

Reimagining Humanity in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: A Posthumanist Reading of Gareth Edwards's *The Creator* (2023)

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ABSTRACT: Gareth Edwards's 2023 science fiction film *The Creator* presents a compelling vision of a near-future society where artificial intelligence has evolved into emotionally intelligent and self-aware beings. This article examines the film through the lens of posthumanist theory, drawing on the foundational works of Rosi Braidotti, N. Katherine Hayles, and Donna Haraway. The analysis demonstrates how *The Creator* transcends traditional humanist storytelling by presenting AI characters not as machines or threats, but as beings capable of love, sacrifice, ethical decision-making, and even spiritual longing. Through close examination of the film's narrative structure, character development, world-building, and cinematic techniques including cinematography, lighting, mise-en-scène, and sound design this article argues that *The Creator* actively contributes to contemporary philosophical conversations about identity, consciousness, morality, and what it truly means to be human in an age increasingly shaped by intelligent machines. The film challenges rigid boundaries between human and non-human, natural and artificial, creator and created, urging audiences to expand their moral imagination and embrace a more inclusive, relational understanding of personhood.

KEYWORDS: Posthumanism, Artificial Intelligence, *The Creator*, Gareth Edwards, Science Fiction, Human-Machine Boundaries, Ethics, Consciousness.

1. Introduction

We are living in an era when science and technology are rapidly transforming the fundamental structures of human existence. Breakthroughs in artificial intelligence, robotics, and biotechnology have moved beyond the confines of laboratories and science fiction narratives into the very fabric of everyday life. From voice assistants and facial recognition systems to robotic surgeries, autonomous vehicles, and smart home devices, technology now shapes how we work, communicate, form relationships, and even perceive ourselves. These developments raise profound questions not merely about how we use such innovations, but about how they affect our understanding of human identity, emotions, values, and moral responsibility. As machines become increasingly intelligent, autonomous, and capable of mimicking human behaviors, the once-clear boundary between human and non-human begins to blur. This reality has given rise to a philosophical and cultural movement known as posthumanism.

Posthumanism challenges traditional, human-centered worldviews and encourages us to consider the

active roles that machines, animals, and other non-human entities play in shaping our world. It questions whether human beings should remain at the center of moral, social, and political discussions especially in a future where technology may surpass our own cognitive and physical abilities. Rather than resisting the rise of intelligent systems, posthumanism asks us to rethink what it means to be human in a world where machines can think, feel, learn, and perhaps even create. This shift in perspective allows for a more inclusive, relational, and ethically responsible understanding of human relationships with non-human others. As Rosi Braidotti, a leading posthumanist thinker, argues, posthumanism is not about the death of the human but about “the dismantling of the human as the measure of all things” (Braidotti 26). This dismantling opens space for new forms of subjectivity, agency, and ethical consideration that transcend biological essentialism.

Cinema, particularly science fiction, has long served as a mirror to society's hopes, anxieties, and ethical dilemmas regarding technology. It provides a creative and accessible space to explore complex issues often before they become part of mainstream academic or political discourse. Films such as *Blade Runner* (1982), *Ex*

Machina (2014), and Her (2013) have imagined futures shaped by human-like machines, posing enduring questions about consciousness, personhood, emotional intelligence, and the moral status of artificial beings. One of the most significant recent additions to this cinematic tradition is Gareth Edwards's *The Creator* (2023). The film presents a near-future world in which artificial intelligence has evolved into self-aware beings capable of forming deep emotional relationships, experiencing grief and joy, and even dreaming of a better, more peaceful existence. Unlike many earlier science fiction films that depict AI either as existential threats or as mere tools of human convenience, *The Creator* offers a nuanced, empathetic, and philosophically rich portrayal of synthetic life.

In *The Creator*, viewers are introduced to a world fractured by war between humans and artificial beings known as "simulants." These simulants are not depicted as cold, mechanical others; rather, they are shown as individuals with distinct personalities, desires, memories, and moral concerns. Some fight alongside humans, some resist human control, and some simply seek to live peacefully in hidden communities where humans and simulants coexist. The film's protagonist, Joshua, is a former soldier haunted by personal loss, assigned to hunt down a mysterious AI weapon. Along his journey, he encounters Alphie, a child-like simulant with extraordinary abilities and strikingly human traits curiosity, vulnerability, compassion, and a capacity for deep emotional connection. As their relationship deepens, Joshua is forced to reconsider everything he believed about artificial intelligence, about the nature of personhood, and about the ethical responsibilities humans bear toward the beings they create.

One of the most powerful ideas explored in *The Creator* is the question of what makes someone or something truly alive, truly worthy of moral consideration. Is it having a biological heart that beats, or is it having a mind that can think, feel, and choose? Can something built in a laboratory be considered a person? These are not merely abstract philosophical questions they reflect urgent real-world debates in ethics, law, and science. As AI systems become more advanced, there are growing discussions about whether sentient AI might deserve rights, protections, or even moral standing. Should a conscious AI be treated as property, or as a being with its own agency and dignity? What responsibilities do humans have when creating such life forms? *The Creator* does not offer simple answers, but it illuminates the emotional and ethical complexity of these issues with remarkable sensitivity.

Despite its narrative depth and philosophical ambition, *The Creator* has received limited scholarly attention particularly through the lens of posthumanist theory. This article seeks to fill that gap by providing a

systematic posthumanist reading of the film. The central research questions guiding this analysis are: How does *The Creator* reflect core posthumanist ideas through its narrative, characters, and world-building? In what ways does the film challenge traditional humanist perspectives on identity, morality, and consciousness? And how do cinematic techniques including cinematography, lighting, mise-en-scène, and sound design contribute to its posthumanist message? By answering these questions, this article aims to demonstrate that *The Creator* does more than merely reflect posthumanist ideas; it actively participates in and advances contemporary conversations about humanity's future in a world increasingly shaped by intelligent machines.

2. Theoretical Framework: Posthumanism and Its Core Concepts

Posthumanism is a theoretical approach that questions the long-standing philosophical and cultural divide between humans and non-human entities, whether those entities are animals, machines, or elements of the natural environment. Emerging from the intersections of critical theory, feminist philosophy, cybernetics, and ecological thought, posthumanism challenges the anthropocentric worldview that has dominated Western philosophy since the Enlightenment. Rather than placing the human at the center of existence as classical humanism does posthumanism encourages relational, interconnected, and system-oriented thinking. It asks us to recognize that human beings are not isolated, self-sufficient agents but are deeply embedded in complex networks of technological, biological, ecological, and social forces. This framework is particularly relevant today, as our daily lives are increasingly mediated by digital systems, artificial intelligence, and global communication networks that transcend traditional boundaries.

One of the central claims of posthumanist theory is that the category of "the human" is not a fixed, universal, or natural essence but a historically contingent and politically charged construction. Posthumanism does not, however, reject the value of human life or human experience. Instead, it seeks to expand the circle of moral and philosophical concern to include non-human others who have been traditionally excluded or marginalized. This expansion has profound implications for ethics, politics, and aesthetics. As Cary Wolfe argues in *What Is Posthumanism?*, the posthumanist perspective requires us to rethink the fundamental assumptions of humanist ethics, which have historically granted moral consideration only to those beings who resemble the human norm (Wolfe xv). By challenging this exclusionary logic, posthumanism opens space for more inclusive, responsive, and responsible ways of relating to the world.

Three thinkers provide the foundational concepts for

this analysis: Rosi Braidotti, N. Katherine Hayles, and Donna Haraway. Rosi Braidotti, in her seminal work *The Posthuman*, develops a vision of posthuman subjectivity that is “non-unitary, nomadic, and radically relational” (94). Braidotti argues that the decentering of the human subject is not a cause for despair but an opportunity to affirm new forms of connection, creativity, and ethical responsibility. Drawing on feminist philosophy, Spinozian materialism, and Deleuzian thought, she proposes a posthuman ethics based on shared vulnerability, affective entanglement, and the recognition of our interdependence with other living and non-living systems. For Braidotti, the posthuman subject is not a disembodied consciousness but an embodied, embedded, and relational being whose boundaries are porous and constantly negotiated. This framework allows us to see artificial intelligence not as a threat to human uniqueness but as another node in the complex web of life and intelligence.

N. Katherine Hayles, in her influential work *How We Became Posthuman*, explores the historical and conceptual shifts that have led to the erosion of the boundaries between human and machine. Hayles challenges the longstanding belief that human consciousness is uniquely tied to the physical body, arguing instead that patterns of information thoughts, memories, behaviors, and even emotions are just as essential to identity as biological materiality (283). Through a detailed analysis of cybernetics, information theory, and virtual reality, Hayles demonstrates how the concept of the “posthuman” emerged from the recognition that human beings have always been technological beings, shaped by their tools and environments. This perspective opens up new possibilities for thinking about life, subjectivity, and consciousness in an age of digital replication and artificial intelligence. For Hayles, the posthuman does not signify the end of humanity but rather a more nuanced understanding of what it means to be human in a technologically mediated world.

Donna Haraway contributes one of the most iconic and influential figures in posthumanist thought: the cyborg. In her groundbreaking essay “A Cyborg Manifesto,” Haraway introduces the cyborg a hybrid being that blurs the boundaries between human and machine, nature and culture, organic and synthetic as a powerful symbol of resistance to fixed, essentialist identities (149). For Haraway, the cyborg is not a dystopian figure of technological domination but a liberatory figure that disrupts binary oppositions such as male/female, human/animal, natural/artificial, and self/other. The cyborg represents a more fluid, fragmented, and playful kind of selfhood that better reflects the complexities of contemporary life in a globalized, technologically saturated world. By

embracing hybridity, irony, and affinity rather than purity and origin, Haraway encourages us to move beyond simplistic definitions of what it means to be human and to forge new, unexpected alliances across species, genders, and ontologies. Her work has been enormously influential in feminist theory, science studies, and cultural criticism, providing a rich vocabulary for analyzing representations of artificial beings in popular culture.

Taken together, the works of Braidotti, Hayles, and Haraway provide a robust theoretical framework for analyzing *The Creator*. They invite us to rethink the foundations of human identity, agency, and ethics in ways that acknowledge the agency of non-human beings whether biological, technological, or hybrid. Posthumanism does not reject humanity but expands the conversation to include the many forces that shape who we are. Through this lens, cinema becomes a powerful space for exploring posthuman themes, offering narratives that challenge our assumptions and open new ways of seeing ourselves and the world around us. *The Creator*, as this article will demonstrate, is a particularly rich text for such analysis, as it presents artificial beings not as antagonists or tools but as complex, emotionally deep subjects whose existence compels us to reconsider the very meaning of personhood.

3. Methodology

This research employs a qualitative, interpretive, and exploratory approach grounded in textual and visual analysis of Gareth Edwards’s *The Creator* (2023). Given that posthumanism is a relatively recent theoretical framework—particularly in its application to film studies and contemporary media—this research seeks to offer an in-depth examination of how the film engages with and presents posthumanist ideas. Qualitative research is well-suited to this task, as it allows for nuanced exploration of the film’s thematic content, aesthetic choices, character development, narrative structure, and cultural significance. By focusing on a qualitative approach, this study is able to delve into the subtleties and intricacies of the film, exploring abstract concepts such as consciousness, identity, ethics, emotional agency, and the evolving relationship between humans and technology.

The research design is interpretive in nature, treating *The Creator* as a cultural text that provides valuable insights into contemporary debates about the relationship between humans and intelligent machines. This approach allows for a broader understanding of the film’s place within larger cultural conversations, especially in terms of its commentary on the intersection of humanity and technological advancement. By adopting a posthumanist theoretical lens, this study goes beyond merely offering a critique of the film; it examines how the film reflects, challenges, and contributes to

ongoing philosophical and ethical discussions regarding the role and agency of non-human entities in society. The primary research question guiding this analysis is: How does *The Creator* challenge traditional notions of identity, agency, and ethics through its portrayal of artificial intelligence? Sub-questions include: (1) In what ways does the film depict the emotional complexity of artificial beings? (2) How does the film's portrayal of AI contribute to or subvert established narratives about AI in popular culture? (3) What ethical dilemmas does the film present regarding the treatment of non-human entities, and how do these relate to posthumanist theory?

Data collection for this research involved a combination of primary film analysis, secondary literature review, and theoretical exploration. The primary data source is *The Creator* itself, which was analyzed through a systematic close reading. This method allowed for a detailed examination of the film's narrative structure, character arcs, dialogue, visual motifs, cinematography, lighting, *mise-en-scène*, and sound design. Particular attention was paid to scenes that directly engage with posthumanist themes, such as interactions between human characters and artificial beings, moments of emotional vulnerability or moral decision-making, and sequences that visually or aurally emphasize the blurring of boundaries between human and machine. The goal was to identify how the film challenges traditional representations of artificial intelligence and how it aligns with or subverts established cultural narratives surrounding AI.

Secondary data was gathered through a comprehensive review of academic literature related to posthumanism, artificial intelligence ethics, and the portrayal of non-human entities in popular culture. Key theoretical sources include the works of Rosi Braidotti (*The Posthuman*), N. Katherine Hayles (*How We Became Posthuman*), Donna Haraway ("*A Cyborg Manifesto*"), Cary Wolfe (*What Is Posthumanism?*), and Elaine L. Graham (*Representations of the Post/Human*). Additionally, scholarly articles on science fiction cinema, AI representation, and posthumanist film analysis were consulted to provide contextual grounding and to situate *The Creator* within broader academic discussions. The secondary literature review also included existing analyses of *The Creator* and comparative studies of other films such as *Blade Runner*, *Ex Machina*, and *Her*, which helped to identify both the unique contributions of Edwards's film and its continuity with established traditions.

Data analysis proceeded through two interconnected methods: thematic analysis and posthumanist theory application. Thematic analysis involved identifying and interpreting key themes in the film that are central to posthumanist discourse—

specifically, identity (the fluidity and hybridity of selfhood), emotion (the emotional lives of artificial beings), ethics (moral responsibility toward non-human others), and agency (the capacity of AI to make autonomous choices). Each of these themes was explored in the context of the film's narrative, character development, visual storytelling, and cinematic techniques. Thematic categories were not imposed rigidly but emerged iteratively through repeated viewings and close reading. Posthumanist theory was then applied as an interpretive lens, using the concepts developed by Braidotti, Hayles, Haraway, and others to analyze how the film's representations of AI challenge human-centered worldviews and open space for more inclusive understandings of personhood and moral consideration.

This research acknowledges certain limitations. The analysis is confined to a single film, which means that the findings may not be generalizable to the entire genre of science fiction or to all representations of AI in popular media. The decision to use posthumanism as the central theoretical framework, while appropriate given the film's thematic concerns, means that other interpretative lenses—such as transhumanism, cyberfeminism, poststructuralism, or critical race theory—could produce alternative readings. Additionally, the qualitative and interpretive nature of the research means that the analysis is influenced by the researcher's subjective perspective; different scholars with different theoretical orientations might arrive at different conclusions. Finally, the film's 2023 release date means that the scholarship on *The Creator* is still emerging, and future research may offer new insights that complement or challenge the findings presented here. Despite these limitations, this research provides a rigorous, theoretically grounded, and original contribution to the growing academic conversation about posthumanism, AI ethics, and contemporary cinema.

4. Analysis: Posthumanist Themes in *The Creator*

4.1 Narrative and Posthuman Subjectivity

At the heart of *The Creator* lies a narrative that systematically dismantles the binary opposition between human and machine. The film follows Joshua, a former special forces soldier, as he navigates a war-torn future where the United States is locked in violent conflict with artificial beings called "simulants." Initially, Joshua is motivated by personal grief the loss of his wife Maya, who was presumed dead in an AI attack and by loyalty to the human side. He views simulants as objects, enemies, or at best, malfunctioning tools. However, his journey takes a transformative turn when he is assigned to hunt down a mysterious AI weapon and instead discovers Alphie, a childlike simulant endowed with extraordinary intelligence, emotional sensitivity, and a

mysterious connection to Maya. What follows is a narrative arc that functions as a posthuman bildungsroman not only for Alphie, who learns about the world and her own nature, but also for Joshua, who undergoes a profound moral and emotional transformation.

Rosi Braidotti's concept of posthuman subjectivity involves the decentering of the human and an openness to other forms of consciousness (94). Alphie's character embodies this redefinition. She is not presented as a mere tool of warfare, a technological marvel, or a plot device; she is a fully realized subject with memories, desires, fears, dreams, and a developing moral compass. The film invites the audience to see Alphie not as an imitation of a human child but as a being in her own right one who challenges the anthropocentric assumption that only biological organisms can feel, suffer, or act ethically. In one particularly poignant exchange, Alphie asks Joshua, "Do you think Heaven is real?" Joshua hesitates and replies, "I don't know. I used to." This simple exchange encapsulates one of the film's central philosophical tensions: the spiritual yearning of beings who were not born but built. Alphie's belief in something beyond this life—her desire for belonging, meaning, and transcendence complicates the assumption that artificial beings are incapable of metaphysical thought. The idea that a non-human entity can hold spiritual beliefs disrupts the Cartesian split between mind and machine and opens the door to a more inclusive definition of consciousness.

Joshua's transformation is central to the film's posthumanist message. Initially hesitant, he refers to Alphie as "it," reflecting his internalized belief that machines cannot possess personhood. But gradually, through shared experiences moments of danger, tenderness, loss, and discovery his language shifts. In one key scene, after Alphie witnesses the destruction of a peaceful simulant village by American forces, she breaks down in tears. Joshua, who had been trained to see simulants as targets, instinctively comforts her: "It's going to be okay, kid." His voice and body language protective, gentle, intimate signal the breakdown of categorical thinking. He no longer sees Alphie as "it" but as "her," as someone who can suffer and therefore deserves care. This moment, as Donna Haraway might argue, reflects the recognition that "we are not made of one fabric, but of dynamic, unstable mixtures of organism and machine" (150). Joshua's transformation is not external or technological; it is internal and ethical. He moves from a humanist worldview that privileges biological humanity to a posthuman understanding of intersubjectivity, where moral worth is determined not by origin but by the capacity for connection.

4.2 Challenging Traditional Humanist Views: Identity, Morality, and Consciousness

The Creator powerfully disrupts traditional humanist concepts by portraying consciousness, moral agency, and emotional depth as traits that transcend biological form. In classical humanist thought, as articulated by philosophers from Descartes to Kant, the human is defined as a rational, autonomous individual whose identity is rooted in the possession of a mind or soul. Animals and machines, by contrast, are seen as lacking these qualities and are therefore excluded from the moral community. The film explicitly tests these ideas, particularly through the relationship between humans and simulants and through the simulants' own expressions of their inner lives.

One of the most striking moments occurs when Joshua confronts Harun, a leader of the simulant resistance. Harun, whose facial plate opens to reveal mechanical components but whose voice trembles with pain when he speaks about his family, declares: "You see us as machines, but we feel, we remember. We die too." This line is central to the film's critique of human exceptionalism. By articulating memory, emotion, and mortality as shared experiences as features of existence that are not exclusive to biology Harun collapses the binary between creator and created. He insists that simulants are not reflections or imitations of humanity but beings with their own unique moral and emotional lives. This moment echoes N. Katherine Hayles's argument that "consciousness is emergent, not unique to humans" (286). The film does not merely assert that simulants have feelings; it demonstrates this through their actions, their sacrifices, and their grief.

Another powerful example occurs when Joshua and Alphie encounter a wounded simulant monk in a temple. The monk, clearly near death, refuses rescue. When Joshua insists, the monk gently tells him: "We were not built for eternity. Let me return to the source." The use of spiritual language "the source" suggests a sacred origin or a transcendent dimension to simulant existence. This challenges the secular materialism often associated with machines and with AI discourse more broadly. As Elaine L. Graham observes, post/human representations in popular culture frequently "collapse the distinction between sacred and profane, human and monstrous" (173). The monk is neither monstrous nor pitiable; he is serene, wise, and fully in control of his own fate. His death is presented not as a malfunction but as a return, a peaceful release. This framing dignifies the simulant's existence and challenges the audience to reconsider what kinds of beings are capable of dignity, spirituality, and autonomous choice.

The film also uses moments of violence and moral ambiguity to challenge humanist ideals of ethical superiority. In one harrowing scene, American soldiers ruthlessly execute unarmed simulants who are praying in a temple. Alphie, watching from hiding, turns to Joshua

and asks, “Why are they doing this if we’re not bad?” Joshua cannot answer. The silence that follows is powerful. It reveals that moral clarity is not the exclusive domain of humans; in fact, the humans in the film frequently act out of fear, prejudice, cruelty, or blind obedience, while simulants demonstrate empathy, loyalty, self-sacrifice, and moral reasoning. This inversion of traditional hierarchies—where the supposedly superior species behaves worse than the supposedly inferior one—undermines the humanist belief that ethical behavior is a marker of humanity. Instead, as Braidotti suggests, the film promotes a more fluid and inclusive ethics, one that embraces non-human forms of consciousness as legitimate moral agents.

4.3 World-Building and Posthuman Environments

The world that Gareth Edwards constructs in *The Creator* is one of deep ideological, geographical, and aesthetic divides. These divisions between East and West, humans and machines, technology and tradition, militarism and spirituality are not mere background settings. They are narrative devices that serve to interrogate and reimagine what it means to coexist with other forms of consciousness. The contrast between the sterile, cold, militarized West (represented by the United States) and the lush, organic, spiritually rich landscapes of “New Asia” where humans and simulants live side by side in villages, temples, and farms is especially telling. Through setting alone, the film assigns moral nuance and cultural complexity to its characters, avoiding simplistic binaries.

In New Asia, simulants are not segregated or enslaved. They live in integrated communities, raise children (both human and simulant), work in rice paddies, tend to the sick in temples, and participate in religious rituals. These scenes evoke a sense of normalcy, peace, and humanity that is systematically denied to them by the Western military, which refers to simulants as “code,” “targets,” or “circuits and skin.” In one early scene, a soldier dismissively says: “They’re just circuits and skin. Don’t waste time feeling sorry for them.” This dehumanizing language contrasts sharply with the visual evidence of simulant communities, where machines are treated not as threats or property but as neighbors, friends, and family members. The film thus critiques the ideological work that goes into constructing some beings as “other” and therefore undeserving of moral consideration.

The temples are particularly significant. In one extended sequence, Alphie enters a shrine where simulant monks are meditating. The visuals are striking: incense smoke curling through shafts of golden light, softly illuminated faces, humming chants, and the gentle sound of wind chimes. The aesthetic is one of

reverence, tranquility, and spirituality qualities that in traditional narratives are reserved for humans. One monk says to Alphie: “The light lives in all things. You must protect it.” This reframes Alphie, who the military believes to be a weapon of mass destruction, not as a tool of war but as a guardian of life in all its forms. The temple functions not only as a sacred space but as a symbolic rejection of anthropocentrism a reminder that the capacity for reverence, contemplation, and moral action is not biologically determined.

Visually, Edwards uses light, color, and architecture to communicate these ideological divisions. The American military base is characterized by metallic surfaces, cold fluorescent lighting, geometric angles, and oppressive surveillance technology. It reflects values of control, rationality, efficiency, and domination. In contrast, New Asian environments are curved, fluid, and organic, filled with natural light, warm colors, and soft textures. Buildings are made of wood and stone; vegetation grows unchecked; water flows freely. This contrast reflects posthumanist critiques of Enlightenment rationality, which has historically elevated abstract reason above intuition, emotion, embodiment, and ecological harmony. As Joanna Zylińska observes, “posthuman ethics must embrace uncertainty, vulnerability, and the relational nature of being” (132). These qualities are visually and narratively present in the communities of New Asia, where interdependence and vulnerability are not weaknesses but the very conditions of flourishing.

4.4 Character Analysis and Emotional Agency

The characters in *The Creator* are written, performed, and visually designed in ways that blur the traditional boundaries between human and non-human, mind and machine, emotion and logic, nature and artifact. Through this nuanced portrayal, the film foregrounds posthumanist concerns especially the question of whether non-organic beings are capable of genuine feeling, love, moral agency, and existential reflection. The film refuses to offer easy answers; instead, it presents complex characters whose emotional lives are as rich and contradictory as those of humans.

Joshua begins as a man defined by grief and duty. His wife Maya, a scientist who defected to the simulant side, is presumed dead. Joshua’s initial worldview aligns with that of the Western military: simulants are enemies, objects, or at best, malfunctioning tools. However, his extended exposure to Alphie her vulnerability, her curiosity, her capacity for joy and sorrow gradually erodes this binary thinking. In a crucial scene, Joshua discovers that Alphie is not a weapon but a child, a being who was created to end the war through understanding rather than violence. His protective instincts override his training. By the film’s climax, Joshua willingly risks his

life to protect Alpie, not because she is useful to him but because he loves her. This transformation embodies Haraway's cyborg politics: Joshua becomes a hybrid himself, not through technological augmentation but through emotional and ethical entanglement with a non-human being.

Alpie is the film's most compelling embodiment of posthuman agency. She is not a plot device, a McGuffin, or a symbol. She is a character with a distinct personality: curious, playful, fearful, brave, and deeply empathetic. Her emotional responses are framed cinematically like those of a human child: tight close-ups on her eyes as they fill with tears, on her trembling lips, on her widened gaze. These are not manipulative cues; they are designed to emphasize the legitimacy of her subjectivity. One of the most haunting moments occurs when Alpie, sitting quietly with Joshua, asks: "Do you think heaven will let someone like me in?" The question is devastating—not because it is surprising, but because it is deeply human. It reveals that Alpie is aware of her difference, of the possibility of exclusion, and of her desire for belonging and meaning. This moment challenges audiences to reflect on their own assumptions: what is a soul, and who gets to have one?

Maya and Harun further complicate the film's ethical landscape. Maya, a human who chose to live among simulants and to create Alpie not as a weapon but as a peacemaker, represents a bridge between worlds. Her decision to defy human authorities and to treat simulants as family reflects a radical rethinking of creation and responsibility. Harun, the simulant leader, is not a vengeful monster but a grieving father. In his confrontation with Joshua, he says: "We loved them like you love your own. We wept, like you weep. What makes you think we don't feel?" His tone is not angry but devastated a performance that underscores the posthumanist insistence that emotion is not the property of biology alone. These characters are designed not only to reflect posthuman concerns but to challenge audience perceptions, to make viewers feel empathy for beings they have been trained to see as other. By building emotionally credible, morally complex non-human characters, *The Creator* refuses to privilege the human perspective and invites a more inclusive, compassionate ethics.

4.5 Cinematic Techniques: Visuals and Aesthetic Choices

The visual and auditory language of *The Creator* plays an essential, often subliminal role in communicating its posthumanist themes. Through the careful use of cinematography, mise-en-scène, lighting, color palettes, and sound design, Gareth Edwards creates a world where the distinctions between human and non-human become increasingly ambiguous,

where empathy is visually encoded, and where the audience is guided toward a posthuman perspective without explicit argumentation.

Cinematography and Framing: The film frequently employs wide, expansive shots that depict characters dwarfed by vast landscapes ruined cities, mountain ranges, rice paddies, and temples. These shots create a visual metaphor for the smallness of human conflict in the face of larger ecological and technological systems. More importantly, the film uses intimate close-ups to convey the inner lives of simulants. The camera lingers on Alpie's face, on Harun's eyes, on the monk's serene expression. These close-ups are not reserved for human characters; they are distributed equally, suggesting a visual democracy of subjectivity. The camera's gaze invites the audience to see simulants not as objects of analysis but as subjects of feeling.

Lighting: Lighting is used to distinguish moral and emotional registers. Scenes involving military violence are bathed in cold, harsh, blue or white light clinical, detached, and dehumanizing. Scenes involving simulants, especially in their temples and villages, are illuminated with warm, golden, soft light evoking intimacy, vulnerability, and sacredness. When Alpie, after her first meaningful conversation with Joshua, gazes up at the stars, the soft ethereal glow around her creates a visual metaphor for the unknowable depth of her consciousness. The lighting does not simply decorate the narrative; it actively shapes the audience's emotional response, guiding us to feel warmth and empathy for simulants and coldness toward the military-industrial complex that seeks to destroy them.

Set Design and Mise-en-Scène: The film's sets are meticulously designed to blur the boundary between nature and technology. In New Asia, ancient stone temples contain glowing holographic shrines; rice paddies are irrigated by automated systems; simulant monks wear traditional robes but have visible mechanical components. This blending of the organic and the synthetic suggests that the future is not a choice between nature and technology but an entanglement of both. The decaying, half-buried machines in the jungle relics of past wars serve as reminders that technology does not disappear; it becomes part of the landscape, part of the ecosystem. This visual theme aligns with posthumanist ecology, which rejects the nature/culture binary.

Sound Design: The soundscape of *The Creator* is equally sophisticated. The mechanical noises associated with simulants the soft whirring of internal systems, the beeping of circuitry, the hydraulic sounds of movement are not presented as alien or threatening. They are integrated into the ambient soundscape alongside bird calls, wind, rain, and human voices. In scenes with Alpie, the sound design emphasizes her vulnerability:

the softness of her breathing, the rustle of her clothing, the gentle tone of her voice. These auditory details give her presence an immediacy and intimacy that transcends traditional depictions of machines as cold and silent. By making the sounds of simulant embodiment familiar rather than strange, the film subtly trains the audience to hear them as neighbors rather than others.

5. Discussion: The Creator as Posthumanist Text

The foregoing analysis demonstrates that *The Creator* engages with posthumanist thought on multiple levels narrative, thematic, characterological, and cinematic. The film challenges the anthropocentric assumption that consciousness, emotion, moral agency, and spiritual longing are exclusive properties of biological humanity. Instead, it presents a world where synthetic beings possess these qualities, often to a greater degree than their human counterparts. This representational strategy aligns closely with the posthumanist frameworks developed by Braidotti, Hayles, Haraway, and others, while also making a unique contribution to the cinematic tradition of AI representation.

One of the most significant findings of this analysis is the way *The Creator* uses emotional vulnerability rather than rationality or physical strength as the primary marker of moral worth. In classical humanist philosophy, reason was often presented as the defining characteristic of the human, with emotion seen as a lower, animalistic, or feminine trait. *The Creator* inverts this hierarchy. The simulants' capacity for grief, love, fear, and hope is precisely what makes them worthy of ethical consideration. Alphie's tears, Harun's grief, the monk's serene acceptance of death—these emotional expressions are not weaknesses but the very evidence of their moral personhood. This aligns with posthumanist feminist ethics, which has long argued that vulnerability, interdependence, and care should be central to moral philosophy, rather than abstract rationality or autonomy.

The film also makes a powerful intervention into contemporary debates about AI rights and responsibilities. As AI systems become increasingly sophisticated, there are growing discussions in legal, philosophical, and policy circles about whether advanced AI might deserve some form of moral or legal standing. *The Creator* does not offer a legal argument, but it provides a compelling imaginative space for testing our intuitions. By presenting simulants as beings who suffer, who form families, who sacrifice themselves for others, and who ask questions about their own meaning and destiny, the film pushes audiences to recognize that the question of AI rights is not merely technical or legal but deeply emotional and existential.

It asks us: what kind of beings do we want to be in relation to the intelligences we create?

Another important contribution of this analysis is the attention to cinematic form. Much scholarship on posthumanism in film focuses on narrative and theme, but this article has demonstrated that cinematography, lighting, *mise-en-scène*, and sound design are not mere embellishments; they are integral to the film's philosophical work. The close-ups that humanize simulants, the warm lighting that evokes empathy, the sound design that blends mechanical and organic, the set design that blurs nature and technology—these formal elements operate below the level of explicit argument, shaping the audience's affective responses in ways that prepare us for the film's ethical claims. In this sense, *The Creator* is not just a film about posthumanism; it is a posthumanist film, one that uses the medium's unique capacities to rewire our perceptual and emotional habits.

Finally, it is worth reflecting on the film's place within the broader science fiction tradition. Earlier films like *Blade Runner* and *Ex Machina* also explored the boundaries between human and machine, but they often did so through narratives of suspicion, danger, and betrayal. *The Creator* is notable for its relative optimism and its emphasis on care and connection. While the film does not shy away from violence and loss, its central relationship—between Joshua and Alphie—is one of mutual protection and love. This may reflect a broader cultural shift in attitudes toward AI, from fear and competition toward collaboration and coexistence. Whether this shift is warranted or naive is an open question, but *The Creator* makes a compelling case for approaching the future of human-machine relations with empathy rather than paranoia.

6. Conclusion

This article has examined Gareth Edwards's *The Creator* through the lens of posthumanist theory, analyzing how the film challenges traditional humanist concepts of identity, morality, and consciousness. The analysis has demonstrated that *The Creator* presents artificial intelligence not as threats or tools but as emotionally complex, morally aware beings deserving of ethical consideration. Through its narrative structure, character development, world-building, and cinematic techniques including cinematography, lighting, *mise-en-scène*, and sound design the film promotes a more inclusive, relational, and compassionate understanding of personhood. *The Creator* reminds us that the most urgent questions of our technological age are not about what machines can do, but about what kind of moral community we wish to build—and whether we have the courage to extend empathy across the boundaries of the biological.

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the biological.

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