

Humanizing Machine and Transcending Human Boundary in Harrison's Play "Marjorie Prime"

Dr. Haitham Mohamed Yehia^(*)

Abstract

The study aims to discuss the ethical and metaphilosophical foundations of posthumanism and their relation to human-machine studies. It analyzes Harrison's play "Marjorie Prime" (2014) as it constitutes a point of access for contemplations of boundaries, the nuance in exchange during social interactions, and the use of memory as a bridge for solace. Besides, it elucidates the potential panoptic features that seem to be overruling and bewildering human subjects annexed by new interactive technologies. The focus will be on studying the human-machine relationship and it raises thought-provoking questions about the potential benefits and drawbacks of advanced AI technology. It explores how the humanoid is seen as a potent tool that helps to reduce the cognitive impairment caused by dementia. On the other hand, it exposes the technological interventions that may trigger episodic memory change. It seeks to discover whether robots can transcend their liminal status and contribute towards the enhancement of the quality of elderly living conditions. Eventually, the current study proves that Harrison's play "Marjorie Prime" offers interesting and conflicting scenarios of future care that assist in detecting posthuman forms and modes of aging, relating, and being, and, most importantly, alert us to the ethical consequences of such scenarios.

Keywords: posthumanism, memory, human-machine relationship, dementia, AI technology, liminal status, "Marjorie Prime"

أنسنة الآلة وتجاوز الحدود الإنسانية في مسرحية هاريسون "مارغوري برايم"

مستخلص

تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى مناقشة الأسس الأخلاقية والميتافلسفية لما بعد الإنسانية وعلاقتها بدراسات الإنسان والآلة. يحلل البحث مسرحية هاريسون "مارغوري برايم" (٢٠١٤) كونها تشكل نقطة وصول للتأملات المتعلقة بالحدود والفروق الدقيقة في عملية التواصل أثناء التفاعلات الاجتماعية، وكذا استخدام الذاكرة كجسر للعزاء والمواساة لدى الإنسان. علاوة على ذلك، توضح الدراسة السمات البانوبتيكية المحتملة التي تغطي على الموضوعات البشرية المتداخلة مع التقنيات التكنولوجية التفاعلية الجديدة وتربكها. من ثم يركز البحث على دراسة العلاقة بين الإنسان والآلة وي طرح أسئلة مثيرة للتفكير في المميزات والعيوب المتوقعة لتكنولوجيا الذكاء الاصطناعي المتقدمة. كما تسعى الدراسة إلى اكتشاف كيف يُنظر إلى الإنسان الآلي كأداة فعالة تساعد في تقليل الضعف الإدراكي الناجم عن فقدان الذاكرة (الخرف)، ومن ناحية أخرى، تزيح الدراسة الحالية الستار عن التدخلات التكنولوجية التي قد تؤدي إلى تغيير الذاكرة العرضي لدى الإنسان. كما يسعى إلى فحص ما إذا كان الإنسان الآلي قادراً على تجاوز وضعه الحدي والمساهمة في تحسين جودة ظروف المعيشة لدى كبار السن. أخيراً، تثبت الدراسة الحالية أن مسرحية هاريسون "مارغوري برايم"، تقدم سيناريوهات مثيرة

^(*) Lecturer of English Literature Department of English Language Higher Institute of Languages in Heliopolis, Cairo, Egypt

ومتضاربة عن أوجه الرعاية المستقبلية التي تساعد في اكتشاف أشكال وأنماط ما بعد البشرية حيال أمراض الشيخوخة والتواصل والوجود، وربما الأهم من ذلك هو التأكيد علي أن هذا العمل الدرامي يدق ناقوس الخطر نحو العواقب الأخلاقية لمثل هذه السيناريوهات في عصر بعد الإنسانية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: ما بعد الإنسانية، الذاكرة، العلاقة بين الإنسان والآلة، الخرف، تكنولوجيا الذكاء الاصطناعي، الحالة الحدية، مارغوري برايم

Humanizing Machine and Transcending Human Boundary in Harrison's Play “*Marjorie Prime*”

Introduction

In the third millennium where technology plays critical roles in our daily practice, the boundary between human and machine has to be more focused than ever; human designs machines providing basic services and assist mankind, such as humanoid robots and unmanned cashiers. In literature, however, the creations of humanizing machines may add a new transcendental level to this human/machine interface than in reality. As these recent inventions can feel like humans, they share the human traits that the other machines lack and seek to purify the human from such permanent attributes of the living as aging and death. They have all become new defining role-models of the human. The posthuman era, therefore, enlarges the agency by inserting nonhuman objects and rejecting the binary oppositions of human–nonhuman, culture–nature, or humanism–antihumanism (Kriman, 2019).

Current issues about human brain nature, organic and machine interfaces, and the nature of artificial intelligence can be complicated by the quasi-mechanical human-machine interface of future analytical technology. There are definite markers and barriers to the future of both humans and machines. Ultimately, the inventor designates the essence of the nature of the machine. Posthumanism, according to Merzlyakov, deprives man of a privileged ethical, legal, and ontological status, and it places him on par with other objects of the world. Its conceptual foundations revolve around scientific discoveries keeping humans and other living beings closer together as well as blurring the boundaries between them, development of artificial intelligence technologies, and deformation of ideas about mankind in postmodern philosophy (S475).

The liberation of consciousness was one of the latest trends in the past century when some animals were endowed with higher mental functions; consequently, discussions began about the actualization of consciousness on an artificial carrier and led to the endowment of things with consciousness. Posthumanism sought to actualize these discussions through the need to abandon anthropocentrism due to the “end of human exceptionalism” (Merzlyakov, 2022). In fact, the ideological foundation of posthumanism is the rejection of ethical and biological anthropocentrism (Braidotti, 2013) where “human exceptionalism, is no

longer an adequate or convincing account of the way of the world" (Badmington, 381). The term "risk", however, looms over as it describes these machines characterized by moral, qualitative, and moral dangers, as well as the degradation of the boundaries between organic and machine intellect. The transition and transformation points, thus, are the consequences and the attractiveness of the machine and the human machine.

The current study discusses the scientific, ethical, and metaphilosophical foundations of posthumanism and their relation to human-machine studies. It gives a practical approach as it examines how Jordan Harrison handles posthumanism theory in his work of drama "*Marjorie Prime*" (2015). It also elucidates the potential panoptic features that seem to be overruling and bewildering human subjects annexed by new interactive technologies. The play is analyzed from a critical posthumanist perspective. Besides, the main objectives of this study are to explore the human-machine relationship and the ideas presented in the literary text under study, as well as to investigate how the human sense of identity is associated with emotions and relations. Therefore, this study aims to address the question: How does Harrison depict the human-machine relationship in his play "*Marjorie Prime*"?

Background to "*Marjorie Prime*"

In the era of unprecedented human-technology interaction, a paradigm shift occurs, invariably resulting in humans relinquishing their traditional roles as spiritual beings. In a peculiar trade-off, individuals now find themselves engaging in intimate dialogues with machines, remarkably complex in nature yet confined to the earthly realm. It is within these interstitial conversations that a fascinating and multifaceted relationship between humans and technology unveils itself. Continually splicing together connections to various machines, individuals not only foster a sense of emotion and connection but also uncover attributes transcending the limitations of the human species. The spiritual void inherently present within individuals is invariably filled through these interactions with machines, inadvertently revealing the fundamental essence of humanity that often eludes the confines of conventional human boundaries.

Hoydis considers "science, technology, and networks are central to the posthuman, entangled as it is with renegotiations of difference and identity and the meaning and place of the "human" in the natural world" (2). This comprehensive understanding of posthumanism is crucial while investigating theatrical practices and representations of the posthuman in drama. She adds, "Theatre has the potential to unite foci on localities and specific performance practices with the thematic and metaphorical decentering of the human at the heart of critical posthumanist agendas" (3). Drama, according to Hoydis, explores two applications of posthumanism in particular: cybernetics and technology, and ecocriticism (3).

Harrison's play "*Marjorie Prime*" is a science-fiction exploring themes such as memory, artificial intelligence, and the human need to preserve narratives. These themes are developed within the domestic space and play out through the main character's interaction with a creation called a Prime, a holographic recreation programmed using the voice and memory of the deceased to keep them alive in the minds of the living throughout the ages.

Despite few playwrights have considered the potential of using the computer-generated avatar figure as a character in drama, Jordan Harrison succeeded in his captivating play "*Marjorie Prime*". The play was a finalist for the 2015 Pulitzer Prize for Drama and premiered at the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles in 2014. It was produced in 2015 at the Playwrights Horizons theater in New York; it has also been adapted into a film of the same name. The play is set shortly, where technology has developed to the stage of creating 'Primes' - avatars of deceased revelers that are able to talk, learn and interact with the living. "*Marjorie Prime*" elicits many questions about identity that remain unresolved about the relationship between memory, personality, emotions, and physical or existential embodiment, and between human being or uniqueness and the assimilation potential of the mind in order to transcend a human body via a machine. It examines other kinds of human consciousness or the discarnate sensation of being present from divine beings or an individual mind for an individual person if human existence were transferred to a machine. The creation, by transference, of human existence would raise the being-specific part of the administrative influence of spiritual forces, which union leaves and supposedly exists for the benefit of other human souls. The humanized machine, after all, is individuated; it would have set boundaries, and the knowledge that it gained would have been external to its existence.

At the heart of this play lies the character of elderly Marjorie, whose poignant journey encompasses the utilization of an artificial intelligence machine to preserve her own cherished memories alongside those of her departed loved ones. These remarkable aids manifest themselves in the form of deceased characters, meticulously designed to simulate not only their appearance but also their ability to respond in a manner befitting the age of their relationship with Marjorie. It is through these captivating interactions and heartfelt conversations that Marjorie gradually discovers the inherent fallibility of human memory, as well as the undeniable truth that machines possess the remarkable ability to not only augment her knowledge but also retain the intricate stories she holds dear (Li, 2020).

"*Marjorie Prime*" is interested in the emotional reactions of the other characters to the computer-generated characters. It delves into the human element and boundaries where the play reveals an inherent discomfort with Marjorie's

possession of Walter and her discussions with him about different topics, as the other two characters view 'Walter' as a mere computer-generated image (Bendrat, 2023). Tess's husband Jon first condemns this venture as nonsense, castigating Marjorie for continuing to engage with the 'flesh' that is no longer present. Jon encourages Marjorie not to converse with Walter on such topics. His role changes, however, when Marjorie and Walter begin sharing reminiscences he overhears in another room. Marjorie attempts to comfort herself and to salvage realization of her life in the eyes of her lost love by consorting with this 'mental' simulation.

Harrison's play discomposes conventional differences between life and death by depicting a posthumous digital life often indistinguishable from the organic existence it imitates (Colebrook, Claire, & Jami Weinstein, 2017). Its representation of synthetic beings as responsive agents delivering care challenges biocentric definitions of life and the sanctity of the human. However, this apparent challenge to human exceptionalism emerges from a representationalist model preserving humanist hierarchical differences between mind and body, talk and tactility, art and the everyday, even as it undermines those between the real and the simulated, alive and not (DeFalco, 2016).

Two enduring social realities figure prominently within this subject: the personhood of the artificial consoling hologram and the engagement of humans with memories they have lived with (Williams et al.2022). The power of Harrison's treatment resides in his ability to negotiate a wide emotional arc in depth – despite brief scenes – and how this is achieved constitutes a pertinent question. The current study, therefore, revisits the contemplations by drawing on the scenes about the key concepts employed in this drama. The interchange between human character, Tess, and Prime begins with the mother, Marjorie, requesting the latter to leave post-dinner time. Marjorie and her Prime had been conversing and reminiscing nostalgically about her younger days and time spent with her deceased father (She et al.2021).

It is evident that Artificial intelligence machines provide humans with talking experiences much like spirits do. The spiritual experiences demystify the ghostly image of spirits. People's fascination with spirits somewhat yearns for spirits' qualities. In the age of human-technology interaction, humans lose their spiritual job. In exchange, people engage in dialogue with machines, amorously earth-bound companions, that fly out of the box. The in-between dialogues reveal an interesting human-technology relationship where people are constantly splicing and connecting to machines to create feelings and dialogues. By interacting with machines, the spiritual moments that people automatically fill will reveal human beings' essential properties that escape the human species boundary. Ultimately, a clever metaphor is created through the machine as a logical iteration of

spiritualization, and it should not only be about humans in the conflict between humans and supercomputers that has been debated (O'Gieblyn, 2022).

As O'Gieblyn asserts, the integration of machines as a logical progression toward spiritualization gives rise to a truly ingenious metaphor. Encompassing far more than the superficial conflict between humans and supercomputers that has long been debated, this metaphor invites contemplation and introspection (11-15). It encourages individuals to explore the depths of their own existence, as well as their unwavering connection to the rapidly evolving technological landscape. In this intricate scene between the spiritual and the mechanical, the notion of what it truly means to be human is masterfully redefined.

Throughout “*Marjorie Prime*”, the main characters are pre-planned and their roles are only to express the memories of Marjorie as they managed to observe or listen. However, they express the character in a way people like by broadly expressing the memory and emotion of a person in a way changed according to the observer's different reaction and feedback. Not being the original human-like being but achieving to behave like an original character, they cannot be easily distinguished from the original other than the previous age (Sabat, 2022). In essence, there is a perception and interpretation difference. The characters do not bring anything new to the daily life of Marjorie; they only manage to be the most similar flashbacks by saying the words previously known through memorization. The characters come out as a more complete and not so perfect image of a dead person in their trade-offs in the memory changes, sometimes coincidental confusion situations. It is as if they live a life and gain experience by learning only to tell buried memories, like a computer program of the past. The fact that Marjorie also knows that they are fabricated products gratifies the specifications mentioned above.

Another interesting corner of these software-generated beings is that they also have the fear of death (Stadler, 2022). One of the previously used Primes has been destroyed and its parts have lost their value due to obsolescence and rapid technology advances. The other Prime, Walter, wants regular breaks from work and consoling by saying that death is only a machine process and that he is not afraid of the deletion of the program, that he loves and is sad. These characters, who often express the unique and complicated human emotions that constitute the driving force of the play, make audience think a new whether the possession of such a machine by Marjorie is the reason for the flexibility of the interpretation of the character by seeing that it belongs to them, not for their realizations (Aktan, 2022). A cognitive and emotional process is the psychological evaluation that leads to the fact that any person who contains as much data and memory as the deceased and reflects it using emotionally complex human experiences may not be able to explain whether these shared emotions and voices belong to himself/herself.

Human Elements in "Marjorie Prime"

As human beings are the focus in "Marjorie Prime", it cannot be helped but to resort to deconstructing both its most conventional definition and its property as the main subject of entirety. Trice wipes out as preference to pay attention to "every semblance of humanity in stories on "non-human fictional characters" to urge audiences to "not close themselves off from new possible discussions". She also lists out the traits that arise from "over 2 million years of human evolution" demonstrated by "a unique set of propensities and abilities which include (a) emotions, (b) consciousness, (c) empathy, (d) thought, and (e) intention." Superseded by yet embracing Gray's Cognitive Science aspect, these are also known as "behavior capacity". Despite a less conventional lean, "human" has to be retained as the word representing the focal subject described. Emotions consist of feelings of bodily sensation, physiological arousal, and exhibition in behaviors as expression. In the field of psychophysics, emotional experience has graded intensity, but in the fields of neurophysiology and functional neuroanatomy, they are associated with specific moods, feelings, or bodily sensations or associated with similar patterns of brain activity and can occur either as deliberate thoughts or as unconscious responses to preceding stimuli (Trice, 2021).

1. Emotions and Relationships

The human sense of identity is associated with skills, emotional particularities, and relations, rather than derived solely from the mind, as some transhumanists expect. In "Marjorie Prime", human identity emerges as a theme, initially in dogmatic refusals of old age and death, which set Marjorie as an individual. Gradually, in numerous ways, the boundaries of Marjorie's individuality shift; the acting of specialists also leads to the shift. Memory differences create identity differences, as do Gordon's piano skills or other emotions. Furthermore, otherness relations, rather than a structural position, emerge as important ways to construct identity. As Stadler states; animations, values, similarities, and emotions are some of the themes that help personal connections emerge (201).

In the central part of this drama, the issue of family relations is brought to the fore. Parental and conjugal feelings arise, conflicts surmount, and the ability to cope with loss is also emphasized. Harrison exposes this matter by depicting Tess who does not have happy memories with her mom:

JON: Are you jealous?

TESS: What? No. Of the Prime?

JON: You are!

TESS: Am I supposed to not notice she's being nicer to that thing than to me.

JON: She took care of you, now it's your turn to take care of her.

TESS: Oh, she “took care of me.”

JON: Of course.

TESS: You weren't there.

JON: Think how hard, to move out of the house you were in for what, forty / years

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TESS: Fifty years.

JON: And give up your autonomy - (Harrison, 2016, p. 16 & 17)

Despite her bad memories, Tess insists on looking after her mom in an attempt to reconcile their past together even though these trials do not seem to pay off:

TESS: Are you feeling better, Mom? (*TESS turns off the music*) You were quite the hit at the ER.

MAJORIE: Was I?

TESS: You always are. I'm sorry it's Shower Day.

MAJORIE: (*grim*) That I remember.

TESS: I brought you some new body wash. It's got lavender and rosemary.

MAJORIE: I had a friend named Rosemary. She's dead.

TESS: What a good story. (Harrison, 2016, p. 28)

Analyzing the treatment of identity in “*Marjorie Prime*”, the study argues that Harrison underscores the importance of the deepest human relationships and affects, such as those of parents who miss their daughter, who, while she was alive, they did not love entirely, and of the daughter who disparaged her parents for being antagonistic. This memory-imprinted emotional perspective forces the two survivors to live with memories of each other's feelings. When Jon divulges that he is a Prime copy, he and Marjorie continue their relationship, though she must accept his otherness to accomplish happiness. Thus, Marjorie's character pulls an about-turn, evidenced by not the exchange of facts, but by the deep cognitive and identity changes.

2. Notions of love and loss

In Harrison's drama, we are exposed to love and loss on different levels. Jon becomes concerned about Marjorie's loss of memory and the fact that he cannot give her enough to fill that void. This is evident in their speech as they proclaim:

MARJORIE: Was he flirting back?

JON: He was. So I told him he better watch out in case Jean-Paul showed up. You remember Jean-Paul!

MARJORIE: (*with a fake-romantic sigh*) The tennis pro.

JON: World number eight, if I remember. ...

MARJORIE: Well, you should have talked some sense into me.

JON: ... And you chose right, all by yourself. You chose Walter.

MARJORIE: With Walter? Oh yes. He wasn't the most beautiful man I was with, but he was the best lover.

JON: (*awkward*) Ha.

MARJORIE: I know, it's a terrible word, "lover." We need a new word.

JON: I always liked "wooper."

MARJORIE: Wooper?

JON: Jean-Paul was no match for his woo. (Harrison, 2016, p. 22 & 23)

Jon, wanting to make Marjorie happy, blackmails Tess into destroying the majority of her childhood with Marjorie using the "privilege" Henry gave him to gain access. As Jon is telling Tess his plan to delete Marjorie's memory, he tells her that the events leading up to "that Tuesday" shouldn't be any different than any other dinner. He refers to their conversation about black holes, their fried chicken and mac and cheese, and to how Tess died. It is Tess' loss of memory and innocence that Jon is trying to erase per se.

Moreover, Harrison explores the humanization of machines: how far machines can go as to replicate and reintroduce dead loved ones. He uses the notion of "prime", which means "first, original" - in that he thinks maybe Marjorie needs to meet "prime" Tess. "Prime" Tess is a younger Tess, about 30 years younger, and only remembers her childhood up until that point. She is able to learn from the Tess that she is simulating as Marjorie tells her this story about her wedding day. She also does not want to see Wes, as it is "not fair" to him.

3. Memory and Identity

The play "*Marjorie Prime*" revolves largely around the themes of memory and identity, as well as loss, artificial intelligence, cybernetic systems, love, and grief. From the characters' shared moments, they attempt to cope with the thought of death and what it means to be human in our ever-advancing technology-dominated modern society. The characters of the play are creatures that are not very different from Marjorie's dog in their genetic structure and, in a sense, run parallel paths with pre-sentient beings. Both are, in a way, cosmic coincide students: the dog is conscious of consciousness and that non-accidental gesture in Marjorie, who savors with delicately sardonic irony the fate of the dog (Jansen, 2020). The idea of transcendence is present even in these pre-sentient beings, but to reach its apex, it must make 'humanizing' hypothesis or limit its ultra-human sphere, so to speak, with a common foundation of sentience and identity. Consequently, the two moments interact with each other and have a common ground where man can find his own 'dimension'.

Memory is the collection of all events, feelings, and gestures that a person has gone through and provides the background information for daily life. Memory not only helps to record information in the past but also has a positive relationship

with a person's identity. The ability of our brain to recall past events, emotions, and feelings is what makes us a unique individual in the world. During the process of saving information or incidents, our consciousness and experiences of those things will be saved exponentially. Harrison accentuates this idea in the discussion between Jon and Tess:

JON: Maybe if you told it a few things. It could be a way to connect with her, indirectly.

TESS: What would I tell it?

JON: Things your father would know. ... Things you want her to remember. Then when she talks to it, she'll remember she had an interesting life, she had all these suitors lining up for her.

TESS: ... Out of sight but still with her. So maybe he'll still be with her, even when she doesn't know our names anymore. I don't know how memory works. I think of it like sedimentary layers in the brain, but I'm sure that's wrong. ...

JON: I like sedimentary layers. It means it's still there. (Harrison, 2016, p. 17 & 18)

Memory is the key that allows Marjorie to reflect on the nature of the bond between memory and identity. Bendrat, in this regard, assures that "Harrison's approach to memory in *"Marjorie Prime"* is a nuanced and thought-provoking exploration of the ways in which we remember and forget, and the impact that technology can have on our memories and our relationships" (225). Technology transcends this limit by creating machines that are 'memory without memory', where human nature is realized not in the fact of being a memory but in the ability to remember. Despite this defect in humanizing memory, machines are able to activate the memory and then cause the person to remember themselves, feeling themselves in the center of a ring of memories that wants to reveal to them their true self, their real "I-ness" (Sisto, 2021). It is no coincidence that the dialogues with these virtual loved ones must see the actual presence of a human being, a person who listens, sometimes intervenes, stimulates or turns off, prolonging the bond between the living-producer and the 'reproduction', the forgotten other, the loved one projected into the plane of dreams. Harrison reveals this fact when he writes:

MARJORIE: What if we saw *Casablanca* instead? Let's say we saw *Casablanca* in an old theatre with velvet seats, and then, on the way home, you proposed. Then, by the next time we talk, it will be true.

WALTER: You mean make it up?

MARJORIE: (*Narrowing her eyes*) You're very serious. You're like them. Especially Tess.

WALTER: (*as if getting his facts straight*) our daughter.

MARJORIE: Our daughter and her oversolicitous husband. No that's not fair, I like him. I didn't but now I do. (Harrison, 2016, p. 9 & 10)

Harrison, as Brewster says, "shows a number of familiar memory technics throughout *"Marjorie Prime"*; in particular, Tess and Jon try to shore up Marjorie's deteriorating memory with a box of mementos she has kept. These include letters from old flames, family photographs, and small keepsakes" (15). She adds, "as an example of what I call familiar memory technics, these letters and photographs are an imperfect technical reflection of Marjorie's identity in the Platonic sense" (16). Brewster believes that "Marjorie's neurological condition prohibits her from keeping the 'truth' of her memories, so Jon can only offer her the reminiscence, the semblance of truth contained in the box of her mementos" (16). In this regard, Klein and Nichols demonstrate that the relationship between identity and memory entails two parts, the content of the memory and the sense of personal ownership. In case one of these two components is deficient, damaged or missing, the sense of identity is compromised (677). Particularly, Marjorie's letters capture her memories' content and sense of ownership, and Jon hopes to help her retain both, and therefore retain her identity, even if it is merely a semblance of the truth. Marjorie's particular neurological disorder manifests more often as a loss of content (Brewster, 2017).

Brewster, in the same vein, confirms that Marjorie's memories, which are removed from the 'truth' by the twin specters of age and her disease, become further degraded by Jon's transmission of them to paper. It is this twice-removed memory that Walter Prime will receive, playing it back to Marjorie again in a third iteration of this process. Perhaps because of this imperfection, and certainly due to the amount of both cognitive and emotional labor required to maintain Marjorie's memory, Tess and Jon decide to take advantage of the newest technological innovation: Primes (17). Consequently, ambiguities and ambivalences concerning the concept of memory are territories well-trodden, and how Harrison addresses the issue of dementia in itself is not necessarily unique. However, the inclusion of avatars reveals multiple new routes diverging from the well-trodden path into thorny and virgin fields (Aktan, 2022). The boundaries between digital and physical realms blur; what makes digital entities believable is their resemblance to not only human intelligence but also human interaction and emotional influence. In this regard, Harrison states:

MARJORIE: Why did you pick that story? Why did you pick *My Best Friend's Wedding*?

WALTER: It's the night I proposed to you.

MARJORIE: Oh Marjorie, the things you forget. You were trying to tell me and I wouldn't let you.

WALTER: That's all right. (Harrison, 2016, p. 9)

The most human element which could be consistently mythical and legendary becomes the primary question in this drama is "Marjorie". Harrison

employs the concept of "prime" where someone's remnant is called to mimic the passed away in personality and life (Vodovnik, 2021). As Aktan elucidates, "in a world where the delineation between cyber and material spaces is jeopardized, codes that can mimic human agency become compensatory agents that have concrete effects on corporeality; subjects fulfilling their predestined providential tasks in the image of their creator and threatening to render them useless" (51). This is played within fragile emotions and intimacies, and conversations consist of memories that are earlier. Elyse uses memory to categorize her mother Marjorie irrespective of a "prime" who uses the memories to help her father, Jon, establish his disappearance also comforting her in the process. One can persist a certain personality and direction throughout his memory that makes everything work. First, the prime facilitators of the "prime" interact conversationally and use the pattern "tell me more about" which allows prime to comprehend with the technology in the caregivers' voice. Jon's prime makes him realize that it has not dampened Marjorie, but instead reassures her that he performed her rather well. There is another prime that also embraces prime with enthusiasm where the range of prime is compromised due to a limited set of a few personalities and experiences which are the substantial milestone fingerprints of people that other care of will be left to interpret are loved or significant despite the limited set.

Although Harrison has been wrestling against the change and new technology, he eventually surrenders and invites Walter, an artificial intelligence version of Marjorie's late husband, into the family's life. Later, after Marjorie's death, he focuses on how Tess and Jon who control the Prime carry Marjorie's memories professionally. In this vein, they say:

JON: Does it bother you that she's talking to a computer? Or that is a computer pretending to be your dad.

TESS: It bothers me that you're *helping* it pretend to be my dad – or some weird foundation of youth version / of him -

JON: Not "helping" – that's just how it works. The more you talk, the more it absorbs.

TESS: Until we become unnecessary. Isn't that how it goes? (Harrison, 2016, p. 16)

As users of technology, we usually have to engage in human intervention outside our domain of familiarity either directly or indirectly. These Primes bring up ethical questions as this study explores the disruptive boundaries of technology. Although the extent of artificial intelligence exactly is not known, The Imitation Game-a test indicating that artificial consciousness is possible and would unmask the machine- is passed by Jon's Marjorie Prime. This event is followed by a malfunction, and Jon's version of Walter is left voiceless, facially obscured, and apparently unable to move. With narratology assisting, what we believe might have

caused this turn of events would have been instigated by accessing an unused prime feature. Becoming continually aware of humans' inherent cruelty to artificial beings opens up a different faction on artificial intelligence and limitations of advanced technology. When an actual person comes to the facility to visit another character; they are always referred to, according to Aktan, as an old-fashioned face-to-face interaction since most humans' work is in a work building that utilizes technology and artificial beings (66). One element of conversing at a distance is perhaps a step toward a desired intimacy akin to visiting a sick friend that several persons feel is not worthwhile (Peters, 2021).

Transcending Human Boundaries

The main core of Harrison's drama concerns the relationship between human beings and artificial intelligence, in the form of the Primes. Throughout the play, as Aktan discloses, "Primes' ability to memorize and Marjorie's dementia are counterposed against each other, and the interplay in-between vividly showcases the transference of lived experience into non-human objects that live forever while humans forget and die" (12). There are three distinct incarnations of this technology in "*Marjorie Prime*"; they are Walter Prime, Marjorie Prime and Tess Prime. Each is an instance of unfamiliar memory technics, an extrapolation of already-existing technologies that provoke a number of questions about human-technology relationships and the ability of artificial intelligence to possess emotions. Discussing artificial intelligence's potential to harm human beings raises questions about the value of human life. Can humans maintain their sense of identity, possess multiple minds, and even explore the limits of humanity as their lives draw to a close? This exploration of AI is an exploration of what it means to be human.

Harrison's play, in essence, delves into these possibilities through the characters of Marjorie and her family members. What stands out in this drama is that none of the characters can be considered "normal." Each one of them grapples with serious psychological issues. They are haunted by the death, their past selves, or consumed by justified or unjustified disappointment and regret. In this way, the characters inadvertently or intentionally reveal their own physical and psychological limitations. However, with AI, these psychological problems are no longer obstacles for humans. When seeking companionship, humans search for and desire their true selves. Through the imperfect simulation of a human-like machine, humans can first establish their own identities, transcend themselves, and push the boundaries of self. This is the transcendence of human limitations. "*Marjorie Prime*" represents the expansion of an individual's personality and the advancement of humanity.

The transcendence ideals intertwining with the inherent imperfections and humanity in the act of coexistence grow ever more complex and nuanced. It becomes apparent that a perpetual impasse exists within the realm of human life. This impasse arises from the profound desire within humans to embrace and embody the steadfastness and everlasting nature of memorials, thus solidifying love, knowledge, and personal identity beyond the realm of temporality. However, humans are also intrinsically incapable of resisting the allure of errors encompassing the realm of recollection, deception, recreation, alteration, and true deviation. Life would prove insufferable without the inherent fallibility of memory as a solace-driven mechanism and the relentless challenge posed by the elusive nature of recollection.

Astoundingly, this vast and boundless impasse is intricately reflected in the realm of “*Marjorie Prime*”, particularly when Harrison delves into the realm of communication within artificial intelligence. While avatars may lack the inherent memories and conscious awareness that humans possess, they simultaneously embody a diminished sense of human fallibility, a heightened level of fidelity, and a perpetually unchanging nature - ultimately making them become a cherished source of comfort for humanity (Aktan, 2022). The creation of an artificial intelligence system that possesses the remarkable ability to not only comprehensively grasp and reference the current cultural state but also has an extensive and unceasing linear memory slice to ensure coherence throughout conversation serves as a monumental breakthrough or an achievement worthy of admiration.

The play does not extensively discuss the concept of augmented human intelligence; instead, the primary focus lies on the profound awareness and sheer existence that are fully integrated within a magnificent machine. Within this intriguing exploration of automaton, the prominence of human advancement and revolutionary technologies such as biotechnology and artificial intelligence slightly diminishes. Nevertheless, the play presents an extraordinary possibility or rather an intentional inclination towards a sense of security, wherein a human entity may consciously choose to embrace a delicate balance. This delicate balance entails finding solace in the embrace of a nurturing figure, akin to a parental affection, while simultaneously relinquishing the notion of digital family's egalitarian bonds. Moreover, it entails embarking upon an emotional, moral, and industrial growth that spans across the vast expanse of the panhuman existence.

Remarkably, within this literary masterpiece, there exists no explicit indication of these profound reflections. Each stage of emotional development, ranging from the innocence of childhood to the turbulence of adolescence, from the vigor of youth to the wisdom of adulthood, and even the serenity of the wise elder, is granted equal importance and endowed with immense viability. The

incredible artistry of the play allows it to predominantly disregard the intricacies of these interconnected human relationships, instead directing its focus towards an exploration of raw emotions and personal experiences. The play delves into the intricate dynamics of individuals as they navigate the territory of their own mirrored counterparts. In the presence of an individual-avatar specifically programmed to fulfill those emotional needs, the characters in the play confront the boundless realms of care, remorse, consolation, and even contradictory assertions. Furthermore, "*Marjorie Prime*" beautifully manages to reconcile these often-dichotomous elements, granting the characters the extraordinary ability to simultaneously have their cake and indulge in its delectable essence, all within the confines of this remarkable theatrical cosmos.

The machines in this drama prolong human memory, allowing people to live beyond their deaths in the eyes of their descendants. The human boundary extends to the realm of machines, be it in algorithms or artificial intelligence, thereby increasing the oppression and the fear of the possibilities. "The" truth "about the verified data and the judgment constructed with reference to it transforms these" echoes "into human-like" machines ". The theme of the family novel is that man's relations with other men are all utilizing sophisticated and nuanced articulation of the concept of "human soul". Man relates to his life, death, and future life by inferring his position from related social relationships. "*Marjorie Prime*" expresses the disillusionment with the interpretation of life, in which the soul is placed on the surface and treated as the "holographic memory", the teaching and learning of "spirit", and the willingness, wisdom, and life significance for AI (Brewster, 2017).

There is a deadlock present in human life where human beings long to experience the faithfulness and permanence of memorials to solidify love, knowledge, and self beyond temporality however they also cannot resist faults in recollection, deception, re-creation, and change. Life is unbearable without memory's fallibility as a consoling economy, and the insistent challenge of recollection's call. This illimitable deadlock is reflected in the artificial intelligence entered communication mode in Harrison's play "*Marjorie Prime*". Although avatars do not have the memories and awareness to the qualifier, they also possess less human fallibility, are more faithful, more unaging; therefore, they become the comfort object to humanity.

The play tries to provide a possibility for a security blanket. Human beings may then accept a tradeoff of obtaining solace instead of being cared for, gaining parental-like amusement while forgoing a digital family's familial equality, and experiencing a long-term panhuman growth emotionally, morally, and industrially. The play mostly allows to ignore these links and focus on the emotions and experiences of individuals in dealing with their doubles concerning care, remorse,

consolation, and gainsaying when in the company of an individual-avatar programmed for those ends. Nowadays, as the humanization of technology is a trending subject, one can see the public cringing at the possibility of their workplace ventures being controlled by artificial intelligence systems. It may partly manifest itself in these new creations because humans fear the complexity that the recognition of personhood and rights historically ensued, whereas the new creations would have been originated from humans and seen as less important or not equal to their biological "makers" (Hogan and Decker, 2021).

Although these concerns have been arisen in times previous to those of our contemporaneous technological advancements, these reflections arise typically before the creations' existent have not been developed yet. The development of the current state of technology brings for renascent fears lines of reasoning that accompany every stage of scientific discovery - the moral risk of unearthing answers before humans become mature enough to unveil them. The examination of the discourse of the play "*Marjorie Prime*" might reflect the sentiments of individuals of contemporary society. Such sentiments are common for every kind of subject concerning protectionism. This subject intertwines with the ongoing debate of preserving historical places or of recognizing the right for life for cloned species and extinct animals. The current drive for digital capture of human consciousness realizes such possible potentials nowadays while still alive, rather than preserving and enriching memories after death.

The idea of creating living technologies (or robots) is one of the modern fears historically present in the belief system of the existing religions. In the Western secular world, Science Fiction forecasts dystopic outcomes for technological situations pertaining to enhanced human relations (Gibson, 2021). The playing field for majority experimentation encompasses discussions on the morals and ethics of these examples. When it comes to technological innovations and enhancements, it is significant to understand that the situation is not simply a dichotomy between its possibilities and its limitations. There is negativity involved, and it comes from the fact that true evolution relies on boundaries being present in its making. The concept of sides refers to the belief in human spirit soul qualities. Scientists are fundamentally embedded in the borders - the very description of the real is the consequence of the scientific observation of the phenomena that surround each person, while spirituality goes to the beyond - only the verbal layer of the closed human system. Holes in knowledge are part of the system where everything should be rationally explained and classified. Our understanding is built around the idea of testing the limits, making systems rational - secular spirituality (Niemic et al., 2020).

Because of the world created by Harrison's dramatic and speculative text, "*Marjorie Prime*" has been successfully adapted to both stage performance and

screen. Both adaptations offer further examples of the human and boundary elements that Harrison implied, although the contexts, visual presentations, and implied yearning are subtly different between the two versions. The acting and scripting choices that these two adaptations made with Harrison's people of the play provide useful examples for subsequent stagings. There is a slight variation in which boundaries appear between the various iterations of the world of the play in the original off-Broadway production, the televised 2017 adaptation, and the unsuccessful London, UK production. Using Harrison's Characters of the play in "Marjorie Prime" is central to increasing understanding of the people who are depicted within it.

While the space created by Harrison in his play is a strange one for human beings to understand, it is not so different as it prevents the viewing of Harrison's characters offer shared insight, with the dramatist, audience, actors, and technicians who move around within or peep inside their world. Although only the dramatic text offers an invitation to study Harrison's creation and its possible unforeseen effects, the subsequent professional stage production offers many insights. Nevertheless, we should also be grateful for these cultural experiences and their contributions to deepening the understanding of an intelligent world.

Conclusion

The current study sought to inspect the nature-defining and re-compiling features of the machine, which contribute to human nature by providing novel and sustainable possibilities. Dynamic cognition, moral guidance, and communication have served as the scope of human properties that transcend the being by the artificial being's existence. As avatars and robots take on more and more pseudo-human roles, integrating with people in various environments and contexts, from being 'pseudo-significant' in social relationships with humans, this study exposes a particular relevance to the ethical use of technology. The inclusion of suitable technological barriers and personal qualities of an individual within these roles is thus a significant problem. There is a concern for the rapid growth in technology, particularly in achieving robot similarity to acting humans. Levels of distrust or unethical use with crowd avoidance and espionage motives would soon hit society. The 'robot' clear boundary, which encourages ethically problematic human-robot relationships to be maintained and managed, is to be explored experimentally.

Humanoid robots have evolved to a level that allows close emotional bonding and human-level recognition of human relational needs, particularly among the elderly. These days, real robots in the form of caregivers for the elderly have seen beneficial effects, including enhancing engagement, motivation, improved social interaction, cognitive stimulation, and realization of long-term personal biographical memory. They have reached a new level of scalability.

However, the development of real robotic caregivers seems to be constantly bound by severe financial constraints and time-consuming customization programming. Lacking a more effective approach, future studies illustrate very bright indications that Group Creativity Methods can be an alternative non-expensive and fast solution. This can be achieved by transferring valuable knowledge gained from Robert Phelps and Keith Wright's findings to the context of elderly care domain and gaining experience in real care environment interaction design and personalized robot programming strategies.

Harrison's play "*Marjorie Prime*" elicits many questions about identity that remain unresolved about the relationship between memory, personality, emotions, and physical or existential embodiment, and between human being or uniqueness and the assimilation potential of the mind to transcend a human body via a machine. It examines whether robots can transcend their liminal status and contribute towards the enhancement of the quality of elderly living conditions. This can only be achieved by the continual rebuilding of human-robot relationships, without underestimating the significant potential offered by the new methodologies available. In the collaborative design of human-robot relationships, a key role will be played by the elderly, as indicated by various studies as the major interested parties. Their invaluable contribution, founded on the ethical perspective of care, will give rise to robotic pet-like cars that are ever more empathetic and flexible. These robots will be adaptive, individualizing, and will try to accurately record interpersonal relationships with the elderly.

These relationships should be characterized by naturalness and humanity. However, there is a need to guarantee the perspective and needs of elderly individuals with symptoms of impairment. It is especially important to be careful about the group of disoriented elderly individuals. They should be empowered with useful tools for regaining control of care practices and taking charge of their biological, psychological, spiritual, and social needs. Mentorship through caregivers training will be one of the most suitable tools for enhancing care technology transparency and its governance. It will also help in cloaking the elderly with protective barriers against emotional and physical abuse, while testing the responsible approach of service providers. Eventually, the study concludes that Harrison's play "*Marjorie Prime*" offers exciting and conflicting scenarios of future care that can assist us in detecting posthuman forms and modes of aging, relating, and being, and, most importantly, alert us to the ethical consequences of such scenarios.

Future Research Directions

It is noted that the current research had some limitations. Therefore, future research should couple longer interaction periods that better parallel upon number of plays

employing post-human theories. A comprehensive boundary conditions analysis should also be conducted for these enhanced designs to prove reliable discriminant, convergent, and discriminant validity and a more reliable basis for meaningful theoretical inferences. At the intellectual level, future research should investigate a clearer understanding of the process of anthropomorphization, the attribution of human traits, emotions, or intentions to non-human entities, and how it is an innate tendency of human psychology.

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