSTER  
--we're like, so far beyond.

ASTRO EARL  
We try to, like expand other people.

DESI MONSTER  
Right.

FRAZIER  
If I was, say, to become a woman in some sort of virtual reality, then I could perhaps bring some of that experience back with me so that I would be a more full individual, if you will. And I think the whole thing about life is to be illuminated, to see what's really going on around you, and to illuminate others as well.

MORE  
Extropians are people who want to push back limits of all kinds. So we tend to challenge not just things that other people challenge, like political limits, or the limits we can see today, but we're interested in any kind of limits that humans have traditionally accepted. One big one, of course, is human life span. We want to push back the limits to human life so we can live indefinitely long, which will mean removing, getting rid of these human bodies and becoming post-human, as we call it.

BARLOW  
I don't think there are any liberations from reality. I mean, the only liberation from reality that I'm familiar with is death. And even that, you know, it's just that we don't have any reports from the field

there.

REGIS

Well just think of how long it takes to learn what you need to in order to get by in life. It takes a process of primary school education, which is ten or twelve years, and high school, and college, then graduate school. So finally at the age of forty you have what you need to go through life. And you may have twenty years in which you ply and practice whatever it is you learned for the first forty years. And then you're dead. That's not the way to go.

ETTINGER

What we're asking people to do is to change their world-view, change their whole outlook on life. People grow up expecting they will die, their children will then grow up and they will die, and their children will grow up and die; but suppose it suddenly dawns on you that your children may not die ... and they may not.

ETTINGER

All together, there are about fifty people frozen now, I believe. Here at the cryonics institute we have eleven. And who were they? Well, as I said, one was my mother, one was my first wife.

MRS. ETTINGER

I'm very interested in immortality. I'm much older than I look, and the way I stay that way is I take some of the substances that have been discovered that prolong life.

MRS. ETTINGER

When it's time for me to go I will be all taken care of. I'm looking forward to being brought back and I don't know exactly what's going to be there. Whatever it is, I'll be glad. I mean it's better than rotten.

ETTINGER

We have, at the present time, two cats and one dog at the cryonics institute. The other organizations also have pets in suspension. And of course the prices are proportionately lower, price goes more or less according to size. A lot of people are interested in saving their dogs and cats.

VEGAS BLONDE LADY

I like cryonics because I'm dating a seventeen-year-old boy. I'm twenty-eight. And I wanna like, wait for him. (laughs) I wanna wake up when he's twenty-five.

CRYONICS CRITIC ONE

Well, I guess you could say, freezin' somebody's body, we'll be able to preserve it. But ...

CRYONICS CRITIC TWO

Wakin' 'em back up is the problem.

CRYONICS CRITIC ONE

Yeah, because when you wake somebody back up, I think that the age is gonna, you know, come after 'em harder. They gotta ...

CRYONICS CRITIC TWO

Yeah.

CRYONICS CRITIC ONE

They gotta watch out for the age difference.

CRYONICS CRITIC TWO

Like Walt Disney. Look how old he is now. Know what

I'm sayin'? And when ... if they ever do find a way to unfreeze him and bring him back to life, he's just gonna die again. 'Cause how old it is, know what I'm sayin'?

ETTINGER

Obviously, patients who have suffered considerable damage, whether by freezing or through old age or through some terminal disease or injury, will need considerable repair before they can be made young and healthy. And this means that we will need detailed control over human biology, and one way of looking at this is that all you have to do to make a person healthy or young or both is to rearrange his atoms and molecules a little bit. And there's a word that has come into use recently, referring to molecular engineering or the manipulation of matter at the atomic and molecular level, and that word is 'nanotechnology'.

REGIS

Nanotechnology is this plan for gaining complete control over the structure of matter. So if you have a person with a damaged heart, for example, you can have little robots stream through the blood stream, under computer control or under some kind of human control, and they could effect the repairs that were necessary.

REGIS

So in a sense you have a sort of, a type of omnipotence. I myself don't worry about whether this is blasphemous, or we're trying to play god. We're simply trying to gain the control that we are able to over nature and over our own selves.

R.U. SIRIUS

People who are most offended by the results of mechanistic technology, are also the ones who most

vehemently oppose biotechnology and nanotechnology, which are really the options, which are really nature-based technologies. This is, you know, we are moving from the industrial model to the biological model.

KAKU

Well there are individuals who think that cyberspace is unnatural and that computers in some sense are artificial. But you have to realize that our brain is in some sense a tremendous computer. And it may take many centuries before we have true robots that can simulate the functions of the brain, but there is a continuum.

FRAZIER

We will get to the point where we can simulate a person and their reaction so well because we'll understand the chemicals, the formulation of the body, and all that so well that maybe we will have computers that are basically people.

KAKU

The reason why we don't have mechanical butlers and mechanical maids, the reason is something we take totally for granted - pattern recognition. Computers can see, but they don't recognize, they don't understand.

MORE

I don't think robots are going to replace human beings. I think, what we're going to see is more of a merger of human beings and robots to become some kind of combined organism.

MORE

In the next few years we're going to start seeing household robots appear. And they have to be fairly sophisticated, they have to be able to move around a house without bumping into things and knocking

things over, and they have to learn their surroundings. So we're going to see a spectrum from very stupid to very smart.

ASTRO EARL

I definitely think that artificial intelligence is ... it's already starting. It's already happening.

DESI MONSTER

Yes.

ASTRO EARL

And it will take over. It definitely will take over. And I don't think that man is really ready to accept that.

MORE

The idea of transferring human consciousness from the brain to a machine of some kind puzzles many people because they tend to think of themselves, because of religious ideas, as essentially a soul. They think there's some non-physical, spiritual matter inside this human body. And so if you talk about transferring personality from the brain to a computer, they don't see how that's possible.

BAXTER

The brain is a combination (unless you're a deeply religious person and you believe in the spirit of something other than the human existence) is biology, chemistry, and electronics: combined in a very unique way.

BAXTER

The brain is a finite system of neurons. Once you figure it out, once you've got a template for it, it's just a question of runnin' the map ...

BAXTER

... piece o' cake.

FRAZIER

Obviously, in a human life there's too much information to full assimilate, but you can make a good, educated guess. That's what artificial life's all about too - a good, educated guess. So, can we download our personalities? Yeah, maybe. Uploading them is a different story, though. Downloading them - I think so, we'll get there eventually.

MORE

Right now we're not in very good control of our impulses. We tend to get angry and envious and jealous and have wars all the time. Maybe we should make some changes to our genetics and our neurochemistry, we might be able to control those things. And we're beginning to see just the bare beginnings of that in some of the chemicals people are using, like prozac is a very crude example of something which moderates personality. But I think we'll see far more sophisticated chemical control of our brains which we can choose ourselves as individuals and choose who we want to be.

R.U. SIRIUS

At the edge of our culture, people are starting to view drugs as information. You take a particular combination of chemicals to create a particular response in your brain and your nervous system. And you find that response perhaps useful in getting a different view of reality.

MIKE REHDISH

If you take ecstasy, it takes your ego away so you have a better time relating with people and understanding what people have to like, say or do ... like, even if it's just for a little while, that experience can change like, your whole life. The first time I took ecstasy I saw people in a whole different light. I saw them like, all as good. And like, everybody else was on ecstasy too, so they were all good.

SKY KID ONE

I like optical machines that sorta like tap into the visual cortex and sorta like stimulate your brain.

SKY KID ONE

When you high it's like your mind over ----- it's like it plays. What you see you exaggerate. Everything you see is exaggerated.

CARLOS

Chocolate, lot of chocolate, sugar, white, synthetic sugar, MDMA, ecstasy.

LEARY

The key to a human psychology is to know how to operate your brain and that means being able to expand consciousness and ... In the past, they, the psychiatrists and the ministers and priests that were either sane ... or you're crazy. And throughout human history, they, the controllers that wanna scare us ... there's sanity and what's real, and that's what's we're in charge of, and anything else is sinful, psychotic, evil, daft, hallucinatory ...

BUKATMAN

The mind itself becomes a controlled environment. As we move in and begin to

understand it more and map it, this terrain becomes something we can handle.

R.U. SIRIUS

We're just beginning to understand the human brain. Brain chemistry started in the late 1970's, and it's moving very quickly, in fact, the computer modeling and so forth. And there are new synthetic drugs being made. Both ... uh, psychedelic and intelligence drugs.

MIKE REHDISH

Hello!

DMT

Hi!

MIKE

We're Mike ...

DMT

and DMT!

MIKE

And we're the bartenders.

DMT

Smart drinks.

MIKE

Smart drinks-'r-us.

MIKE

We make these drinks ...

DMT

... which have vitamins, minerals, and amino acids ...

MIKE

... out of juice and fresh fruit. And we put them in cups.

DMT

Big cups.

MIKE

And we also offer ..

BOTH (DMT & MIKE)

Ginseng!

MIKE

And we .. well, we do a lot of experimenting.

DMT

Yeah.

MIKE

Fructose, choline, chromium (?) ..

DMT

... or ginkgo. This has ginkgo in it, which is a chemical that like ...

MIKE

Focuses.

DMT

... clears the mind and focuses it.

MIKE

This has choline in it and it's good if you smoke a lot of pot. It works very well.

DMT

Yeah. If you do, in fact.

MIKE

It's very good for you.

DMT

Yeah.

(Interviewer)

No alcohol?

BOTH

No alcohol.

MIKE

We have no alcohol at the bar. Alcohol is a sin. And that's our job.

DMT

That's what we do.

MIKE

And we do that at every single rave in America. Every day - day-in, day-out.

DMT

Mike and DMT, worldwide.

MIKE

Yep! Woooooooooooo!

MORE

Smart drugs - sometimes called 'nootropics' from the Greek 'noos', meaning mind - are drugs which are able to increase human intelligence, concentration, and other cognitive abilities without unpleasant side-effects.

FRAZIER

It's not getting high. Smart drugs are not about that. It's giving you an edge. And a ten percent edge when I'm sitting down at the keyboard, when I'm making animation, or when I'm writing or something: the edge that I get from that is very much worth it.

FRAZIER

Although it's not very safe to prescribe them to yourself, in some cases I do anyway. I've used myself as a pharmaceutical guinea pig quite a bit. And I've never ... with the exception of one time where I was a little nauseated by hydergine, as a matter of fact ... it's never hurt me yet.

MORE

There's a whole paradigm in medicine which says that what doctors are there to do is to cure disease, to remedy problems, fix things. They don't have any idea that medicine should be there to increase human abilities beyond the norm. Therefore, the FDA won't approve drugs for increasing human intelligence, increasing concentration or memory ... only for giving those people, people with cognitive deficits, people with senility, to try and remove those problems and bring them back to normal. But you can't get drugs approved to make you better than normal.

LEARY

The last person in the world you want giving you drugs that'll change your opinion and your mind is a government authorized scientist. It's a nightmare. So we ... glorious victory of the sixties. We took the power to change your consciousness away from the medic-- And even today with prozac, it's no longer the psychiatrists that do it, it's the general practitioners. And even the idea of self-medication ... you know, sure, get a friendly doctor ... yeah.

LEARY

Hear these people talk about prozac - I'm not pushing prozac, never had it - but it's interesting that they're saying now what we were saying about LSD in the sixties. You have to learn your own rhythm, how it affects you. It raises your self-esteem , it confuses you, so. Well it's gotta be you in charge of your brain.

FRAZIER

The people who change, the people who make the difference, are reprogrammed. You can do that through drugs. You can do that through meditation. You can do that now through virtual reality - computers are helping us with that. To assimilate another existence, to become somebody else, somewhere else, is a fantastic experience.

MALE NET USER

Hi. My name is Sarah and I'm twelve years old, and I'm blonde, five-feet-four, and really, really cute. What do you look like?

BARLOW

When you're dealing with people in this environment, you're just dealing with their words. In essence, you're just dealing with pure, abstracted mind, and the impression that you receive from that is really quite different from the one you get when it's being projected against a face and a body. I mean I talk to people on the phone, and when I meet them physically I'm not particularly surprised. I am always surprised by physical encounters with people I've previously met virtually.

BARLOW

This thing makes it possible for me to be everywhere, in a sense. I mean, I have communications with people that I've never met, all over the world. I mean, we are together in this virtual place called cyberspace, where there isn't any time and there isn't any distance. Of course, when you're in a place where there isn't any time and isn't any distance, it's kinda like being nowhere at all.

ROBERTS (answering machine)

Hi this is Steve Roberts, Nomadic Research Labs. You've reached the cellular phone aboard Behemoth, the networked recumbent bicycle. I'm not on the bike at the moment, so please leave a message, and when I'm back on the road, I'll find it and call you back. Thank you.

ROBERTS

It's allowed me to redefine home as something virtual. In the old days, before I lived on the Net, I had homes in places like Louisville, Kentucky and Columbus, Ohio, and the thought of moving and wandering involved a tremendous amount of disruption in life. And that whole issue has just disappeared, because I treat the network as home. So my physical location is irrelevant.

ROBERTS

This is the control console here. The main screen is a Macintosh, and that's where I do most of my work. All my electronic mail and writing and things like that take place there - mapping software, I use a program called Geo-Query that brings up a map of the area that I'm in.

ROBERTS

If I was ever stuck on an island someplace, the one most important thing I would want would be a computer with a 'net connection, after the basic resources of, you know, water and food of course.

BUKATMAN

I don't wanna be in a non-space. I wanna be in a public, physical space, with nice people around, having nice drinks. I just ... I think I need that kind of environment far more than the kind of disembodied, on-line, cyberspace, community.

CYBERCAFE KID

Coffee shops, they tend to draw in people who are not that familiar with computers, are not so technologically oriented.

OTAKU KID

I think it's really great that they position the terminals in, actually in cafes.

CYBERCAFE KID

Often, it's very shy people who use this, you know. Not entirely, it tends to be either very shy people, or very, very gregarious people.

OTAKU KID

People will come out of their shells a lot more, because their not forced to represent themselves in a physical form and they know that you will be forgiving to have a few more seconds to think out what they type. It's not as intimidating and not as immediate of a situation when you're really just on a text-based universe.

RHEINGOLD

Is it any more unusual to meet someone through a computer system than to go to a public place where alcohol is served and strike up a conversation with a stranger?

RHEINGOLD

Of course, people are not always what they represent themselves to be, whether that's in a bar or on a computer bulletin board system. So I think the same warnings apply, but that doesn't preclude the possibility that they could become a friend, or a lover, or even a spouse.

CYBERCAFE KID

'Netters' tend to move in together and live in the same houses. And they call the houses that they live in 'shacks', you know like, there's 'nerd shack', and ...

OTAKU KID

Nerd shacks are great. The first place I moved into in San Jose was a nerd shack and it was really a blast because there's seven people moved into this house and they'd all met each other over BBS's. So every one of them had a phone line and a computer, and whenever like, Domino's pizza or something would come by to deliver us a pizza ... We had set up all of

the machines in the living room. They were all set up. I mean, the guy thought he'd walked into like, NORAD Center or something.

KAKU

Think of the earth as a shell of computers all hooked up by internet. A living, thinking shell.

R.U. SIRIUS

What's interesting about the internet, or the so-called 'information super-highway', really is the fact that it's been a broad and lawless terrain.

R.U. SIRIUS

This was the wild west in virtual form for a period of time. It will still continue to be pretty wild, just because of its largeness and its intensity, and the amount of people and amount of information flying around in there.

RHEINGOLD

We're seeing with the increasing realism of the computer networks ... Instead of just words on a screen, we're going to see images. We're going to see three-dimensional images, the electronic world becoming more and more realistic.

RHEINGOLD

We already have billions of people around the world, sitting in their rooms, looking at little television boxes all day, passively receiving the entertainment that's fed to them. Now the people have an opportunity to look at a little box and communicate through it. I ask you, is that more alienating or is that connecting people?

#### R.U. SIRIUS

More of our social interaction, of course, takes place inside of media and inside of information space, and many of us are just as ticklish and just as playful in that area, and just as sexual in that area as we are in our physical bodies. The brain is already the primary erotic organ, you know it just sends messages to our genitals and so forth. So the way to eroticize the brain is to explore sexuality through media.

#### RHEINGOLD

It's nothing new that the human race is obsessed with sex. Therefore, when a new communication technology comes along, there will be a form of sexual expression that will come along very quickly and use that technology. I'm quite sure that very soon after the invention of the printing press, people were printing dirty books.

#### R.U. SIRIUS

People have been doing this for years through pornography. Of course, they now are gonna have all kinds of other different forms of mediated sexual intercourse, including on-line virtual reality and so forth. And I think that everybody will become much more experimental in these areas.

#### PALAC

The Internet was developed by the US military to be a command and control centre. And it could not be shut down. In the event of a nuclear attack, right, the Internet would still be standing. Well I doubt that they thought people would be talking about sex on the internet someday, but now we are. And nobody can shut us up. With On-line communication, if you put an image up on BBS within an hour there could be a thousand

duplicates of that image. Or 10,000. I mean, who knows how many people may have had access to that image. And how are you going to go back and say, 'okay, everybody turn in their picture of that dog-sex photo.'

PALAC

People have said, What's your hottest V.R. fantasy? What's your hottest virtual reality fantasy? I would really like to experience sexuality from a man's point of view, from a genetic male point of view.

PALAC

Historically, people have taken drugs to induce, you know, states of ecstasy. And then now some people say, Hey, the computer is a way to induce that state of ecstasy only, you know, without the high price of having some dealer around.

PALAC

In terms of sex and machines, I guess my Hitachi Magic Wand, you know, is my favorite toy. And beyond that, I guess maybe my Powerbook, but I don't really have sex with my Powerbook, you know, I just use it to have sex with somebody else (laughs).

GURLAND

The most sort of enticing notion of all is to be able to experience sex within the context of a virtual reality. There's no rejection. You don't have to go through the whole wooing process. Anybody, any fantasy object, from Mel Gibson to Michelle Pfeiffer, becomes available to you.

GURLAND

It is safe sex in every way. I mean, no AIDS, no HIV positive. You can just sort of sit back in the chair and strap on your helmet ... put on

your helmet, strap on your jacket, and away you go.

REGIS

In thinking about virtual reality and synthetic experience and synthetic pleasures, there's a neat little thought experiment, goes under heading of experience machine. This would be a machine which you'd attach yourself to by planting electrodes on your brain and you'd receive certain stimuli from this machine. And in fact you'd be able to receive any sort of stimuli that you desired. You'd be able to have a very vivid experience of having sex with the person of your choice, and this would be the best sex you've ever had in your life, that'd be absolutely guaranteed. You'd have this wonderful sex experience. And the question is would you want to be hooked up to this machine for the rest of your natural life, your entire life?

GURLAND

Interestingly, Oscar Wilde said there are two calamities in this life. One is that get you'd none of the things that you've dreamed for, and the other is that you get absolutely everything that you've dreamed for.

GURLAND

We would pleasure ourselves to death. Maybe too much pleasure can be boring. What makes orgasm exciting is that it's not perpetual.

PALAC

People would like to believe that technology is going to change their dull, boring sex life into this really fabulous one, and that the rules of reality don't apply in the ... you know, in the virtual world, or the technological realm. But, I don't really view technology as a replacement

for sex as we know it.

PALAC

Just take something like a kiss, which is the most fundamental little building block of an erotic experience. How can we possibly simulate that with technology? And why would we want to?

BAXTER

Say you and I been married for forty, fifty years. We are still very much in love with each other. We have a lot of experiences, we've been spending a lot of time together, but we can't have the great sex that we used to have. However, if there's a data from your brain, you can still have the intense love and affection and physical feelings that you had before, even though your sensors are broken down because it still exists in a map in your brain. So you and I can plug into something together. Sounds like the 'orgasmatron' in Barbarella, but in actuality it takes the technology. We can share that loving experiences that we had for years and years and years. We may even keep records of them and be able to share them.

BAXTER

Experiences will be bought and sold like commodities, like they are in the music business and the movie business now. You will plug the, whatever, the RX1000-D interface into the medulla oblongata of your brain, and you will experience what I experienced in 1975 on stage with the Doobie Brothers in New Orleans. You'll experience a downhill ski race.

BARLOW

People get so caught up in simulation and those aspects of V.R. that abstract you from

the world, that they lose sight of what I think is the real point, which is the use of V.R. as a place where you can achieve greater contact.

BARLOW

The other kind of V.R. that I think most people are familiar with is ... was the war in the Gulf. I mean that was a classic case of virtual reality, and sort of a classic case of what's wrong with V.R., or what can be. I mean here we managed to create something like reality, but we abstracted out of it the people that we were killing.

BARLOW

So it was like a giant video game and all we were aware of was that we were winning and that we were zapping the opponent.

BARLOW

I mean, I look for a V.R. where I can hug my daughter and have her feel it, even though she might be in Wyoming and I might be in New York. That's what I want. I want a V.R. where people who can't stand up and walk can dance with the people they love.

KAKU

Science and technology is a sword. On one hand, if it's wielded by people who are concerned about other people, the sword could cut against ignorance, poverty, disease, and liberate humanity. Or, if it is wielded by the Pentagon and by the Aerospace industries, then perhaps we will have weapons of incredible destructive power, like cruise missiles, that have pattern recognition abilities, that can recognize objects, and drop bombs on them. So I think it's a question that technology itself is neither evil nor saint-like. It's a question of who wields

the sword.

LANIER

The key to the future is whether we will have a culture that celebrates imagination, that celebrates play, that is adventurous and fun; or whether we'll have a future in which we continue to seek greater and greater power. What I do think we need is adventures that last centuries. And that's why virtual reality is so interesting to me, because it really will take centuries to figure out what it means to communicate with other people by directly creating the shared world between us without any limitation.

LEARY

The key to this new generation that nobody knows what to call ... is they're hippies with beepers, they're high-tech hippies. And then of course the real powerhouse are kids between the ages of four and ... oh, I don't know ... fourteen. And they'll be teaching. And that is more important than what I think, because they are going to be running the world in twenty years.

LANIER

Someday, there'll be a generation of kids that grows up that's really good at making up what's inside a virtual world, at making up all of the plants and buildings and things that we have no words for ... that aren't plants or buildings. And when they grow up together, they're gonna have a new way to communicate with one another.

LANIER

In essence, our generation is writing the constitution for the future of history. We're creating many things that cannot be undone,

and yet we have no choice. There's no such thing as standing still. We're too in love with technology to retreat from it, so we must do it well. And, of course, I can become stressed out and I worry. I wonder if we will succeed in doing it as well as we can, but I really believe we will. I believe that there's a certain kind of process and a tension we have with one another that makes things better, and that we will come through.