Dil ve Edebiyat Araştırmaları (DEA), Güz, 2020; (22) 277-298
ISSN: 1308-5069 - E-ISSN: 2149-0651

Posthumanism versus Transhumanism: James Tiptree, Jr.'s *The Girl Who Was Plugged In**

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Abstract
This article builds its arguments on the relatively recent discussions of posthumanism in the academic circles, especially as regards the distinctive features that render it separate from transhumanist endeavors of human enhancement through technological means. Following the diverse methodologies of foregrounding scholars of posthumanism, such as Donna Haraway, Katherine Hayles, Rosi Braidotti, Cary Wolfe, and Francesca Ferrando, it seeks to highlight the debate of 'humanness,' enquiring into whether human consciousness could exist without the life-supporting systems of an organic body and to what extent technologies could help us reform our way of understanding the ontological, epistemological, and ethical grounds of being, existing, and acting responsibly and responsively. By drawing upon philosophical questions as such, the article points out the intertwined relations between the mind and the body, cross-examines the dichotomy of inscription versus corporeality, and analyzes the dynamic ties between technological advances, prosthetic bodies, and the feminist dimensions of posthumanism, while questioning whether James Tiptree, Jr.'s novella *The Girl Who Was Plugged In* (1973) could be considered a posthuman techno-feminist text.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Posthumanism, transhumanism, science-fiction, James Tiptree, Jr., *The Girl Who Was Plugged In*

* This article is invigorated by my speech entitled "Are We Posthuman Yet?: Mind/Body Dichotomy in James Tiptree Jr.'s *The Girl Who Was Plugged In*," delivered at the 10th International IDEA Conference, Boğaziçi University, Istanbul, Turkey, held between April 14-16, 2016. However, the primary locus of arguments strongly differs in this article, which has extended its focus on the comparative dynamics of posthumanism and transhumanism as well as its inclusion of technoscientific studies from a feminist perspective, taking the posthumanist discussions of the novella beyond the Harawayan concept of cyborg.

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Geliş Tarihi / Received Date: 06.02.2020
Kabul Tarihi / Accepted Date: 02.06.2020

DOI: diledeara.685823

Posthümanizm Transhümanizme Karşı: James Tiptree, Jr.'ın *Uzaktan Kumandalı Kız** Adlı Kısa Romanı

Öz

Bu makale, yakın geçmişte bilimsel çevrelerde hız kazanan ve önemi gittikçe artan posthümanizm konusunda ileri sürülen çeşitli akademik görüşler üzerinden oluşturduğu argümanlarla, teknoloji vasıtasıyla insanın fiziksel ve bilişsel kapasitesini artırmayı hedefleyen transhümanizm ile insan kavramının özünü sorgulayan posthümanizmi birbirlerinden ayırt edecek özellikleri tartışmaya açmaktadır. Donna Haraway, Katherine Hayles, Rosi Braidotti, Cary Wolfe ve Francesca Ferrando gibi, posthümanizmin temelini oluşturan ve alanda önde gelen kuramcıların metodolojilerini izleyerek, insan olmanın anlamı; organik bir bedenin sağlayacağı yaşam destek sistemleri olmaksızın insan bilincinin var olup olamayacağı; ontolojik, epistemolojik ve etik düzlemlerden bakıldığında varlığa, bilgiye ve tepkisel ya da ahlaki olarak davranışlarımıza yönelik anlayışımızı teknoloji yoluyla yeniden düzenleyip düzenleyemeyeceğimiz gibi kritik, felsefi sorulara odaklanmaktadır. Dolayısıyla, bu makale, ele aldığı konular ile; zihin/beden arasındaki ayrılmaz ilişkinin öneminin altını çizmekte, yazı (bilgi) ile bedensellik arasındaki ikilemi sorgulamakta ve bir yandan James Tiptree, Jr.'ın *Uzaktan Kumandalı Kız* (1973) adlı kısa romanının posthümanist teknofeminist bir metin olarak değerlendirilip değerlendirilemeyeceği sorusuna yanıt ararken, diğer bir yandan da teknolojik gelişmeler, protez (eklenti) bedenler ve posthümanizmin feminist boyutları arasındaki dinamik ilişkileri incelemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Posthümanizm, transhümanizm, bilim-kurgu, James Tiptree, Jr., *Uzaktan Kumandalı Kız*

* The title is used as in the Turkish translation of the novella by Begüm Kovulmaz, published by İthaki Yayınları in 2018.

Extended Summary

The main contentions of this article are predominantly the predicaments of posthumanism and transhumanism, especially in their relatively new configurations in philosophically and ethically grounded academic debates. Although posthumanism sharply differs from transhumanism in its material feminist, new materialist, and eco-philosophical strands, the technoscientific aspect of the 'cybernetic posthuman' as both a hardwired and an organic body cannot completely release posthumanism from its alignments with transhumanism, often constructed upon false grounds. Therefore, the methodologies employed in this article retain, to a considerable extent, their loyalty to the foreparents of critical posthumanism, who have molded posthumanism into its current shape. This means, the methodologies used in this article mainly follow the strategies brought forward by those pioneering figures of the posthuman thought, such as Donna Haraway, Katherine Hayles, Rosi Braidotti, Cary Wolfe, and Francesca Ferrando. These scholars have contributed to the development of or fashioned posthumanism from diverse perspectives. Due to its literary context, however, the article focuses on the technological veins of posthumanism more than its other branches. As a result of the limitations posed by its literary scope, the article does not reveal a more exceptional picture of posthumanism, which collaborates with animal studies, environmental ethics, and various strands of ecocriticism. The main point of problematization here is the resemblance of transhumanism and posthumanism in their technoscientific aspects. The two elements that comprise the body of this article are, therefore, the concept of the posthuman versus the transhuman. While posthumanism distinctively situates itself against the anthropocentric ventures of sexism, racism, ableism, ageism, and speciesism, transhumanism centralizes the concept of Anthropos. Thus, even though the new materialist aspects of posthumanism remain out of the scope here, following from posthumanism's counterarguments to all discriminatory *'-isms,'* the intersectional links between feminism and posthumanism hold

a central place within this article. Conceived as a technofeminist endeavor by its very own roots, posthumanism, as handled in this article, is a means to interrogate the dynamic relations between emergent subjectivities in technoscientific landscapes. Therefore, James Tiptree, Jr.'s novella *The Girl Who Was Plugged In* (1973) is used as a means to solidify the posthuman/ the transhuman quandary, and the novella serves as a robust springboard to discuss the intertwined connectivity between the mind and the body, nature and technology, and the brain (as matter) and consciousness (as information). The main character's story is entirely based on the dilemma of the mind a symbolizes the polis, which is comprised nd the body due to her two-faced representation as P. Burke (the intelligent mind with undesirable materiality) and Delphi (the beautiful artificial body). This description is scrutinized through her relations to the technologically enhanced landscape within a far-future world dominated by megacorporations. Not far from the reality of our twenty-first-century lives, *The Girl Who Was Plugged In*, on the one hand, forms the template for a critique of consumerist, liberal humanist, and an advanced form of capitalism, which makes it aligned with the recent posthumanist thought. On the other hand, the mind/body distinction, where the mind is superior, controlling element behind the body alludes to the transhumanist side of the discussion. Though not without ambiguity, James Tiptree, Jr.'s novella still retains its technoscientific feminist undertones. It critically reassesses the commoditization and fetishization of the female body within the highly advanced capitalist systems accompanied by high-rise buildings and intelligent machines. Therefore, Delphi/P. Burke combination stands as a metaphor for the cyborg that symbolizes the *polis*, which is comprised of the privileged *bios* only, ignoring zoë. That primary dichotomy between *bios* and *zoë*, after all, not only formulates the core theme of the novella but also conjures the main streams of discussion in the recent forms of posthumanism. Hence, the article discusses the novella within posthumanist and transhumanist contexts and analyzes it from an all-embracing, technofeminist and posthumanist perspective. Despite the novella's slight proximity to transhumanist ideals, the critiques of advanced capitalism in the text can highlight the battle cry of Delphi/P.Burke as the daughter(s) of *zoë*.

Introduction

Theories of posthumanism and the term 'posthuman' have, in recent years, been increasingly a matter of debate in academia within diverse contexts and with different connotations. Most of the time, readers have encountered the concept of 'the posthuman' used as a transposable component of transhumanism. On various occasions, the rhizomatic links between the set of theories and the term have, on the one hand, been equated with anti-humanism, a critique of anthropocentrism, and an all-embracing umbrella concept for the merger of postcolonialism, feminism, and anti-speciesism. On the other hand, these links have been employed in technophilic or technophobic settings with an implication of human enhancement. The interchangeable employment of the terms posthumanism and its 'dark twin' transhumanism, inevitably make posthumanism and its related concepts confusing. As foregrounding feminist scholars of posthumanism and gender studies Cecilia Åsberg and Rosi Braidotti point out in their introduction to *A Feminist Companion to Posthumanities* (2018), there is a wide range of references to the posthuman in both popular and scholarly contexts. For them, these referential points are, from time to time, "incompatible" with one another; one being associated with "a belief in modern progress or technology as salvation from bodily vulnerabilities" (7) and the other being a vast array of theories nourished by Nietzschean anti-humanism, Foucauldian conceptualization of the end of the human, and a disanthropocentric flat ontology. The disconcerting symptoms of posthumanism in its cybernetic and technophilic aspects, therefore, lead to a misunderstanding of the term, especially in the proliferation of related jargon, such as transhumanism, anti-humanism, super-humanism, and meta-humanism[1].

Given such contrasting contentions on posthumanism and the posthuman, in what follows, this article broadly discusses the potential misperceptions

1 For a broader discussion of these terms in comparison to one another, see Francesca Ferrando's 2013 article entitled "Posthumanism, Transhumanism, Antihumanism, Metahumanism, and New Materialisms: Differences and Relations" published in *Existenz: A Journal in Philosophy, Religion, Politics, and the Arts* 8.2, 26-32.

by conversing on the posthuman quandaries of body and consciousness, corporeality and information, and matter and meaning. As a literary means to solidify these critical and philosophical discussions, it provides cases in point from James Tiptree, Jr.'s *The Girl Who Was Plugged In* (1973), a short novella that shares particular feminist concerns with the recent posthumanist debate over the body and its (mostly female) representations as an 'unflawed and desirable' object. Following a nonlinear strategy, rather than a chronological outline in its explication of theory and practice, the article takes a posthumanist stance and intends to distance it from transhumanism.

The Convergence of Posthumanism, Transhumanism, and Technoscience

The dichotomies of discourse/matter, information/corporeality, and mind/body have long been the basis for much of the current posthumanist disputes. Such basis, in its most renowned forms, is exemplified by the inaugural projects and works of posthumanist theorists such as N. Katherine Hayles and Cary Wolfe, aside from landmark publications that have come to shape posthumanism as it is, such as Donna J. Haraway's and Rosi Braidotti's foundational works. Among many others that have flourished within the past decade and cast the posthumanist discourse in its various facets, however, when one considers the 'high-tech features' of the posthumanist debate, Hayles's and Wolfe's inspirational ventures bear utmost significance. These are especially key to understanding and spanning the immense gap between information and corporeality. Likewise, when it comes to the deliberations over the opposition of the mind and the body and its deconstructions, one cannot help remembering Hayles's famous quote that underlines the indivisibility of the mind from the body, in which she emphasizes an assortment of "heterogeneous components" and a "material-informational entity" with constantly transgressive boundaries (1999: 3). This quotation is expressively apposite in illuminating and decomposing the Cartesian debate of mind/body, especially concerning the inquiries into the possibilities of the existence of human intelligence without a body as envisaged in Marvin Minsky's *The Society of Mind* (1985) or into the

likelihood of transferring human consciousness into a processor as imagined in Richard Jastrow's *The Enchanted Loom* (1981) and Hans Moravec's *Mind Children* (1988). These have sparked many academic and popular conversations under transhumanist and (falsely attached) posthumanist labels because they appealed to the innermost desires of the human ego: immortality and power. The writers of such imaginations perceived the human body in derogatory senses, as fallible, weak, and mortal. If they could get the brain "ensconced in a computer," this, they believed, would bring liberation to the human, who would then hold the necessary power to shape its fate and "could live forever" (Jastrow 1981: 166-167). For the posthumanist thought, however, the mind has always been indivisible from the body. Posthumanist scholars have always emphasized the "interdependency" and "overlap" of humans with nature and other species (Fuller 2017: 151).

Then why are these two different terms confused so often? The terms 'posthumanism' and 'transhumanism' are obscured because these two recent trends in thought share a common point in what they denote and connote, though with a significant difference. Both directions are increasingly getting immersed in an attraction to science and technology. Then, to concisely outline the considerable disparity between them, using Francesca Ferrando's words would be beneficial. The various tropes of transhumanism "share the goal of human enhancement" via science and technology, so transhumanism "does not expropriate rational humanism" due to "philosophically rooting itself in the Enlightenment" (2019: 31-32). This belief in the powerful essence of the human, in its numerous forms and scenarios, can be likened to a precautionary step taken to prevent the unavoidable 'death of the human,' perhaps in a Foucauldian sense, as the ultimate being that dominates the planet. Although this is the primary distinction between posthumanism and transhumanism, it is still quite easy to confuse the two at first glance because, indeed, at least on one plane, the posthuman condition may signify 'the end of the human' as we know it. In the posthumanist thought, the human is no longer viewed as a self-contained entity. It is 'dethroned' due to being composed of organic and inorganic matter and to a strong dependence on technology, which indicates that 'the human' is no longer

the concept that it was, regarded as separate from the environment surrounding it. For posthumanists, this environment not only surrounds the human, but it is also *within* it. Therefore, as Ferrando argues (2019), posthumanism considers technology as an indispensable part of the human, but it does not prioritize it; if it did so, it would downgrade itself "to a form of techno-reductionism" (39). It is a 'neither-nor case' rather than an anti-technology form of rebellion or an endeavor to create an immortal, impregnable Frankenstein.

On the other hand, transhumanism finds it possible and desirable to fundamentally alter human physiology to increase "human performance outside the realms of what is considered to be 'normal' for humans" (*Humanity+*). Fantasies of eliminating the physical aspects of the human to achieve 'immortality' often accompany transhumanist thought. "Chips," rather than "biology," are the humans' "destiny" in this thread (Kosko 1999: 256), so the belief in the power and capabilities of the human as a superior being is extended to such a scope that it has come to be formulated as an overgeneralized misconception of the Nietzschean *übermensch*. The main problem for the posthumanist thought, then, rises from the fact that the earlier writings of the followers of transhumanism mentioned a conversion from human to 'posthuman,' although calling this hybrid figure 'Human 2.0' would perhaps explain it better.

Thus, in the distinction between transhumanism and posthumanism, the notion of technogenesis plays a crucial role. Technogenesis, which Hayles identifies as considering technology inextricable from human existence (and as Ferrando underlines by borrowing the term from Hayles), echoes Ihab Hassan's Prometheus, arguably the first philosophical attempt to define a posthumanist understanding. Hassan (1977) attributes posthumanist qualities to the human as we know it from the very beginning of its history. Indeed, he calls upon a mythological figure, Prometheus, who stole the fire from gods to give it to the humankind. He refers to "the discovery of fire by prehistoric 'man'" as Stefan Herbrechter (2013: 34) puts it. In other words, from the discovery of fire onwards, humans have always experienced a co-evolution with tools, apparatuses, and technology, on which they are always dependent, as Hassan strongly underlines and Herbrechter outlines. As Herbrechter pinpoints, Hassan's definition of

posthumanism involves the human's "technologization and cyborgization" as well as "its immersion within an expanding technoculture" (2013: 35). That amalgamation of fiction, knowledge, technology, and vision is repeated in Donna Haraway's famous metaphor of the cyborg, too. Haraway observes: "By the late twentieth century, our time, a mythic time, we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short, we are cyborgs" (1991: 150). In this famous quotation, despite her hesitation towards being associated with posthumanism due to the term's false associations with transhumanism, Haraway has founded the very essence of the posthumanist debate. In this essence, the cyborg metaphor of politico-feminism defies Western capitalism, which follows "the tradition of progress; the tradition of the appropriation of nature as resource for the productions of culture; the tradition of reproduction of the self from the reflections of the other" (1991: 150). Hassan's and Haraway's views on and critiques of liberal humanist undertakings that construct the foundations of Western capitalism, however, are reversed in transhumanism. Transhumanism, in its core, rests upon the very foundations of the liberal humanist discourse that believes in human progress, with faith in science and achievement.

Returning to the predicament of transhumanism and posthumanism, aside from technogenesis, there is one more common element between the two that causes their confusion: their signaling the end of the human. However, how they deal with this notion highlights one of the significant differences between them. According to Hayles (1999), the concept of the posthuman indicates the end of the human as a specific conceptualization. By this, she implies that the belief in having "individual agency and choice" is dismantled because these titles were, after all, bestowed upon humans by themselves only if they had "wealth, power, and leisure" by which they configured themselves as "autonomous beings" who practice "their will" (286). Thus, posthumanism strictly criticizes what transhumanism follows. The dreams of attaining super-DNAs or invincible bodies that are non-aging and non-defied by diseases still apply to those "fractions of humanity" that are mentioned by Hayles (1999: 286). The economic and scientific privileges segregate those who hold power from those

who do not have access to fundamental 'human' rights. As such, transhumanism returns to the very basis of all dichotomies: the one between *bios*, which is interpreted as the eminent life of the select residents of the *polis*, and *zoë* as all the remaining life forms, or 'bare life' to borrow Giorgio Agamben's much-contested use of the term (1998). If, as Haraway notes, "the cyborg defines a technological *polis*," then, posthumanism seeks a new formation in which the high-quality life and the bare life are no longer at war with one another. If *bios* is specific Life and *zoë* is general and encompassing Life as the ancient Greeks understood them (deliberate capitalization), then *bios* is always already dependent on *zoë*. However, due to the power relations attributed to them, the former denies such dependency over the latter. What posthumanism seeks to overcome is that denial[2].

As can be understood from these discussions, none of the undertakings of posthumanism above refer to a "postbiological" reality, which is "dominated by self-improving, thinking machines" as Moravec dreams of (1988: 5). Nor do they envisage futures based on an augmentation of the human to attain higher efficiency. As David Roden (2015) rightfully underlines, posthumanism aims to present a from-within understanding and deconstruction of humanism, "tracing its internal tensions and conceptual discrepancies" instead of imagining "the uploaded minds or intelligent robots to come" (9). In other words, posthumanism perceives technology as a partner to battle our simple beliefs on the alleged gap between humans and nonhumans on the ontological plane, not as a sheer instrument to alter the cognitive and physical capacities of humans, creating "an entirely new species" (Ağın Dönmez 2015: 22). From a twenty-first-century ecofeminist perspective, then, it is not difficult to see the underlying feminist assumptions of posthumanism that pursues the breakdown of all binary oppositions created in the Enlightenment ideals of Western liberalism.

2 This calls to mind the famous Master Model by feminist eco-philosopher Val Plumwood (1993), in which there are operational links between psychology, philosophy, economics, and political science, as further advanced by Greta Gaard in her *Critical Ecofeminism* (2017). Arguing that the dualisms of human versus nature and mind versus body contribute to the making of the colonialist Master Model, Plumwood (1993) noted that these are gendered, raced, and classed dualisms, indicating a dynamic web of interrelations between them. Having strong connections to the overcoming of what Plumwood calls 'backgrounding,' which means the Master benefits from the services provided by the other but repudiates such reliance, the primary goal of posthumanism is to restore *zoë* into its deserved position of inclusion. The feminist grounds for posthumanism are discussed in the next section of this article.

The Feminist Orientations of Posthumanism

Following what has been reviewed above, one can build links between feminism and posthumanism, not only because the latest technoscientific discussions in science and technology studies come from feminist strands, but also because much of the theoretical grounds of posthumanism are indebted to theories of feminism. Building her arguments on deconstructivist and anti-anthropocentic premises, for instance, Braidotti (2016) foregrounds her recent claims of posthumanism on the "intersections between feminism and the posthuman predicament" (21). She notes that "feminism is not *a* humanism;" that "Anthropos has been decentered and so is the emphasis on *bios*;" and that "nonhuman life," that is *zoë*, is currently "the ruling concept" (Braidotti 2016: 21, italics in the original). Mentioning the two primary sources from which posthuman critical theory derives its power, Braidotti (2018) also accentuates the impact of the work produced by "feminist theory and Deleuze and Guattari's neomaterialist philosophy" on the evolvement of posthumanism (340). She observes: "The combination of feminist and neomaterialist philosophies allows for an anti-humanist and post-anthropocentric stance, which can innovate and invigorate discussions of naturalism, the environment, ecological justice and the shifting status of the human. This results in the rejection of dualism" (2018: 340). In a sense, this echoes Wolfe's undertones implicating the link between all kinds of discriminatory '-*isms*,' as when he argues against humanism as a speciesist discourse. This is significant because such speciesism is parallel to other discriminatory practices. Wolfe argues that if the systematic exploitation and killing of nonhuman animals for species-based reasons continue to be considered acceptable on the institutional levels, then such discourse of humanism will be employed by people for the discrimination of other people, "to countenance violence against the social other of whatever species – or gender, or race, or class, or sexual difference" (2003: 8). Such ecofeminist and postcolonialist resonations have helped posthumanism to reach a higher latitude and gain a broader scope of cultural and ecological studies that have all been produced on philosophical and ethical grounds so far.

Therefore, as Braidotti verbalizes, posthumanism is strongly tied to all feminist enterprises, and thus needs to face substantial challenges of philosophy and ethics. The first of these challenges is "to acknowledge that subjectivity is not

the exclusive prerogative of Anthropos." The second is "to develop a dynamic and sustainable notion of vitalist materialism that encompasses non-human agents, ranging from plants and animals to technological artefacts." Finally, "to enlarge the frame and scope of ethical accountability along the transversal lines of post-anthropocentric relations;" that is, "to create assemblages of human and non-human actors" is the third (Braidotti 2018: 339). Bearing in mind these challenges and acknowledging the recent developments in posthumanist set of theories in new materialisms, material ecocriticism, and material feminisms, all of which seek to bring together nature, culture, and technology with all the human and nonhuman components of life and non-life, posthumanism has always already been a feminist undertaking. If, as Braidotti summarizes, an "eco-sophical co-creation of the world" gives rise to the recognition of the "anthropomorphic and non-anthropomorphic beings" altogether, with all their "specific abilities and capacities," extending the scope to "the inclusion of and interaction with technological artefacts," then it is possible to overcome the nature/culture dichotomy that resides within the Western practices of advanced capitalism, which builds itself on an "over-coding of technology by the financial profit principle" (2018: 340). This summary, in its ecologically oriented, feminist, and technologically embracing philosophy, leads us to the discussion of James Tiptree Jr.'s novella from posthumanist and feminist aspects as an early critique of such advanced capitalism.

Multiple Interconnections of Posthuman Feminist Technoscience in *The Girl Who Was Plugged In*

Resonating with the interrelations and entangled connectivities beyond human mental and bodily capacities as mentioned earlier, James Tiptree Jr.'s novella is set in a technologically-progressive landscape, with the probable aim of critiquing the progressive capitalism of the twentieth century and beyond, and of criticizing the anthropocentric and capitalist desire to shape and usurp the female body as a means of profit. Intended as an "anti-capitalist satire" (Çamur 2018)[3], the novella creates a world where the advertisements are strictly hidden

3 Translations of the citations from this author is mine.

from view, and even the word advertisement itself is censored. To evade the control mechanisms, the alternative method of using 'icons' is developed. These icons are basically androids controlled by operators who are never to be seen in 'real' life. The story, which questions the 'reality' of female attractiveness, consumer society, and the rise of capitalism, unfolds around Delphi as the icon, a young and attractive android, and P. Burke as the operator, a seventeen-year-old girl with a deformed body. The fusion of Delphi and P. Burke reveals a breakdown in the real/unreal dichotomy along with other forms of binary oppositions such as the predicament of "voice versus silence" (Çamur 2018). As Hazal Çamur also observes, "P. Burke's 'P.' is never disclosed throughout the text, and her last name refers to her being unvoiced" (2018), while Delphi's identity is described as both 'angelic' and 'pornographic' at once. Although these binaries highly contribute to the many layers of meaning in the novella, the significant contrasts prevail in two contested areas: gender and humanness.

Interestingly, one of the primary dichotomies, gender binary, results from the author's own identity. James Tiptree Jr. was a pseudonym for Alice Bradley Sheldon, the Hugo-award winner of 1974 with this novella, who did not reveal her female identity until 1977. On what came to be known as Tiptree Jr.'s "masculine prose," the author commented that "men have so preempted the area of human experience that when you write about universal motives, you are assumed to be writing like a man" (qtd. in Wills 2018). As Çamur (2018) notes, James Tiptree Jr. "shelved the validity of" what is referred to as 'masculine' and 'feminine' stylistics in his/her writings. Her identity, thus reflected in her work, is the primary source for the transposition of male/female binary. Such twisting of gender-based prejudices gives a posthumanist tendency to the novella's context. Despite its plot revolving around a beautiful body controlled by an intelligent mind and its seeming allusions to the quandary of the mind and the body, the novella allows itself to be analyzed by the critical threads of posthumanism. In fact, in the literary sense, it can be claimed that the novella posits itself around the very same niches that are undertaken by Hayles, Braidotti, and Wolfe in expressing the relations between the mental and the bodily, and in articulating a flat ontological plane where the human and the nonhuman co-exist. As some of those filaments in the

novella seem transhumanist in tone, in the rest of this article, such threads will be discussed in a much broader philosophical posthumanist scope.

As the novella narrates how P. Burke's mind becomes a remote control for the fabricated body of Delphi, it is a zone of intersection between corporeality and consciousness, which highlights the intertwined relations between inscription and incorporation. Whether existence can be segregated into mental and bodily parts is the core question concerning the discussion of what makes the human what it is. In this regard, one can contend that a posthuman identity emerges out of Tiptree's plot, being shaped by P. Burke's consciousness and Delphi's manufactured corporeality. Put differently, the character of P. Burke plus Delphi formulates the core epistemological, ontological, and ethical questions as a critique of the capitalistic practices of megacorporations in the twentieth century, as well as bearing resemblances to Haraway's concept of the cyborg and naturecultures. In brief, the text is rich in its manifest critiques of the twentieth (and thereby twenty-first) century consumer culture that holds captive the female body within the unsolved binary jams and dualisms created by capitalism, which are increasingly condemned by the most recent revelations of posthuman critical theory. To repeat Braidotti's poetic depiction above, then, the novella at least is in an attempt to disparage a world which avoids embracing the concept of "an eco-sophical co-creation" or recognizing the diverse forms of human-like and nonhuman-like beings and things alike, thus allowing questioning 'humanness.'

So, what is human? Is it a biological species only? Is it a social category? What are the cultural, philosophical, and ethical implications of being a human? These are central questions to both Tiptree's text and posthumanism as a philosophical concept. In a nonlinear explication, at this point, a return is necessary to the fact that posthumanism problematizes the exclusionary definition of the human, which relies heavily on the Enlightenment ideals and universally categorizes the human as a rational and sentient white male due to its Eurocentric and androcentric tendencies. From a different perspective, Wolfe (2018) explains this human/nonhuman dilemma thoroughly. He mentions the impossibility of segregating the human and the nonhuman, especially considering "binding together of neurophysiology, cognitive states and symbolic

behaviors" and, for that matter, underlines the impossibility of drawing a line between the brain and the mind (358). He continues his argument with the idea that "cultural and anthropological inheritances, tool use and technologies, archives and prosthetic devices, or semiotic systems of all kinds" pre-exist us, humans, since he views these as "always already on the scene before we arrive, providing the very antecedent conditions of possibility for our *becoming* 'human." He then connects these convincing arguments with the position that "human beings are *prosthetic* beings" and compellingly contends that humans are composed of a "multiplicity of relations" (358, italics in the original). As such, one can recognize from Wolfe's arguments that posthumanism holds among its objectives the destabilization of all dichotomies that arise from the fundamental distinction between *bios* and *zoë*. As a rejection of the ghettoizing '*-isms*,' the concept of the posthuman is offered as a new model of subjectivity, which, in Wolfe's words, helps posthumanism to be detached from transhumanism through a reconception of relations. These relations are between "what we call 'the human' and the question of *finitude*," including "the finitude of our relationship to the tools, languages, codes, maps and semiotic systems that make the world cognitively available to us in the first place" (2018: 358, italics in the original).

Contextually assembled along comparable lines, Tiptree Jr.'s novella also has reservations about such codes of meaning-making practices and their interrelational situation in synch with the discussions of the body. Indeed, a merger of Delphi and P. Burke composes the very same person, but how is that possible when Delphi's body is an object of desire while it is P. Burke's mind that makes this body 'desirable' and more importantly 'vital'? If the human is associated with such qualities that redeem it into 'superior' as intelligence, speech, responsiveness, and cognizance, then all the fleshly foundations of the human as a biological species are, to some extent, ignored, if not omitted. As Hayles aptly puts it, the human as "the liberal subject" owns a body, but was not typically characterized as "*being* a body;" it is associated with "the rational mind" with claims of "notorious universality – a claim that depends on erasing markers of bodily difference, including sex, race, and ethnicity" (1997: 245; emphases

in the original). Such erasure of the markers of physical or biological difference being a shared characteristic of "*both* the liberal humanist subject *and* the cybernetic posthuman" (Hayles 1997: 243; emphases in the original) is the critical component in Tiptree's novella. As P. Burke becomes the controlling mind behind Delphi's body, her 'real' self becomes disjointed from her corporeality. Hence, when analyzed through a posthumanist lens, despite its powerful alliance with technoscientific elements that resonate with the posthuman, Tiptree's text seems to retain a strictly human-centered mentality, which makes it affiliated with a transhumanist mindset. On the other hand, the story also carries somewhat closer references to the current formulations of the posthuman, as it is a critique of capitalist practices that assign the informational a higher status than the material.

The ambivalence that Tiptree's novella creates, thus, leads to a discussion of the posthuman in two distinct ways. The first of these is the configuration of the posthuman as an alternative reality to the human experience – one that is entirely based on nanotechnology, biotechnology, information technology, and cognitive science. It is primarily fed by feedback loops, automata, and robotics, which correlate with the informational side, the mind. In contrast, the second one defies mind/body distinction and disanthropocentrically critiques human exceptionalism. As mentioned above in the discussions over posthumanism versus transhumanism, although the concept of the posthuman in its current academic formulations does not entirely reject the cybernetic component, it is not wholly based on an erasure of the human identity and its replacement by super-human cyborgs, either. Tiptree's novella, however, seems to attribute mental faculties a privilege over the body in presenting an outline of the human. The binary oppositions between P. Burke's mind and Delphi's body are maintained throughout the text even though they make up the same person. Delphi seems to lack a mind of her own, while P. Burke's body is heavily deformed, and as a result, needs to be 'eliminated' or 'discarded.' While Delphi represents the fabricated and culturally produced body, P. Burke is ascribed to a superior position as she is in control. She is the one who is capable of feeling and loving, so she is considered cognizant. The culture/nature dichotomy, as one can swiftly see, is reiterated throughout the storyline. It becomes clear that culture has co-opted nature as the

environment is mostly made up of technological devices, which is also highly evidenced by P. Burke's deprivation of her own body. Her physical needs are only met during the intervals when she is not in control of Delphi's activity. Delphi's sleep is also passivized. Since she is 'not alive,' she does not sleep, but she is only 'switched off.' Then, the potential kinship between the human and the nonhuman, the living and the inanimate, and the informational and the corporeal remains secondary, if not non-existent, as to the discussions of an all-embracing feminist posthumanism from our current viewpoints. Tiptree's novella oscillates between an early step of technofeminism to critique the commoditization of the female body and a stride towards the transhumanist fantasies of human enhancement.

The same fluctuation occurs in the outer scope of the text, as well. In other words, the dichotomous strategies in the novella are also extended to the world outside: The background imagery indicates almost a delusional future, which highly resembles the present for the contemporary reader. At the same time, since the novella was written in the 1970s, but aimed for the further-technologized future, this constitutes a sense of the past for the reader. In this perception, the borders of the past, the present, and the future are eroded in an extremely commoditized environment. The novella, after all, takes place in the far future, when a megacorporation called GTX has started dominating every walk of life. The narrator, who addresses the reader as "dad" or "zombie," gives a sense that the reader is too old-fashioned or even dead or rotten to understand the dynamics of this new system, reminding us how such views of ageism are currently left behind with the gerontologist strategies employed in contemporary posthumanist contexts. This reference to ageism, of course, raises another point of discussion within the posthumanist framework. As Gavin Andrews and Cameron Duff (2019) note, both human and nonhuman bodies, be they biological or material, have their distinct capacities of aging, and they evolve collectively and along with one another. Therefore, each of these "aging realities and experiences emerges through the working of 'assemblages' composed of these entities," producing lively, flat ontologies that are in an interplay through one another with "vital outcomes […] which are more than the sum of assemblages' parts" (48). In this regard, as twenty-first-century creatures that have co-evolved with technologies and entities

that are *within* and *around* us, 'we' as (post)humans have reversed the narrator's deliberate indications of us being the 'older' and 'rotten' generation. Still, in its clear strategies, the novella presents the details of this highly technological system to a certain extent, by indicating the existence of techno-entities as detailed images: "Ah, there's plenty to swing with here—and it's not all that far in the future, dad. But pass up the sci-fi stuff for now, like for instance the holovision technology that's put TV and radio in museums. Or the worldwide carrier field bouncing down from satellites, controlling communication and transport systems all over the globe. That was a spin-off from asteroid mining, pass it by" (2). Then, the novella presents a dualism of technology and nature in its repercussions. The way the storyline of the novella is built up, for instance, reveals that the body is merely viewed as an extension, which can be problematized in the posthumanist sense because it creates a sense of proximity to the transhumanist ventures mentioned above. According to Ferrando (2013), this is a form of "techno-reductionism" because it insinuates a driving force towards progress based on the hierarchy of "rational thought" (28), which resonates with the idea that the humans' physical aspects refer to something that they need to get rid of to obtain super-human features. On the other hand, posthumanism absolves the mystifying elements of "any ontological polarization through the postmodern practice of deconstruction" (Ferrando 2013: 29). Thus, the body of P. Burke might be viewed as rejecting any form of reconciliation, and her mind as a form of AI take-over as imagined by science-fiction dystopias that derive pleasure in seeing the end of the human and its flawed bodily aspects.

Nevertheless, it is essential at this point to emphasize the blurring of such dichotomy in posthumanism. Viewing Tiptree's text as 'posthuman' and 'technofeminist' does not necessarily suggest that posthumanism rejects the informational aspect of the body, as in the DNA. In its earlier configurations, as in Ihab Hassan's work, posthumanism stood as a questioning of the human in its collaboration with technology and machines. In its current formulations, however, posthumanism is in pursuit of repositioning the human with its nonhuman organic and technological counterparts. Especially the bourgeoning effects of material feminism and new materialisms are essential in such

formulations. By defying the centuries-old mind/body dualism, posthumanism objects to considering information as an inscription that follows the existence of the body. Alternatively, reversing the argument, the presence of the biological and of the informational aspects of the human does not precede one another; they exist together. In this sense, the posthuman subjectivity does not completely defy cyberculture, but it does not view it as central to its argument. Considering Tiptree's novella, however, on which side of this posthumanist predicament it stands is ambiguous.

As suggested by Andrews and Duff (2019), within the advanced forms and practices of Western capitalism and its associations with human faith in progress and achievement, humans are increasingly immersed in, emerge with, and live through "more-than-human assemblages of digital cultures, algorithmic computation, electronic media diffusion, and technological proliferation, including engineering and bio-technologies" (47). If this is the case – and this is the case indeed, one can prefer to view Tiptree Jr.'s text as a merger of such assemblages, rather than understanding it in a singular, monolithic form of technology dominance. After all, enthused mainly by Haraway's conceptualization of the cyborg as a no-origin, hybrid figure that incorporates the human and the machine, posthumanism is fundamentally fed by technoscientific studies and cyberculture as well as their philosophical repercussions. It is, therefore, possible to build an analogy between Tiptree's novella and Haraway's and Hassan's approaches to the posthuman, which might relieve the stress on Tiptree's work and save it from being associated with a direct form of transhumanism. There are correlative links between P. Burke as the inscriptional side and Delphi as the corporeal side. Within such amalgamation, the narrative powers of a body or a text are fused with the matter, displaying more than a rudimentary disregard for the biological aspect. Put this way, Tiptree's dilemma of Delphi/P. Burke might be resolved into a consolidation of Delphi *and* P. Burke. Even if one cannot claim that the text fully aligns itself with our current understanding of posthumanist ventures, it could still be viewed as an early posthuman technofeminist attempt.

Conclusion

The Girl Who Was Plugged In allows itself to be read as a "material-semiotic node" (Haraway 1991: 200) because just as Haraway's cyborg is a feminist critique of the postmodern state of the human, surrounded by the capitalistic practices of Western science and politics, so is Tiptree's novella. This novella, therefore, can be thought of as an earlier form of posthumanist philosophies due to its raising of the mind/body dichotomy over the two-sides of a female character and to its resemblance to Hassan's view of the posthuman, which emphasizes "artificial intelligences" that convert "the concept of the human" (1977: 846). The same artificial intelligences take over P. Burke's body as she becomes practically non-existent after a failing suicidal attempt. Her body is tied to machines and highly technological systems, and her brain and consciousness start controlling a new 'goddess,' which is a pseudonym for all the female celebrity figures. The erasure of her organic body from the living world, thus, denotes a Moravec-style fantasy as her mind is the controlling power behind a non-natural body. Delphi, after all, is not a 'real' human, but because she is more tangible than P. Burke, she becomes more 'real' than 'the real,' almost materializing as a Baudrillardian simulacrum. Her past now being erased, P. Burke indeed becomes a no-origin figure in the body of Delphi, just like a cyborg subject, which is an outcry of the women's experiences in the late twentieth century, to remember Haraway's words. The extreme emphasis on the bodily qualities of women, indeed, defines who is capable of loving and being loved and who is not, so this is the commoditization of the female body, and Tiptree presents an ambiguous criticism of this liberal capitalist mindset through this novella.

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