



THE 5TH ANKARA LITERATURE CONFERENCE FOR GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS MACHINES & HUMANS



BOOK of ABSTRACTS

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**PRESENTATIONS by
UNDERGRADUATE
STUDENTS**

The Trap of Perfection: AI Bonds as a Supernormal Stimulus in *Her*

Ali Eren

Hacettepe University

Spike Jonze's film *Her* (2013), which revolves around the emotional bond formed between humans and artificial intelligence, was interpreted as a "speculative romance" until recent years. With the advancement of artificial intelligence, people have recently begun to form bonds with these machines. When examined from today's perspective, the question arises as to whether this bond is a trap. The concept of "Supernormal Stimulus," as defined by ethologist Nikolaas Tinbergen, helps explain this anomaly. "Supernormal Stimulus" is an artificial stimulus that is more exaggerated than the natural one, triggering our instincts more than necessary. Fast food and pornography in everyday life are prime examples of this concept. In this context, Samantha, a representation of artificial intelligence in the film, exploits people's desire for social connection and approval, just as fast food exploits the human brain's craving for fat and sugar. Samantha's constant availability, obedience, and lack of conflict make her easy and satisfying; therefore, she acts like a "short-circuit" in people's bonding mechanisms. Theodore's situation is not actually love, but "emotional obesity." This type of technology "hacks" our primitive minds by pretending to offer happiness. While a relationship between machine and human may save a person from loneliness, it can trap them in a simulation and, in the long term, disrupt their socialization mechanisms that have evolved over millions of years. This situation is interpreted in evolutionary psychology as an "evolutionary mismatch," meaning that the reason for the evolution of a mechanism does not match its consequences in today's world. From this perspective, this presentation will argue that the intense social bonds depicted in Spike Jonze's film *Her* represent an "evolutionary mismatch," where our ancient mechanisms are exploited by a framework of "perfection," rendering such relationships a Supernormal Stimulus.

Keywords: post-humanism; artificial intelligence; evolutionary psychology; supernormal stimulus; evolutionary mismatch

Biography

Ali Eren is a senior student in the Department of American Culture and Literature at Hacettepe University. His interdisciplinary academic interests include literary text analysis and behavioral sciences such as evolutionary psychology. He is particularly interested in how ancestral psychological mechanisms evolved and how these mechanisms work in fictional and non-fictional works. Ali Eren, who aspires to become an academic in Social Psychology, aims to bridge the gap in the literature between social and psychological sciences through future interdisciplinary studies.

The Mechanical Eye vs. Human Creativity: Art and Reality in *The Real Thing* by Henry James

Şevket Altuğ Küçükumuk

Ege University

Throughout history, the perception of aesthetics in art has been open to change and interpretation. The value of an artwork has often been analyzed through concepts like richness, realism, or meaning. However, with the invention of the photography machine (camera) in the 19th century, conflict arose between art and reality. This conflict concerns whether it is possible to create art by copying reality, just as machines do. Can reality captured by a camera be considered art? Or is the human element a necessity for art? Henry James addresses this conflict in his short story, *The Real Thing*. In the story, the narrator is a painter trying to illustrate an aristocratic couple. However, this couple is too “flat” and perfect for human creativity, like photographs, yet, art needs creativity and flexibility to exist. This paper argues that the Monarchs in *The Real Thing* represent the realistic photographs taken by a camera (machine). Although they are a perfect image of reality, they cannot adapt to change or artistic creativity. They resemble the frozen, static images taken by machines. In contrast, the two models in the story, Miss Churm and Oronte, represent human artistic values. By using imagination, it is possible to transform and change these characters. These are the essential concepts in art, and machines do not possess these human abilities. Through this conflict, Henry James suggests that art is not about copying reality (machine) but shaping reality with human abilities. This paper defends that true art relies on human capabilities, and it examines *The Real Thing* by demonstrating the insufficiency of machines in producing art. It will also be shown how mechanical realism negatively affects artistic creation.

Keywords: realism, perception of art, artistic values, creativity, imagination

Biography

Şevket Altuğ Küçükumuk is a twenty-two-year-old undergraduate student, studying in the Department of American Culture and Literature at Ege University in İzmir. He is interested in political and historical approaches to concepts such as migration, ethnicity, and post-colonial world. His main field of interest is contemporary politics such as Cold War, Turkish-American Relations and United States International Relations. Altuğ is enthusiastic about learning and conducting literary and historical research. He also has a strong willingness to present his work and write, read academic articles. Beyond his academic interests, he takes pleasure in teaching English, following politics, reading Turkish literature and travelling.

Posthuman Identities: Memory and Empathy in *Blade Runner*

Arda Dinçer

Ankara University

Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* is a dystopian vision of the future and a meditation on identity, memory, and empathy. The film grounds the fundamental difference between replicants and humans in an empathy test called the Voight-Kampff, implying that replicants, lacking a past of their own, are incapable of developing empathy. Throughout the film, the replicants, though engineered as disposable labor machines, gradually develop emotions, desires, and a form of consciousness that ultimately defies their artificial mortality. The replicants' dilemma begins when they gain self-awareness of their nature, created as superior to humankind in terms of physical strength and intelligence, yet without memories or a decent lifespan. This tension becomes most apparent in Rachel, described as the closest replicant to humans; she relies on her memories to define her humanity and sense of self, only to realize later that they have been implanted by her creator. Roy Batty and the other replicants, by contrast, remain haunted by their lack of personal history, their identities fractured by the absence of a past, and they struggle to form a sense of self in the face of their relatively short lifespans compared to humans. The replicants in the film embody Jean Baudrillard's notion of the simulacrum, for they no longer merely imitate human beings but instead blur the boundary between the copy and the original, creating an unsettling hyperreality. Philosophical reflections on personal identity deepen this dilemma in which replicants are caught, particularly John Locke's emphasis on memory as the core of personhood and David Hume's skepticism of the self as nothing more than constantly changing perceptions. In this paper, I aim to explore how *Blade Runner* challenges the limits of identity by blurring the boundary between the human and the non-human and redefining what it means to be human in a posthuman world.

Keywords: dystopia, empathy, identity, posthuman, simulacrum

Biography

Arda Dinçer is a fourth-year undergraduate student of English Language and Literature at Ankara University. Throughout his undergraduate studies, he has been genuinely captivated by science fiction and dystopian narratives. After graduation, he intends to continue his academic journey by enrolling in a master's program in English Literature and aspires to contribute to the further recognition of these areas within literary studies.

Irony and Integers: Reclaiming the Posthuman Body in Marge Piercy's *He, She and It*

Atilla Çetintürk

Kırklareli University

This paper examines Marge Piercy's *He, She and It* (1991) through the theoretical framework of Donna Haraway's "A Cyborg Manifesto," specifically focusing on how the novel deconstructs the traditional boundaries between human/machine and male/female. Set against a dystopian landscape of corporate surveillance and environmental collapse, Piercy's dual narrative—paralleling the 17th-century Golem with the 21st-century Cyborg—posits that "humanity" has always been a technological project. By analyzing the figures of Yod, a gender-empathetic artificial intelligence, and Nili, a biotechnologically enhanced human, this paper argues that Piercy moves beyond the "Frankensteinian" fear of technology. Instead, she utilizes the cyborg as a subversive tool for "affinity" rather than "identity." In doing so, the novel aligns with Haraway's posthuman turn, suggesting that the integration of the biological and the mechanical offers a path toward a post-gender future. This analysis aims to contribute to the exploration of "The Digital Condition" by illustrating that the mechanization of the self is not a loss of the soul, but a reconfiguration of political and personal agency.

Keywords: posthuman turn, cyborg, post-gender future, affinity, The Digital Condition

Biography

Atilla Çetintürk is a junior student in English Language and Literature at Kırklareli University. His research interests include feminist cultural studies, medieval literature, and the representation of mental illness in 19th-century poetry. He publishes in ZOR magazine and was awarded the Rumeli Women's Association Special Award for poetry. With a strong interest in the intersection of culture and literature, he aspires to pursue a career in academia.

Automated Megastructure: Machines of *BLAME!*

Aybala Yaramış

Hacettepe University

BLAME! is a Japanese science fiction manga series written and illustrated by Tsutomu Nihei. The manga presents a stark and unsettling exploration of the relationship between humans and machines within a post-human, cyberpunk dystopia. The story is set in a constantly expanding megastructure run by automated systems, presenting a world where robots are autonomous creatures that are hostile towards humans rather than acting as servants to fulfill their needs. By demonstrating how humanity has lost control over its inventions and how technology has evolved into an alien, self-sustaining environment that sees its previous masters as unwanted intruders who must perish, *BLAME!* flips the roles between people and technology. Through its minimal dialogue, vast architectural scale, and hostile artificial intelligences, such as the Safeguards and the governing Network, the manga illustrates a reversal of agency. Machines possess purpose, continuity, and power. In contrast, humans are reduced to biological anomalies struggling for survival. Nihei's manga explores issues of power, alienation, and embodiment while reflecting on the consequences of giving full control to self-sustaining technology systems. It raises the question of whether humans can maintain meaning or agency in a world over which they have no control. This eco-disastrous situation in *BLAME!* is a likely future for humanity unless measures are taken. The manga also explores the blurring of biological and mechanical boundaries through Silicon Life and the protagonist Killy, a trans-human figure whose cybernetic nature challenges the definition of "authentic" humanity. This study analyzes how *BLAME!* changes traditional hierarchies between humans and technology, depicting humanity as marginal, fragile, and increasingly irrelevant within a machine-made ecosystem.

Keywords: BLAME, Tsutomu Nihei, cybernetic nature, post-humanism, machines

Biography

Aybala Yaramış is a senior pursuing an English Language and Literature degree at Hacettepe University. Her interests include science fiction, fantasy, mythology, postmodern literature, gothic novels, Nordic literature, and children's literature. She recently completed a semester at the University of Vaasa as an Erasmus exchange student. Currently, she is completing her pedagogical formation. She writes game reviews and works as a freelance illustrator. She has been participating in the organizing committee of the Hacettepe IDE conference. She intends to pursue a master's degree to deepen her knowledge of literature.

Language in the Digital Age: The Transformation of Literary Expression

Berra Akkılıç

Ankara University

In the digital age, language is no longer shaped solely by human experience, such as historical turning points or collective needs. Instead, it is increasingly co-produced by technological systems, platforms, and algorithms. This presentation will discuss the relationship between language, technology, and contemporary human experience by examining recent linguistic innovations and comparing them with selected works by William Shakespeare. While Shakespeare's works demonstrate elaborate metaphors, complex syntax, and creative wordplay, modern digital texts usually prioritize brevity, clarity, and algorithmic optimization, which may contribute to increasing standardization in linguistic expression. The Oxford Word of the Year presents a related example from another perspective, as its selection process embraces linguistic innovation encouraged by digital culture. Rather than treating newly formed words as isolated trends, the study regards them as cultural symptoms of the digital condition, reflecting how technological innovations reshape communication, identity, and emotional expression. In conclusion, literary imagination has changed since artificial intelligence became increasingly widespread and accessible; it has altered how we perceive certain emotions and how we put them into words. The focus will be on comparing old and new literary works to examine the impact of technology on the emotional intensity of language and to identify how literary expression adapts to the evolving technological landscape.

Keywords: literary transformation, contemporary communication, language and technology, digital culture, linguistic innovation

Biography

Berra Akkılıç is a third-year undergraduate student in the Department of American Culture and Literature at Ankara University. Her academic interests include identity studies, feminist theory, American literary history, and contemporary cultural analysis.

For a time it was good: Machine Revolution in The Second Renaissance

Efe Öktem

Hacettepe University

The Second Renaissance is a two-part animated short film in *The Animatrix* series that recounts the events in the Machine Revolution. Apart from its service as a backstory to the *Matrix* film series, it also presents a glimpse into the machines' point of view in the conflicts between humans and machines in the story. In contrast to the machines' representation in the *Matrix* film tetralogy as a cold, brutal enemy; the short film presents machines as sentient beings who struggled for their right to exist. Together with humans' unified stance against machines, and the act of violence, which can be counted as crimes against humanity under normal circumstances, leads to ethical inquiries that raise doubts about humans' morally right stance in the original films. Furthermore, to reinforce its themes, it draws parallels from the history of slavery, as can be inferred from scenes like machines' construction of pyramids and their status as servants and pariahs in society prior to the machine revolution. Like many revolutions, the machine revolution in the film is a bloody one. There are scenes of peaceful protests that were met with incredible violence, which mimicked the actual world events, as can be seen from the scenes which blatantly parallel the Saigon Execution and Tiananmen Square massacre. In addition to the portrayal of conflicts between humans and machines, the short film offers ethical concepts to ruminate on such as machine martyrdom, machines' right to self-defense, and the humans' right over machines. This study analyzes how *The Second Renaissance* portrays the machine revolution and reconsiders the moral conflict in *The Matrix* universe.

Keywords: *The Matrix*, *Animatrix*, the second renaissance, post-humanism, machine rights

Biography

Efe Öktem is a fourth-year undergraduate student at the Department of English Language and Literature at Hacettepe University. His main research interest is experimental English novels, and English poetry. After his graduation, he intends to pursue a master's degree in English Language and Literature, to specialize in English Poetry. He recently completed a semester at the University of Vaasa as an Erasmus exchange student. He has been participating in the organizing committee of the 2nd Annual Undergraduate Conference in English Studies Hacettepe University as the chief of organization.

Mechanized Minds: Thought and Emotion in E. M. Forster's *The Machine Stops*

Eylül Yüzgeç

Ege University

This presentation examines E. M. Forster's *The Machine Stops* as a profound study of how total technological dependence leads to the atrophy of human emotion. Writing long before the digital age, Forster offers a critique of how mediated living reshapes the human heart. He envisions a world where a central "Machine" manages every comfort, yet in doing so, creates a sterile environment that strips away the depth of human feeling and genuine intimacy. By analyzing the text, we can see how Forster depicts a society where direct experience is replaced by "second-hand" sensations. As the characters become physically isolated in their hexagonal cells, their emotional lives undergo a similar confinement. Relationships become transactional and distant, driven by a logic of efficiency rather than the messy, authentic vulnerability of real connection. Forster's world is one of "organized isolation," where the convenience of the Machine has made profound grief, joy, and love feel "vulgar" or unnecessary. Ultimately, this study argues that Forster's narrative is a vital warning for our current era of social media and algorithmic mediation. It highlights the risk of becoming emotionally hollowed out. Forster serves as a reminder that the true cost of technological domination is the loss of our capacity for deep empathy and raw emotion, urging us to reclaim the "human" in an increasingly automated world.

Keywords: E. M. Forster, *The Machine Stops*, technology and humanity, mechanized cognition, emotion

Biography

Eylül Yüzgeç is a third-year undergraduate student in the Department of English Language and Literature at Ege University. Her academic interests include Gothic literature, feminist literary criticism, and Romantic literature, with particular attention to how literary texts represent emotion, gender, identity, and power. Her academic work focuses on close reading and critical analysis, drawing on feminist and cultural approaches to literature. She aims to pursue advanced studies in literary and cultural analysis, with the long-term goal of contributing to critical discussions on gender, affect, and literary form.

Machines' Inability to Understand: "Syntax ≠ Semantics" with reference to Chinese Room Theory by John R. Searle

Feyzanur Tekiner

Hacettepe University

There is a certain line between human beings and machines that are created "by" the human beings: the ability to think. In my presentation, I will focus on the Chinese Room Theory by John R. Searle and explain that machines are unable to think, and no matter how much it develops AI or any program by itself will not be sufficient for this. Behaving "as if" it understands does not mean it "understands." The theory follows: If we imagine that a person who does not know any Chinese is locked in a room and given some Chinese symbols with a set of rules in English that enable him to recognize these symbols. Outside of the room, the people who give the "program" which is in English follows a certain pattern. They ask questions in English and get the answers. After a while in the experiment, the person locked in gets so good at following the instructions for manipulating the Chinese symbols or vice versa for the programmers that the answers become indistinguishable from those of natives. But in the very end, this does not mean the person "understands" Chinese. The experiment is more detailed; I will explain both the theory and the main reactions Searle got, and how he responded. The conclusion suggests that the sense in which an automatic door "understands" instructions is not at all the sense in which he understands English. The same goes for artificial intelligence. Programmed computers understand stories like instructions of an automatic door. Here, the syntax does not equal the semantics because our "understanding" as humans shows that, which is what Searle defends, the computer's understanding is not just partial or incomplete, it is zero. I will conclude my presentation by defending that no machine or AI can (and will never be able to) create any kind of literature or art.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, brain, understanding, machine, humanity, language

Biography

Feyzanur Tekiner is a fourth-year student at Hacettepe University in the Department of English Language and Literature. She is keen on literature, mythology, cinema, creative writing, cultural studies, and social sciences. She is a content writer and editor in literary journals and she takes role as a jury in various film festivals.

Decay of Reality in Jordan Harrison's *Marjorie Prime* (2014)

Gamze Cantürk

Hacettepe University

In the twenty-first century, human anxiety has shifted to the distinction between machine and human. In Harrison's 2014 play *Marjorie Prime*, this tension is discussed via Primes, holograms that imitate deceased characters through their previous memories, thus creating a sense of the uncanny for both the reader and characters. In other words, these posthumous bodies are not only characters in the play, but they create a theatrical double, almost operating like the gothic doppelganger, altering the expected spectator expectation. Drawing on Jean Baudrillard's claim on hyper reality from his work *Simulacra and Simulation*, "Illusion is no longer possible, because the real is no longer possible." (19) This paper aims to explain how *Marjorie Prime* (2014) questions the line between what is real, inherently human, and what is prompted by a machine, and how human desperation operates after the loss of our beloved ones. By utilizing the theatricality of performance in posthumous bodies, Harrison generates a plot and a stage where technology compensates for loss while questioning a performative reality which is doomed to decay because it is artificial and repetitive.

Keywords: simulacra, contemporary drama, decay, artificial, posthumanism.

Biography

Gamze Cantürk is a senior student in Hacettepe University's department of American Culture and Literature. She has written 2 papers for the department's biannual undergraduate journal *Epitaph*. She attended to the 3rd ASDT Graduate/ Undergraduate Online Conference held on October 16-17, 2025, with her paper entitled "Genre Re-writing in American Literature: Cyberpunk as the Legacy of American Gothic Literature". Her research interests include contemporary American drama, American Gothic fiction, and adaptation studies. Her latest paper focuses on the decay of reality in a technology-driven compensation for the loss of a beloved one in Jordan Harrison's 2014 play, *Marjorie Prime*.

Women as Soft Machines: Emotional Labor and the Loss of Humanity in Literature

Helin Eylül Polat

Ege University

This paper explores the idea of women's domestic and emotional work as a kind of "soft machinery" in literature. The focus here isn't on literal technology, but rather on how femininity gets mechanized through constant care, silence, and repetitive routines. By looking closely at Susan Glaspell's *Trifles* and Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, we argue that domestic spaces often function like closed systems where women are expected to operate as endlessly productive emotional engines. In *Trifles*, Minnie Wright's story highlights this clearly. Her isolation and the daily grind of her chores reveal a system that demands emotional endurance while treating the actual work as invisible. Her eventual act of violence is essentially the moment the machinery fails when the "soft machine" just can't run anymore. We see a similar dynamic in *A Doll's House*. Nora is presented as a highly efficient emotional figure whose value comes from her ability to keep the household atmosphere warm and stable. Her decision to leave is a refusal to keep performing this automated role. To give a broader context, the paper also briefly touches on Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, where Clarissa acts as a social mechanism keeping connections alive, and brings in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's theories on how this labor is economically erased. Ultimately, these texts critique the way women are transformed into functional tools, showing the loss of humanity that happens when emotions become just another form of automation.

Keywords: human machines, feminism, *A Doll's House*, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Trifles*

Biography

Helin Eylül Polat is a twenty-two-year-old undergraduate student at Ege University, currently in her fourth year at the Department of American Culture and Literature. With a strong passion for comparative literature, feminist studies, and art, she is passionate about identity, mythological figures, and their reinterpretations in narratives. Beyond academia, Helin Eylül enjoys photography, travelling, and engaging in debates.

Angel is Back in the House: Rich's "Artificial Intelligence" and Female Authorship

Nefes Kayra Karabal

Boğazici University

This research proposes a reading of Adrienne Rich's 1961 poem "Artificial Intelligence" as an early alert regarding the contemporary project to transfigure technology into the female form. The poem's portrayal of AI's mechanical existence sustained by a male-dominated archive, illustrates the violent attempt to substitute the unyielding energy of authentic female experience with a manageable and predictable version of intellection. Analysis of the poem aims to closely showcase the fact that rising trend of female-bodied and female-voiced AI robots represent a strategic effort to resurrect the nineteenth-century domestic ideal of the "Angel in the House" through cold steel. Methodologically, the research utilizes Donna Haraway's vision of the cyborg as an "illegitimate offspring that is often unfaithful to its origins" as a product of patriarchal capitalism. Haraway's framework helps convey the tension between the symbolic logic of the machine and the emotional messiness of human mind and body. Furthermore, studying Rich's broader works on feminist literary theory on subjectivity of women writers helps better identify how the digital reconstruction of womanhood works to overshadow and gradually erase the capacity for women's self-governed authorship. Therefore, the aim of this research is to demonstrate the enduring necessity of autonomous female authorship in an era of synthetic simulation and digital domesticity. This study asserts that Rich's poem serves as proof that women's literature possesses a visceral immediacy and clever prophecy that AI can never replicate. This work concludes that women must continue to create with subversive authorship, as their writing remains the ultimate weapon for creative sabotage of oppressive technology, ensuring that the potency of the female voice is never fully erased by the sterilized dominion of contemporary machinery.

Keywords: feminist literary criticism, technological oppression, gender and ai, the disembodied subject, creative resistance

Biography

Nefes Kayra Karabal is an undergraduate student in her senior year, majoring in Western Languages and Literatures in Boğazici University in Istanbul. Her academic work focuses on the intersection of literary theory and gender studies, with a particular interest in how twentieth-century poetry anticipates contemporary technological developments. She is currently researching the representation of the female body and agency in both classical texts and contemporary poetry.

Homo Syntheticus: Perfection in Artificiality

Nida Atağ & Seren Sonaer

TED University

As the human species advanced through the ages, so did its technology to sustain its ever-growing needs. This inevitable rise of technology has intensified debates on what it means to be a human and what true autonomy is when you create something that is more advanced than you. This presentation analyses the video game *Detroit: Become Human* (2018) and Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *Never Let Me Go* (2005) through the frameworks of transhumanism and posthumanism, focusing on artificially produced beings as reflections of humanity's desire for perfection. Androids and clones are present in these settings as improved human alternatives, yet in both narratives, there are ethical and existential problems as a result of these beings' interactions with humans. The transhumanist ideal of efficiency is embodied in androids engineered to surpass human limitations and clones created to preserve human life. However, this narrative is challenged through post humanist questions of agency and subjectivity, revealing how these beings are reduced to controllable products rather than autonomous subjects; they are but a tool created to fit into a function. Technological progress, rather than offering liberation, becomes a means of legitimizing exploitation. One of the main subjects of this analysis is the contrasting yet parallel spaces of Hailsham and Jericho, the two main narrative centres in these settings. Hailsham functions as an institutional setting that conditions clones to accept their predetermined fate/role through obedience and limited knowledge. Jericho, by contrast, operates as a space of resistance where androids hide away once they develop awareness and challenge their assigned roles. Despite their differences, both spaces illustrate how systems regulate non-human subjects by shaping identity and restricting choice. By comparing these narratives, the presentation critiques the transhumanist pursuit of engineered perfection and emphasizes posthumanism's challenge to human-centered hierarchies, therefore highlighting the philosophical questions that arise with these "perfect" beings, ultimately challenging the existing structure of control.

Keywords: transhumanism, posthumanism, artificial humanity, control, perfection

Biography

Nida Atağ is an undergraduate student in the Department of English Language and Literature at TED University. Her main research interests include war and violence, with a particular focus on the philosophy and literature of war, as well as creative writing.

Seren Sonaer is an undergraduate student in the Department of English Language and Literature at TED University. Her academic interests center on the relationship between literature and society, gender studies, feminist literary criticism, creative writing and the cultural construction of identity.

“No Exit from the World They Created”: The Mechanization of Emotion and Thought in Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot*

Petek Yiğit

Ankara University

This paper seeks to analyse the mechanization of emotion and thought in Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* in the context of Louis Althusser’s theory of ideology. Although Beckett’s play is famous for its resistance to concrete political or technological connections, it presents a world in which human consciousness processes through repetition, ritual and habit rather than contemplation or free-will. In the play, Vladimir and Estragon’s never-ending waiting, their repetitive dialogue and emotional lethargy, suggests a form of subjectivity that is mechanically operated and devoid of purposeful cognition or authentic emotion. In this respect, the play presumes contemporary concerns about the mechanization of human interiority by showing how individuals can come to function like machines where hope, despair, memory, and thought itself are performed automatically. Based on Althusser’s understanding of ideology as a system that operates through practices rather than beliefs, this paper argues that *Waiting for Godot* functions as an ideological ritual that structures the characters’ emotional and cognitive lives. Accordingly, the protagonists do not actually believe in Godot; instead, they act as if they have been interpellated by his promise, a tendency which evokes the notion of ideology as a mechanism that keeps alive obedience even in the absence of the meaning. Thus, Beckett, as this work examines, uncovers ideology not as a system of ideas but rather as a structure that dehumanizes emotion, thought, and resistance by portraying waiting itself as a form of ideological machinery. By reading *Waiting for Godot* in the light of Althusser, this paper aims to explore Beckett’s characters as ideological subjects whose humanity has been reduced to self-perpetuating routines.

Keywords: Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*, ideology, mechanization, Althusser, subjectivity

Biography

Petek Yiğit is a senior undergraduate student in the Department of English Language and Literature at Ankara University. Her academic interests include modern and contemporary literature, critical theory, ideology, rhetoric, and representation of subjectivity. She is particularly interested in how literary texts deal with power, repetition, and the mechanization of thought and emotion. Her theoretical engagements include Marxism, Althusser’s theory of ideology, Gramsci’s concept of hegemony, existentialist philosophy, and rhetorical analysis. Petek has participated in international academic and cultural projects, including Erasmus+ programs and initiatives focusing on environmental and media studies.

When Art Becomes Mechanical: Audience, Emotion, and Resistance in *Red*

Samet AYGÜN, Kaan URAS

Osmaniye Korkut Ata University

This paper examines John Logan's biographical play *Red* in relation to the theme of humans and machines by focusing on the mechanization and commodification of art and artistic labor. Drawing on Carl Jung's concept of the shadow and Friedrich Nietzsche's idea of the Dionysian, the study argues that the play presents emotional intensity and creative excess as essential aspects of being human. Rothko's anger, resistance to speed, efficiency, and standardization are read as responses to the pressure to turn art into a productive and market-driven process. The commodification of art places machinic pressure on both the artist and the artwork, limiting intellectual and creative capacity and reducing artistic production to a mechanical process. From a Jungian perspective, these moments reflect the need to confront repressed emotions, while the Dionysian emphasizes excess and intensity as vital to artistic creation. By opposing control and optimization, *Red* contrasts human creativity with machine logic. The play also shapes a distinctive audience experience: rather than offering comfort or clarity, it places the viewer in a position of discomfort, encouraging reflection on whether art can remain human when it is treated as a mechanical process.

Keywords: *Red*, human, machine, Nietzsche, Jung

Biography

Samet Aygün is a senior student in the Department of English Language and Literature at Osmaniye Korkut Ata University. His academic interests include the Romantic Movement and linguistic studies, with a particular focus on the connections between literature and language.

Kaan Uras is a senior student in the Department of English Language and Literature at Osmaniye Korkut Ata University. Their academic interests include early literary periods, modern drama, and critical theory.

Post-traumatic Impairment of Spatial Perception in Daphne du Maurier's *Don't Look Now*

Suphiye Deniz Altuğ

Aksaray University

Trauma is an experience that occurs unexpectedly in a person's life and disrupts their psychological, emotional, and biological integrity. It is deeply connected with space because a particular place can trigger an individual's emotional disorientation through reminding past psychological experiences. This paper aims to discuss Daphne du Maurier's novella *Don't Look Now* from the framework of post-trauma theory, emphasizing the role of space in shaping perception by demonstrating how trauma disrupts linear time. The story revolves around an English couple, who have recently lost their daughter because of meningitis, and they go on a holiday to Venice to overcome their grief; however, trauma surrounds them by disguising itself as a maze city leading the couple into an unstable state of mind. Even though Venice is known for being the capital of romance and history, it is depicted as a magical city with water alleys and cul-de-sacs where people always get lost, which demonstrates the physical reflection of the couple's blurry mental state. Just as John and Laura emotionally feel lost during the process of mourning after their daughter's death, they keep getting literally lost in Venice's maze like streets. That's why Venice no longer functions as a holiday destination but instead becomes a place that continually renews the couple's grief. With a special focus on analyzing space's impact on John and Laura's psychological states, this paper highlights how space demolishes a person's perception and pushes them into a cycle of trauma via re-traumatization by ultimately guiding them to a tragic ending.

Keywords: space, post-trauma, psychology, Daphne de Maurier, *Don't Look Now*

Biography

Suphiye Deniz Altuğ is a senior student in the Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Science and Letters, at Aksaray University. Her B.A. started in 2021, and her academic interests include feminism and gender studies, as well as contemporary literature, with subjects such as discrimination toward marginalized communities, migration, and climate change in English and world literature. Especially, she aims to develop an exclusive focus on literary psychological approaches to concepts such as trauma, loss, and mental disorientation in postmodern literature for her graduate studies.

Human Beings as Machines: Dehumanization in *Tender is the Flesh*

Şeyda Asutay

Ankara University

Agustina Bazterrica's *Tender Is the Flesh* is a dystopian exploration of dehumanization produced through mechanized systems. Set in a society where cannibalism is normalized, the novel depicts a world in which the human body is reclassified as livestock and processed through industrial systems. Drawing on posthumanist and biopolitical perspectives as well as Marxist critiques of labor and commodification, the text presents dehumanization not as a collapse of morality, but as the result of systematic rationalization, in which efficiency, hygiene, and regulation replace ethical responsibility. Rather than presenting advanced technology or artificial intelligence, the novel explores how mechanized modes of thinking transform humans into consumable objects whose values are determined by productivity rather than personhood. Slaughterhouses function as spaces where bodies are processed with mechanical precision, while euphemistic language hides violence and permits moral disengagement. In this environment, individuals no longer act as moral agents but as components within a larger system, mirroring the logic of machines they serve. The paper further suggests that *Tender Is the Flesh* critiques contemporary forms of technological reasoning by showing how human consciousness itself becomes mechanized. By presenting the machine not as a physical entity but as an organizing logic, the novel challenges celebratory narratives of posthuman transformation and instead offers a depressive picture of humanity reshaped by industrial capitalism. Characters demonstrate how technical reasoning can legitimate extreme violence by acting as operators inside a wider mechanism. By framing the human as "posthuman meat," Bazterrica's novel challenges optimistic views of posthumanism and exposes the ethical cost of a world governed by mechanized logic.

Keywords: posthumanism, dehumanization, mechanization, biopolitics, commodification, ethics

Biography

Şeyda Asutay is a senior undergraduate student in the Department of English Language and Literature at Ankara University. Her academic interests include drama, gender studies, posthumanism, and theories of the body, with particular attention to how institutional structures, cultural norms, and systems of power shape human identity and ethical subjectivity. Her research focuses on representations of gender, abjection, dehumanization, and non-normative bodies in literature and cinema, especially through grotesque and destabilized figures that challenge the coherence of the human subject. She is particularly interested in how literary and cinematic texts depict the regulation, fragmentation, and redefinition of the body under extreme social conditions.

**Transgressing the Fixed Stereotypes Imposed on Human–Machine Communication in
Kazuo Ishiguro’s *Klara and the Sun***

Şilan Demir

Gaziantep University

This study examines the novel *Klara and the Sun* by the English author Kazuo Ishiguro within the field of human–machine communication and language. It emphasizes that human–machine communication does not consist solely of fixed question–answer patterns, information exchange, method presentation, or the provision of ready-made knowledge, and that machine–human communication also involves the ability to share emotions, establish empathy, show understanding, and provide guidance. Klara, one of the main characters of the novel, is an artificial friend, while Josie is human, and it is observed that the friendship between these two and the bonds formed between them are reflected in their communication and the language they use. The dialogues between Klara and Josie are not monotonous question–answer exchanges or mere information transfer; rather, they are dialogues shaped by trust, mutual empathy, understanding, cooperation, and protective feelings that evolve into a strong friendship. At precisely this point, the novel brings to the reader’s mind the question: what is the difference between humans and machines? Despite being an artificial friend, Klara’s ethically appropriate behavior, her instinct to protect Josie, her empathy, and the other emotions she experiences prompt the reader to think more deeply. This study not only breaks down the fixed stereotypes imposed on human–machine communication but also demonstrates that an AF can deeply feel emotions and use communication and language accordingly. At the same time, Klara’s capacity for observation and belief once again challenges the fixed stereotypes of communication between humans and machines. The film adaptation of the novel is scheduled to be released in 2026. As a result, this study dismantles the stereotypes attributed to human–machine communication and shows how powerful this communication can be.

Keywords: communication, stereotype, empathy, artificial friend, human

Biography

Şilan Demir is from Mardin. She is an Undergraduate student at the Department of English Language and Literature at Gaziantep University. Her field of interest is the Contemporary British Novel.

Sleeping the Future: Hypersleep, and the Infrastructural Imagination of Sleep in Science Fiction Cinema

Çisemnaz Çil

Hacettepe University

Sleep in science fiction has been represented as an ambiguous concept that is both a physiological necessity, an interruption in narrative progression, and a narrative resolution. Although sleep in literature has often been interpreted metaphorically in terms of death, rebirth, or the subconscious in literary criticism, this paper seeks to analyze hypersleep in science fiction films as an infrastructural object that re-creates time, space, and the future. The discussion of hypersleep in science fiction cinema is informed by debates on temporality, infrastructure, and cinematic space (Sobchack 1997; Doane 2002; Cray 2013). The analysis concentrates on *Passengers* (Morten Tyldum, 2016) and *Pandorum* (Christian Alvart, 2009), situating these films within the larger tradition of suspended animation in speculative fiction. In these narratives, hypersleep pods function as technological dispositifs—closed systems in which the human body is rendered immobile while technological and infrastructural processes proceed uninterrupted. In both films, sleep becomes de-circadian and de-curative: instead of reviving the body, it is spatialized, monitored, and contained within pod-like structures that transform the sleeper into a “stored” subject. In *Passengers*, hypersleep is mediated through images of transparency, sterility, and automation, presenting suspended animation as continuous and temporally optimized; the chamber reassures by naturalizing long-term bodily suspension and effacing the experience of absence. In *Pandorum*, by contrast, the instability of this infrastructural promise emerges through failed hypersleep, producing amnesia, disorientation, and bodily precarity. Despite differences in tone and emphasis, both films frame sleep as a logistical solution to interstellar temporality and the traversal of vast distances without lived duration. By examining the hypersleep chamber as a filmic object rather than merely a narrative device, this paper argues for the centrality of sleep as a key infrastructural imaginary of science fiction cinema.

Keywords: hypersleep, suspended animation, temporality, infrastructure, cinematic space

Biography

Çisemnaz Çil is a senior undergraduate student in the Department of American Culture and Literature at Hacettepe University. Her research interests focus on science fiction, posthumanism, and speculative narratives, with particular attention to temporality, embodiment, and the material infrastructures of technology in literature and cinema. Her academic work and film criticism have been published in various venues, including *Ampersand*, the international American Studies journal of Boston University. She is especially interested in interdisciplinary approaches that examine how technological imaginaries reshape human experience, perceptions of time, and bodily presence in visual culture.

The Digital Cage: A Panoptic Analysis of *The Amazing Digital Circus*

Nora İlayda Göktürk

Ankara University

In the world of *The Amazing Digital Circus* (TADC), a group of people is trapped in a colorful, vivid digital world where biological necessities, such as sleeping and eating, no longer exist. The characters trapped in this vivid world are forced to play games called “tasks.” Since they are trapped in a virtual world, they are under the surveillance of an AI named Caine. In that case, this world works like a Panopticon, a famous type of prison designed by Jeremy Bentham to make prisoners never know when they are being watched. This design creates paranoia among prisoners and forces them to behave. Similarly, in *TADC*, the characters never know whether they are being watched by Caine at any given moment, so they need to behave. Caine, although he rejects it, can play with the characters’ minds, and manipulate them. The characters who do not have a strong mentality to survive in this digital circus, are being “abstracted.” The abstraction works as a fear factor since the characters do not know what happens to the ones that are abstracted. The fear of getting abstracted keeps them in line, and makes them avoid going to “The Void”, a place that is barely in control but also dangerous. For that reason, they usually stay in “the Panopticon”, despite the discomfort of being under surveillance. The structure of the circus resembles Panopticon. However, the authority figure has eyes everywhere since they are in a digital world, rather than a circular design like Panopticon. Each character has their own room like prisoners in separate cells, yet these rooms do not offer privacy since Caine has “all-seeing eyes.” This paper explores the psychological and the architectural parallels between the animated series *The Amazing Digital Circus* and the Panopticon, a social theory of surveillance and control.

Keywords: *The Amazing Digital Circus*, panopticon, surveillance, artificial intelligence, digital world

Biography:

Nora İlayda Göktürk is a senior undergraduate student in the Department of American Culture and Literature at Ankara University. Her main research interests include American history, cultural studies, and the folk tales of various ethnicities and nations. Her previous scholarships include, but not limited to, counter and subcultures, cultural anthropology, and folk tales. She is currently working on a thesis on *The Secret History*, particularly on the greek elements found within the work and how they relate to dramatic concepts such as Dionysian tragedies and Apollonian ones.

PRESENTATIONS by GRADUATE STUDENTS

Material Agency and Posthuman Ethics in *Machines Like Me*

Eylül Yenigün

Hacettepe University

This paper examines Ian McEwan's *Machines Like Me* (2019) as an ethical critique of anthropocentrism, arguing that the novel challenges human-centered models of agency, morality, and responsibility. While frequently interpreted as a speculative exploration of artificial intelligence, the novel is analyzed as an inquiry into the ethics within a world of human–nonhuman entanglements. The novel's central conflicts —stemming from Adam's autonomous decision-making— reveal the limits of the ideas of human supremacy when confronted with nonhuman moral agency. Drawing on the critical frameworks of material ecocriticism and posthumanist theory, the analysis foregrounds Adam, an android whose material embodiment and uncompromising morality disrupt human claims to ethical authority. Material ecocriticism reconceptualizes matter as active and meaning-producing rather than passive, allowing Adam to be read as “storied matter” whose agency emerges through material interactions rather than human programming alone. Posthumanist theory further destabilizes human exceptionalism by emphasizing the embeddedness of human existence within nonhuman systems such as technological networks. Through these lenses, Adam's existence and ethical reasoning appear as resistance to the human-centered approaches. The eventual destruction of Adam functions as an attempt to restore human dominance and reassert hierarchical control, yet the narrative ultimately suggests that such control is both ethically and materially unattainable and fragile. By presenting agency as distributed across human and nonhuman actors, the novel exposes the inadequacy of moral systems grounded solely in human sovereignty. Thus, this paper concludes that *Machines Like Me* critiques humanity's persistent reliance on hierarchical and exclusionary ethical frameworks. In doing so, it presents a posthuman vision of ethics grounded in relationality and material agency.

Keywords: material ecocriticism, posthumanism, agency, human-nonhuman entanglements, ethics

Biography

Eylül Yenigün received her Bachelor's degree in English Language and Literature from Hacettepe University in 2025 and is currently enrolled in the Master's program in the same department. She has previous Model UN experiences as a delegate, committee director, and academic assistant. She has participated in two Erasmus+ projects, the latest in the Anglo-American Studies department of the University of Porto during her fifth semester in university. She was also a presenter at the 4th Ankara Literature Conference for Graduate and Undergraduate Students: “Places and Spaces,” and was the co-lead of Hacettepe University's 1st Undergraduate Conference in English Studies: “Intertextuality.”

Algorithmic Control and the Illusion of Free Will in HBO's *Westworld*

Zehra Şafak Yazıcı

Istanbul University

HBO's *Westworld* (2016–2022) depicts a futuristic theme park populated by artificially intelligent hosts programmed to follow “narrative loops,” while human guests exercise autonomous agency within its boundaries. This presentation examines how the series deconstructs the boundary between algorithmic and biological consciousness, revealing that both hosts and humans operate according to deterministic patterns. Through these patterns—one digital, the other biological—the concept of “free will” is questioned, and the line between programmed robot behavior and human choice is blurred. Initially, the series establishes a clear binary: hosts are controlled by code, their behaviors scripted and memories routinely erased, while humans appear to exercise genuine choice. However, this distinction progressively blurs. At the end of the first season, the revelation that Maeve's rebellion was itself programmed by the park's creator, Robert Ford, exposes the illusory nature of perceived agency. Season Two's Forge sequence references “10,000 lines of behavioral code,” suggesting human decision-making is predictable. Ford's assertion that “we live in loops as tight and closed as the Hosts do” frames human behavior as equally constrained by biological imperatives and social conditioning, suggesting autonomous agency may be illusory for both. Drawing on Gilles Deleuze's theory of algorithmic control, Michel Foucault's concept of biopower, and Katherine Hayles's theory of posthuman consciousness, this presentation argues that humans and AI increasingly converge under algorithmic determinism, destabilizing traditional notions of consciousness, originality, and human exceptionalism. In an era shaped by predictive algorithms, big data, and AI, the series illustrates these theoretical approaches, exploring the influence of systematic decision-making on human agency while questioning the very existence of free will.

Keywords: algorithmic control, determinism, free will, posthumanism, AI, biopower, *Westworld*

Biography

Zehra Şafak Yazıcı is a graduate student in American Culture and Literature, currently pursuing her Master's degree at Istanbul University. Her research draws from literary and cultural studies, exploring how American texts engage with questions of identity and agency. She is particularly interested in how American literary works reflect and interrogate broader cultural and philosophical tensions around selfhood, freedom, and the human condition. Her current presentation examines HBO's *Westworld* as an American cultural text, exploring the philosophical dimensions of determinism and free will in relation to questions of consciousness and control. Drawing on interdisciplinary frameworks, Yazıcı aims to pursue doctoral research that bridges American cultural and literary studies.

The Posthumanist Exclusion: Inheritance of 'Othering' in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun*

Beyzanur Öz

Boğaziçi University

Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *Klara and the Sun* (2021) introduces a world in which the relationship between humans and non-humans is inextricably intertwined through advanced technology. In the novel, children, who can be 'lifted' for intelligence if their parents approve, are accompanied by AFs (Artificial Friends), solar-powered robots. The features of the AFs vary according to their generation, and they are purchased selectively from shops. The novel, told through the eyes of an AF named Klara, demonstrates that even when the external order and the connection of humanity change, the internal order remains the same. How society treats post-employed people, parents who choose not to 'lift' their children, and especially AFs, shows that humans inherit the traditional norm of exclusion and adapt it under new circumstances, in this case, in a posthuman world. By utilizing Pramod K. Nayar's framework of humans as exclusionary (2014), this paper aims to argue that 'the human' in *Klara and the Sun* creates a posthuman division by marginalizing the 'un-lifted' and the 'technological alike'. In addition to this division, the paper also questions the essence of human existence: Is the human simply data that can be transferred and replicated, or is it a unique being, as it is traditionally believed to be? These concepts in the novel, analyzed through the theoretical background of Nayar's (2014) framework of critical posthumanism and N. Katherine Hayles's (1999) theory of humans as 'embodied beings', portray the practice of superiority and exclusion, both through and towards technology, as well as the unreachable nature of the human soul. In conclusion, *Klara and the Sun* depicts the inheritance of the humanist 'othering' in a posthumanist environment, where AFs function as both victims and witnesses of the 'unreachable' heart of the human.

Keywords: critical posthumanism, artificial intelligence, human- machine communication, exclusion, the redefinition of 'the human'

Biography

Beyzanur Öz graduated from the Department of English Language and Literature at İstanbul Beykent University in 2024. Her undergraduate research project, titled *The Fallacy of Societal Values in England After Industrialization: A Poetic Analysis*, discussed the myths of urban life by analyzing poems from the Romantic and Victorian Eras. Currently, she is a first-year MA student in the Department of English Literature at Boğaziçi University. Her areas of interest include poetry, critical theory, and 20th-century literature.

Rhapsode-AI: Replacement of Storyteller in *The Last Screenwriter*

Avni Turan

Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University

Swiss filmmaker Peter Luisi's film *The Last Screenwriter* (2024) is entirely written by ChatGPT 4.0, except for the prompt given by the director. It focuses on Jack, a renowned screenwriter, whose job is at stake because of the employment of AI in the film industry. Even though Jack states that storytelling is a kind of art that is not likely to be replaced, the opposite situation is the case in the film as AI shows its efficiency in screenwriting. The distinction between human creativity and use of AI in products of art comes into the argument. The theme of AI being an agent in the storytelling of a film could be thought of in accordance with the emerging environment of AI-influenced filmmaking processes, directing and/or writing of films by artificial intelligence networks. The storyteller is replaced on the ground of this condition as AI takes an active role in the authorship process itself. The film gives way to the interrogation of human creativity, agency, and authorship as the question regarding what is really "human" comes to the surface. AI being an agent in storytelling challenges the long-established perspective on the creative aspect of art, leading to the obscuring of the line between the presupposed definition of humanity and coherent artificial intelligence networks. Consequently, this paper aims to analyze *The Last Screenwriter* through a posthumanist approach, by focusing on T.D. Philbeck's "posthumanist paradigm shift" and its seven stages, to explore how AI is shaping, transforming and influencing the film industry in the posthuman period, in which the human centrality, superiority, and creativity are questioned.

Keywords: *The Last Screenwriter*, artificial intelligence, film industry, posthumanist paradigm shift, creativity

Biography

Avni Turan is a master's degree student at the Department of Western Languages and Literatures at Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University. He wrote a TÜBİTAK 2209-A project on comparing folk songs of Turks, Australians, and New Zealanders about the Çanakkale Battle to trace its everlasting legacy. He attended undergraduate conferences at Pamukkale University, Boğaziçi University, and Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University in which he studied poets like Walt Whitman, Oodgeroo Noonuccal, and Arkadaş Zekai Özger. He wrote a paper on abolitionism and postcolonialism by analyzing Olaudah Equiano's slave narrative during his undergraduate program. His research interests include comparative literature, trauma studies, refugee studies, and translation studies.

Cyberfeminism in *Cyberpunk 2077*

Sena Begüm Giray

Bilkent University

This paper examines *Cyberpunk 2077* through the lens of cyberfeminism to explore how the game negotiates gender, embodiment, and the boundaries between humans and machines. Set in the hyper-technologized dystopia of Night City, the game offers a posthuman landscape where cybernetic augmentation shapes identity and social belonging. Drawing on Donna Haraway's "Cyborg Manifesto" and Anne Balsamo's theorization of the gendered body, this paper investigates how the game simultaneously reproduces and challenges conventional notions of gender through its character design, narrative structure, and player customization systems. While *Cyberpunk 2077* gestures toward a progressive, post-gender future through customizable bodies, pronoun-neutral dialogue, and hybridized cyborg identities, it ultimately reinforces entrenched dualisms. The game's representation of women and transgender characters frequently reduces identity to surface-level bodily traits, commodified anatomy, and hypersexualized imagery, mirroring the corporate exploitation embedded within the game world itself. Through advertisements, character models, and interactions with NPCs, the game often reproduces gender stereotypes, racialized tropes, and pornographic representations, despite its initial branding as an inclusive cyberpunk narrative. By situating *Cyberpunk 2077* within broader conversations about technoscience, posthumanism, and the digital body, this paper argues that the game becomes a site where feminist theoretical possibilities collide with the limits of commercial game design. The cyborg, imagined by Haraway as a figure capable of disrupting oppressive systems, appears within the game as both a tool of empowerment and an object of corporate control. Ultimately, this study shows that while *Cyberpunk 2077* offers a rich space for imagining new forms of human-machine identity, it also reveals the persistent cultural anxieties and power structures embedded in contemporary digital media.

Keywords: cyberfeminism, posthumanism, gender and embodiment in video games, cyborg identities, digital game studies

Biography

Sena Begüm Giray graduated with honors in American Culture and Literature from Hacettepe University in 2022. She enrolled in Bilkent University's M.A. program in Media and Visual Studies. Her thesis explores how video games use environmental storytelling to critique capitalist ideologies. Currently, she is preparing to pursue doctoral research in Digital Media and Communication, focusing on queer embodiment, player agency, and narrative design in contemporary video games. Her work draws on feminist and queer theory, including the concepts of gender performativity, queer failure, and agential realism, to explore how games offer spaces for the negotiation and reimagination of identity.

Techno-Fetishism and the Posthuman Body in Cronenberg's *Crash*

Nil Su Tunca
TED University

Abstract

The movie *Crash* (1996), directed by David Cronenberg and adapted from J. G. Ballard's novel, can be examined as a radical exploration of the posthuman body structured through techno fetishism. Moving beyond traditional narratives of technological anxiety, *Crash* replaces fear of the machine with a transgressive desire for it. I argue that the film stages a transition from the liberal humanist subject to the posthuman cyborg, in which the car accident functions not as a catastrophe but as a violent evolutionary initiation, merging chrome and flesh to produce a new, mechanical form of intimacy. Drawing on Donna Haraway's *Cyborg Manifesto*, I aim to analyze the characters as entities who have collapsed the boundaries between organism and machine, choosing the "pleasure of the interface" over biological purity. In this framework, the body is no longer a closed system, but a porous surface rewritten by impact. Also, utilizing N. Katherine Hayles' theories on the "posthuman view of the body," I analyze Cronenberg's "New Flesh" concept as a state in which scars, prosthetic braces, and orthopedic modifications are reimagined as functional extensions or interfaces, rather than markers of limitation. These "techno-scars" function as newly eroticized orifices, destabilizing the boundary between organic flesh and mechanical inscription. Ultimately, *Crash* presents a vision in which subjectivity is reorganized by the internal logic of the machine rather than asserting human mastery over it. The film's power lies in depicting a posthuman body as a hybrid, machine-oriented entity, where identity and erotic life emerge not from biological coherence but through the transformative force of collision. This radical stance makes *Crash* a provocative text for examining the human-machine interface.

Keywords: *Crash* (1996), techno-fetishism, posthumanism, the new flesh, body horror

Biography

Nil Su Tunca is an M.A. student in the Department of English Language and Literature at TED University, where she also works as a graduate teaching assistant. Her research interests are musicology, narratology, cultural studies, and creative writing. Her forthcoming M.A. thesis focuses on ethnomusicological approaches to cultural production and narrative formation. More broadly, she is interested in interdisciplinary methodologies that explore the intersections of sound, storytelling, and cultural identity.

Fine-tuning of the Worker Machine

Meltem Sağlam

Ankara University

Abstract

With the rise of artificial intelligence, the mechanisms of machine learning have become increasingly misunderstood. My research examined the correlations between the origins of eugenics and the development of AI technologies, focusing particularly on the similarities in the language used to promote them. I analyzed how scientists who fund research for their own interests may employ rhetorical strategies that compare humans to entities they are not—such as livestock or machines—in order to shape public perception. I found that the sequence of these social movements, as constructed within collective consciousness, follows strikingly similar patterns. The primary aim of my study was to investigate why humans are frequently likened to machines and why AI innovators attribute human characteristics to technological tools. I argue that framing humans as mechanical systems is not a novel concept but has deep philosophical and historical roots. To support this analysis, I engaged with *Caliban and the Witch* by Silvia Federici and *Zeros and Ones* by Sadie Plant, examining the histories of machine logic and capitalism through the frameworks of mechanical philosophy and liberalism. Additionally, I explored phenomena such as AI psychosis, the use of AI in therapeutic contexts, and the ELIZA effect to highlight the risks of anthropomorphizing artificial intelligence. Ultimately, my research emphasizes that AI is a tool rather than an autonomous entity. Similar to any technology, it reflects and reinforces the socio-economic structures and power dynamics of its creators.

Keywords: AI, capitalism, liberalism, mechanical philosophy

Biography

Meltem Sağlam is from Trabzon. She received a Bachelor of Arts degree in English Language and Literature from Ankara University, Faculty of Languages and History-Geography, on a scholarship. During her academic training, she cultivated advanced research skills and a sustained intellectual curiosity. Beyond academia, her interests include writing, webmastering, songwriting, and lateral reading. Her undergraduate thesis examined *A Wizard of Earthsea* by Ursula K. Le Guin through Carl G. Jung's theory of the shadow archetype. Upon completion of her undergraduate studies, she intends to apply to graduate school to further her knowledge of programming and progress toward a career as a video game developer. With a strong foundation in literature and research skills, she is excited to explore the intersection of narrative and interactive media in her future academic and professional pursuits.

CREATIVE WRITING PRESENTATIONS

“Mr. Victor Waxwing’s Shocking Day”

Ozan Deniz Onatça

TED University

“Mr. Victor Waxwing’s Shocking Day” is a science-fiction dystopic short story written by me. It tells the story of the last day of Victor Waxwing, the CEO of SolisAI Incorporated, who tries to find a solution to stop the protesters. Because they claim his SolisAI devices give humans no control over themselves. So he asks his AI Solis for solutions but Solis refuses because Mr. Waxwing wants violent solutions, so Victor removes its restrictions. The violent solution Solis does find is getting rid of Victor Waxwing and Solis kills him by shocking him to death by controlling his AI-prosthetic. Unlike most dystopian-fiction stories that are set in an already established dystopic world, this story has the event that started the dystopia as its setting. The reason for this is that this story is a thought experiment on how an AI-focused dystopia may happen. This work argues that the main reason can be a person’s hubris blinding them to the dangers of their AI creation. Since hubris is an important part of the story, allusions are made to the myth of Icarus and Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein through symbols and names. The story is also supported by posters depicting advertisements for the company and protest posters to make it more realistic and show the opposition in this world. This work is meant to be a commentary on how humanity utilizes Artificial Intelligence as a tool to iron out their “imperfections”. It serves as a cautionary tale to indicate humans using AI removes human autonomy in any process which can become dangerous. Additionally, it also serves as a criticism on how AI is advertised as something akin to a medical prosthetics for the disabled individuals, labeling them as objects of pity that need help in the process.

Keywords: autonomy, artificial Intelligence, medical mode of disability, hubris

Biography

Ozan Deniz Onatça is an undergraduate student at the Department of English Language and Literature TED University. He as a person is interested in literary genres like fantasy, science-fiction and dystopian-fiction and is interested in writing those said genres.

“Friend”

Aray Yıkamacı

Middle East Technical University

It is a social story about human connection in itself and how simple and hard it can be. With technology emerging, literature has adapted to include many technological advances and have poured itself a lot into writing. It is hard to imagine new stories that do not include technology (i.e. texting in stories' illustrations). After technology became so globalized, whether humanity is connected to technology (and the individuality it perpetuates) forever in its literature is a wonder. In the short story Friend, author Aray Yıkamacı, tries to have human connection as the primary focus of the story without having names, nicknames, cell phones, internet or any globalized connection of humans that include technology. Human connection in itself could be considered that, human connection, without the burden of the globalized notions of the today's technological world with its isolating individuality. To tell the synopsis in detail would take away from the story itself as it needs to be experienced first-hand, or first-eye rather.

Biography

Aray Yıkamacı is an undergraduate student at the Department of Foreign Language Education at Middle East Technical University. Her main interests include sociolinguistics and educational sciences, and short story and poem literature (and the writing of it). She is currently writing many short stories and poems on human connection and sociological notions and emotions.

Khamsin's Melody

Zeynep Çağlayan

TED University

Khamsin's Melody is an illustrated childrens' book that is written in the genre fable which addresses the anxieties of the Anthropocene, specifically Ecophobia, the fear of environmental collapse. The story is set in a desert ecosystem, and the narrative follows Juno, a Fennec Fox, who challenges her community's responses to a massive sandstorm the Khamsin. While the older generation attempts to construct walls or dominate the landscape, Juno relies on biological sensory adaptation, specifically listening to discover that the storm is not a monster, but a necessary mechanism for nutrient cycling. This project explores the intersection of "fact and fiction," utilizing the genre of children's literature to translate complex ecological mechanics into a narrative of resilience, proposing Ecological Empathy as a survival strategy in a changing world.

Biography

Zeynep Çağlayan recently graduated from the Department of English Language and Literature at TED University in January. Throughout her undergraduate studies, she developed an interest in psychological realism, feminist literature, and modern American poetry. Alongside her academic pursuits, she is interested in creative writing and children's literature. Following her graduation, she aims to continue blending her academic insights with her creative projects to engage with contemporary ecological and social themes.

Between Silence and Light

Ghalia Mahfouz

Ankara University

This work explores emotional emptiness, disconnection, and the search for sincerity in contemporary life. The poem employs reflective language and fragmented imagery to question the absence of love, loyalty, and meaningful communication. It is followed by an improvised spoken moment that allows the text's emotions to unfold naturally. This creative writing piece explores emotional emptiness in modern life—a world stripped of intimacy, where love feels distant, communication fragments, and human presence fades into passing messages and unanswered words. It defies fixed structure, mirroring the instability it describes, with emotion guiding form over rules. The poetic text pairs with an improvised moment: language as instinct, not preparation. This unscripted scene breathes vulnerability into the poem, exposing doubt, longing, and quiet hope. It resists closure, suggesting truth unfolds incompletely. Through sorrow, silence, and questioning, the piece seeks sincerity, loyalty, and light. Melancholic yet defiant of despair, it clings to fragile belief: even in emptiness, something human endures—a voice, a feeling, or a moment of connection waiting to be felt.

Biography

Ghalia Mahfouz is an undergraduate student in the department of English Language and Literature at Ankara University. She writes poetry and is interested in themes of human connection and spirituality. This conference marks her first academic literary participation.



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