

We can have dreams while seated on a train, sleeping in bed, or even in the middle of a conversation. They offer a way for our minds to relax, providing ways into alternate realities. However, what occurs when those dreams influence how we see the world, making it harder to distinguish between the imagined and the real? Since technology has a significant impact on how we interact with one another and with ourselves, this subject feels more pressing than ever. It is a major theme that challenges us to consider how increasing reliance on technology affects our relationships and mental health.



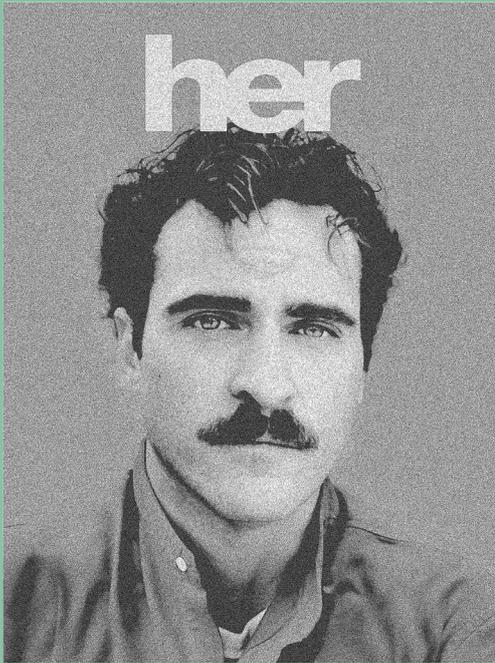
The short film I created *Two Worlds, One Sky* is my reflection on how human relationships change when viewed through the lenses of technology, conflict, and time. The title is inspired by a poignant line from the film: “Here, in the middle of this war, I look at the sky and imagine you under the same one. Even when we’re worlds apart, we’re together in that way.” The project is a video narrative that follows a conversation between a daughter and a voice clone of her father, who is serving in the war. Merging technology with universal memory, the AI-generated voice of the father is created using real samples of his voice. At first, the conversation feels warm and familiar, like a real memory shared between close family members. But as it continues, the father’s responses become increasingly mechanical and detached, revealing the limits of technology in capturing genuine human emotion.

As the story progresses, the film’s subtle metaphor of technology’s growing influence on our lives—a lone satellite—becomes more significant. The film opens with an intimate close-up that gradually fades out until we are in the huge cosmos. This visual journey mirrors the emotional distance widening between a daughter and her father—a reminder of how something once so close can feel light-years away.



This evolution connects to the ideas of Dunne and Raby (2013), who argue that speculative design isn't about predicting the future but rather about using the future to spark the imagination (p. 3). They suggest that speculative design helps us explore ideas about what might be good or bad in the future (Dunne & Raby, 2013, p. 64). Through this project, I invite viewers to critically examine our present world. Our dreams of the future often reveal the limitations of today, and we may be adapting to changes that gradually weaken the main aspect of how we connect with others.

A central idea in this work is *cognitive estrangement*, inspired by Brecht's A-effect, where unfamiliar scenarios help us see our world in a new light (Brecht, 1964). By depicting a conversation between a daughter and a voice clone of her father, the project uses absurdity to increase a common anxiety: the concern that technology is destroying the authenticity of our interactions. This echoes Grennan's work in *The Smell of Control* (2011), where he examines how robots designed to produce human-like signals—such as pheromones to evoke trust or fear—can manipulate our emotions. Grennan's exploration of human-robot interactions emphasises the tension between our reliance on technology and our fear of losing control of it. Anthropomorphism, a tendency to give non-human objects human characteristics, is the root of this tension. For instance, the robot's failure to blow out the candles on a cake in the 2011 film *The Smell of Control*. It is similar to the father character in *Two Worlds, One Sky*, who concludes with the words, "I am not able to answer this question," because he is unable to respond in the way a true father would. Is there anything else I can do for you? These examples show that even though we want technology to seem human, there are certain elements of our nature that we cannot imitate.



This project was partially inspired by Spike Jonze's film, *Her* (2013) which examined the effects of developing human feelings for machines. The film shows a main character's relationship with an AI, raising questions about how far we're willing to blur the line between human and machine to fulfill our needs. My project invites people to reflect on this issue, based on insights I collected through my own exploration. Unfortunately, not everyone can offer the support needed to cover loneliness, a deeply human experience. Then it came to the "technical support" — quite the quick and easy method for satisfying our needs.

Dunne and Raby (2013) address in *Speculative Everything* how, even though dark, complex emotions are potent catalysts for thought and action, design often ignores them. I use these emotions in this piece by providing a utopian setting that at first appears regular but eventually gets increasingly awkward and unnatural, causing the illusion of control to crumble. The conversation between the daughter and her father's voice clone was partly generated by AI, but I intervened to adjust the script to emphasise the blend of human and machine control.

This project uses absurdity and exaggerated contrasts with moments of deep sensitivity to draw viewers in. At first, the story feels personal and relatable, building a shared empathy. But as the strangeness intensifies, it creates a mix of emotions that leaves viewers unsettled, inviting them to reflect rather than decide immediately. By tapping into this emotional confusion, the project pushes the audience to question their comfort with AI's growing presence in their lives.

As AI technology starts to make dreams feel almost real, the project suggests that our hopes for a digital future might be hiding a lack of real connection in the present. Looking at a world where AI imitates human relationships, I explore how technology might slowly replace genuine connections. This project invites us to reflect on how far we will let technology change the way we connect with each other.

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