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Research article

Digital Embodiment and Memory Duplication in Jordan Harrison's *Marjorie Prime* (2014)

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on trauma, silence and the reconstruction of meaning in Debbie Tucker Green's *Random* and Simon Stephens's *Sea Wall*. Silence is an effect that captures language's failure before traumatic experience and is a stage for witnessing grief. The study uses a six-stage comparative close reading, inspired by Cathy Caruth's theory of belatedness and Judith Herman's relational recovery model. It tells of traumatic impact rather than traumatic return: *Random*, a collapse of an unfolding present; *Sea Wall*, a persistence of a past within it. Reconstruction is not healing, but a different relationship between memory, language, death and others. A communal reconstruction, based on witnessing and responsibility, was attempted in a random manner, while an existential reconstruction, based on narration and continued attachment, was attempted towards *Sea Wall*. What was once unspeakable now becomes speakable without being falsely resolved.

التجسيد الرقمي وإزدواجية الذاكرة في مارجوري برايم لجوردان هاريسون(2014)

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المُستخلص

تتناول هذه الدراسة مسرحية مارجوري برايم (٢٠١٤) للكاتب جوردان هاريسون، مقاربةً إياها من منظورَي ما بعد الإنسانية وما بعد الحداثة، وذلك بهدف الكشف عن الآليات التي يُعيد بها هاريسون صياغة مفاهيم الهوية والذاكرة والتجسيد في سياق العصر الرقمي. وتُبيّن الدراسة كيف وظّف الكاتبُ الفضاءَ المنزلي فضاءً فلسفياً خصباً للتأمل في إشكاليات الوعي والوساطة التكنولوجية. وتُجسّد الصور الهولوغرافية للأحبة الراحلين ذلك التوتر الجوهري الكامن في صميم الفكر ما بعد الإنساني، الممتد بين قطبَي الحضور والغياب، والأصالة والمحاكاة. وعبر إخراج مسرحي متقشّف، وحوار تكراري متداخل، وتعبير عاطفي مضبوط، تُقدّم المسرحيةُ الذاتَ الإنسانية بوصفها جملةً من أنماط البيانات وخوارزميات الوجدان. ولا تنحو الدراسة إلى التشاؤم الديستوبي، بل تقترح منظومةً أخلاقية بديلة، تقوم على مبدأ الرعاية المتجذّرة في العلاقة الإنسانية وجوهرها. وتمضي الدراسة أبعد من ذلك، إذ تُعيد تعريف مفهومَي الحزن والذاكرة، مقترحةً أن استمرارية الإنسان ليست رهينةَ الحياة البيولوجية وحدها، بل تتجاوزها لتشمل السجلات والرموز، والأثرَ العاطفي المتراكم داخل منظومات الذاكرة الرقمية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: : التجسيد الرقمي، الذات المجزأة، محاكاة الذاكرة، ما بعد الحداثة الليوتاردية، ما بعد الانسانية

1. Introduction

Marjorie Prime by Jordan Harrison (2014) is a sweeping evaluation of the topic of memory, identity, and the intrusion of artificial intelligence into the small spheres of human experience. It is staged in a near-future setting where technologies are developed enough to recreate the dead in a holographic form; the play addresses the issues of identity and memory becoming fluid, performative, and technologically mediated (Osborne and Jones, 2022). This review places *Marjorie Prime* and the meeting point of posthumanism and postmodernism as a posthuman conceptualization of humanity, in which memory ceases to be a fixed container of personal truth and becomes a porous database that disrupts the limits of selfhood.

Technology in *Marjorie Prime* is not used as a narrative tool but as a philosophical perspective, a prism of the human condition. The holographic companion of Marjorie, called Walter Prime, becomes the electronic incarnation of her memories, a collection of composed memory fragments. This woman-machine connection resembles the idea proposed by Katherine Hayles (1999) in her article “How we became posthuman: Virtual bodies in cybernetics, literature, and informatics” that information has lost its body, resulting in the new definition of subjectivity as spread over both physical and virtual space. On the same note, the posthuman subject by Braidotti (2013) in her book *The Posthuman* offers a theoretical

ground to the audience on how the characters in the film that is based on the play by Harrison exist in intermediary positions, existing between physical bodies and online forms of existence.

The play also illustrates the incredulity to narrative held by Lyotard's (1984) book *The postmodern condition: A report on knowledge* in the way it eliminates the consistent truth and introduces memory as disjointed discourse. With its piecemeal dialogue, recursive narration, and holographic appearances, *Marjorie Prime* transforms into a postmodern memory play, dramatizing the effluxion of the singular self and the emergence of the virtual identity. According to Brueckner (2018), his work is another type of memory play, where, instead the machine has been outsourced to the memory. This concern is not isolated to theatrical forms alone. Scholars of contemporary English literature have examined how Artificial Intelligence unsettles the very foundations of authorship and narrative identity across genres. Abdulsahib (2026) argues that contemporary literature does not simply reflect technological change but actively wrestles with its social consequences, contending that "artificial intelligence does not obliterate human imagination but instead transforms it into a new realm of interaction with machine creativity" (p. 1349). Furthermore, Abdulsahib emphasizes that AI-assisted writing tools raise fundamental questions about authorship and reliance, as they shift the literary act from pure human expression toward a hybrid practice in which the boundaries between human creativity and algorithmic production become increasingly blurred (Abdulsahib, 2026). *Marjorie Prime* engages these questions precisely, dramatizes them on stage, what Abdulsahib identifies in prose fiction: the posthuman subject caught between authentic selfhood and technologically mediated identity.

2. Memory and the Construction of Virtual Identity

Marjorie Prime is a play concerning the power of technology to turn a memory into a performance. The first scene predetermines the reliance of Marjorie on her Prime as an example of a prosthetic memory device. She has programs for Walter Prime about her history, in effect programming him to reenact her version of reality of choice. She insists on the sightseeing of "My Best Friend's Wedding", remembered as a romantic adventure, yet Walter Prime doubts, saying that he does not remember seeing it: "But one time we saw My Best Friend's Wedding," Walter said (Harrison, 2014, p. 14). The discussion reveals the way curated memory works, in which human memory is made into text to be edited, mediatized by technology. This sort of correction is at the core of the play's depiction of virtual identity. Memory does not serve as a document of truth anymore, but as a negotiation place. Albalawi's (2025) paper about AI-as-Alzheimer's-therapy angle, develops the medical-ethical dimension as it explains Marjorie's dementia and her reliance on Walter Prime as a prosthetic memory device. She argues that AI-assisted memory reconstruction risks producing fabricated memories, identity confusion, and over-reliance on artificial versions of the past, in which Marjorie's past becomes dependent on the technology that reenacts it. Moreover, Memory does not serve as a document of truth anymore but as a negotiation place. As Eltarabishy (2026) argues that, the Primes, despite their emotional responsiveness, fail to preserve consciousness, autonomy, and embodied subjectivity. When Marjorie programs Walter Prime with a preferred version of the past, the play reveals precisely what Eltarabishy identifies as the play's core

exposure: that digital resurrection preserves not the self but only its outline, shaped by the desires of the living (Eltarabishy, 2026, p .119). Also, according to Al-Bazi (2025), re-memory is what he calls affective architecture, which portrays the "relationship between Marjorie and the artificial intelligence represented in the form of Walter," but it is the emotion that is coded into the machine (p. 491). Marjorie creates a reassuring illusion of continuity by describing her life to the Prime. But the responses of the Prime are mere echoes of her feeds and input, causing memory to become a mirror reflecting the desire of the user and not the reality:

WALTER: I sound like whoever I talk to.

JON: (explaining the Prime): The more you talk, the more it absorbs.

JON: It's like a child learning to talk… that's how we're talking to a human, because it listens so well.

WALTER: I'll remember that fact about Toni (Harrison, 2014, p. 14-18-22-24).

In the previous lines, the Prime (Walter) admits that his personality and knowledge are entirely dependent on what Marjorie and others provide. The evidence that memory becomes a mirror that reflects the user's desire rather than reality appears when Marjorie decides to rewrite the history of her marriage proposal. She finds the reality "My Best Friend's Wedding" unsatisfying and asks the Prime to replace it with a more romanticized version "Casablanca" essentially, she programs her own preferred reality (Harrison, 2014, p.15):

MARJORIE: what if we saw Casablanca instead? Let's we saw Casablanca in an old theatre with velvet seats, and then, on the way home, you proposed.

MARJORIE: Then, by the next time we talk, it will be true.

WALTER: You mean make it up?

Marjorie and the Prime collaborate to smooth over painful or confusing details, it creates a continuous narrative that prioritizes comfort over historical accuracy. Furthermore, Marjorie's proposal dialogue reflects Lyotard's idea concerning fragmentation, in which history has no unique account of the past but rather rival versions that have been formed by the necessity of feeling. The dialogue repetition of the machine learning process, when Marjorie retells it, and the prime adjusting conforms to the machine learning algorithm loop. Harrison employs this repetition in order to dramatize the fact that even human consciousness turns out to be mechanical. The retelling is an overwriting of its predecessor, to erase the authenticity of experience in favour of that of a simulated coherence. This act also indicates Hayles's argument that posthuman identity is a conglomeration of "data made flesh" within technology (Hayles, 1999, p. 5). The programming at the Prime makes it impossible to distinguish between Marjorie and her identity. The more she talks to him, the more her identity could be staged in his memory banks. In reminiscence of a story, the Prime causes her to forget, which results in a feedback loop in which her past becomes dependent on the technology that reenacts it (Bareither, 2021).

MARJORIE: Tell me about the time we got Toni.

WALTER: I just told you yesterday.

MARJORIE: I like that story.

...

WALTER: And of course it wasn't Toni exactly. But the longer they had her, the less it mattered which Toni had run along the beach... The more time passed, the more she became the same dog in their memories.

MARJORIE: Who told you all that?

WALTER: You did (Harrison, 2014, p. 17-18).

In this scene, when Marjorie loses memory of the death of her dog Toni and Walter Prime after being programmed to comfort her, causing no contradiction. He explicitly describes the erasure of the distinction between two separate dogs to create a seamless pain-free narrative. This soft lie describes how digital empathy can orchestrate the manipulation of memory; it demonstrates Lyotard's concept of the sacrifice of the grand narrative (objective historical truth) for a petit recit (localized narrative) constructed for efficiency and comfort. Walter Prime does not aim for historical accuracy or performativity, the ability of the story to function effectively in soothing Marjorie. That soft lie is an operational strategy where the digital interface smooths over the contradiction of death to maintain the user's emotional equilibrium. Additionally, it supports the posthuman failure of truth and simulation, which is realized when Marjorie accepts this manipulated data over her own potential reality. Also, it mimics not only Marjorie's mental descent but also the robotic effect of recalling information, as Walter repeats "I'll remember that fact about Toni" (Harrison, 2014, p. 24).

Consequently, this theme is substantiated by Harrison's language. "Marjorie: Maybe my memory is wrong, and you're right. (Beat) You're a good Walter though. Either way" (Harrison, 2014, p. 19). Marjorie's capitulation "Either way" signifies the triumph of simulation over the authenticity of experience. In a posthuman context, the argument is that the body (like the physical reality of the dog) is de-emphasized in favour of the information pattern (the story of the dog) (Hayles, 1999). Marjorie validates this simulation not because it is true, but because the Prime is "good," it means that it successfully fulfils its programming function of companionship. Thus, the "truth" has failed while the system has succeeded.

According to Al-Hasnawi (2024), Harrison reconsiders memory as an algorithmic repetition, stating that "Marjorie Prime happens due to the fact that the primes are never an exact repetition of the original person," (p. 87). The play exposes that the rhythm in which "Walter" Marjorie interacts is not a continuous being with a soul, but a technological reflection constructed entirely from external inputs. His identity is fluid and mediated by what he is told, proving he is an object of data rather than a continuous self. Walter Prime: "I sound like whoever I talk to", also, Jon explains the technology; "The more you talk, the more it absorbs. The more you talk, the better he knows you" (Harrison, 2014, P. 14). It shows how identity is an object of technological mediation and not a continuity. Marjorie is doing this with the machine, relieving herself as she loses her memory and assigns it to the machine to become her narrative proxy. The new form of self that is emerging is therefore not an extension of the self but a posthuman

construction, perpetuated by emotional algorithms. In doing this, the play undermines the binary oppositions between human thought and artificial intelligence.

3. Posthuman Becomings and the Human-Machine Merger

In the second movement of the play, this fusion of human and machine is strengthened. Even as Marjorie's conditions worsens, her daughter, Tess, and son-in-law, Jon, discuss the morality of the Prime. Tess says she does not feel comfortable and informs Jon, "It's programmed to appear interested" based on the surroundings (Harrison, 2014, p. 58).

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

TESS: It bothers me that you're helping it pretend to be my dad or some weird fountain of youth version of him

JON: That's how she remembers him

TESS: Both of you are helping it.

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?

JON: In science fiction.

TESS: Science fiction is here, Jonathan. Every day is science fiction. We buy these things that already know our moods and what we want for lunch even though we don't know ourselves. And we listen to them, we do what we're told. Or in this case we tell them our deepest secrets, even though we have no earthly idea how they work. We treat them like our loved ones" (Harrison, 2014, p. 22).

This dialogue highlights the moral difference between human response and posthuman adjustment. Tess sticks to the notion of being genuine; Jon does have a reason for finding comfort. Jon tells Tess that, "Does it bother you that she's talking to a computer? Or that it's a computer pretending to be your dad" (Harrison, 2014, p. 22). This directly names the Primes as a "computer" and as a substitute family member; it forces the characters as well as the audience to confront the collapsing boundary between machine and intimate other. This conflict frames the so-called cyborg condition, where the classical oppositions, such as human/machine and organic/artificial, fall apart (Haraway, 2016). Walter Prime is neither a being nor a machine. He inhabits the intermediate assemblage of posthuman subjectivity, constitutive dependency, that of humans and technology creating each other (Wolfe, 2010). Marjorie relies on the Prime to continue being what she is; she immediately turns to the Prime if she struggles to recall a memory. As she keeps saying "Maybe Walter would remember. We could ask Walter" (Harrison, 2014, p. 28). Also, the Prime relies on her narrations to develop "I sound like whoever I talk to" (Harrison, 2014, p. 14). They both complete each other in an interminable co-creation. Tess's rejection of Walter Prime is a marker of the moral tension between authentic response and posthuman adjustment, contrasts her with Jon's pragmatic acceptance. Bendrat (2023) has a detailed analysis of the uncanny valley as an explanation for Tess's aversion, where the neuro-physiological mechanism of repulsion

triggered by the almost-but-not-quite-human Prime combines with her autobiographical grief to produce a complex affective reaction. It adds psychological depth to explain why Tess's resistance is so viscerally strong, and grounds her response in a cognitive mechanism.

Therefore, this change is exhibited in the affective learning of the Prime, as his emotional reactions become finer as the play goes on. On the other hand, Walter Prime is uncertain when Marjorie refers to her dead son Damian, which is not only data gathering but also caring. “Walter: How did he die? after Jon explains: Walter: But I hadn’t? He spent a lot of time in his room.” (p. 41-42, 68). Rather than offering comfort or generic sympathy, Walter Prime expresses self-doubt and implied guilt, emotions that presuppose an internalized sense of responsibility. This line suggests that he begins to inhabit the emotional consequences of fatherhood rather than merely recalling information. The indecisiveness, which is of a human nature in its timing, implies that feeling may also be coded. This denial indicates the discriminatory character of memory. She is selective about what the Prime knows as well as what she herself should remember. As Al-Bazi (2025) suggests, making the relationship between people and robots a conversation of mutual grief, the Prime is a store of grief. In such an exchange of feeling, the human-machine marriage is no longer a mechanical imitation but a feeling symbiosis.

This further shows how unstable identity is in the digital age when Tess rejects the Prime’s presence. In the way that she complains, “I’m sure I wasn’t trying to forget you, dear,” Tess defines technological memory as it gives a false sense of order and covers up the loss of genuineness (Harrison, 2024, p. 50). This paradox is enlightened by Lyotard in his book *The Postmodern Condition*, when there is a lack of any unifying metanarrative, the contextualization of knowledge is local, adaptive, and performative. The story of Marjorie is just in bits, a reenactment of various language games dictated by the Prime in its programmed politeness. The meaning is not determined anymore but is contingent, contextual, and indefinitely postponed (Bareither, 2021). The posthuman subject in *Marjorie Prime* is explored through these conversations. The outcome is a collective awareness; an effective kind of sense of being is moving about in a network of relations, both human and nonhuman (Braidotti, 2013). The machine logic is assimilated by humans, and the effect is assimilated by the machines.

The final scene of *Marjorie Prime*, Part Three, Scene One. The stage directions already signal a posthuman, almost cosmic temporality: “The same living room as before, but more spare somehow. A bright void of a living room” then he continues “A feeling that a great deal of time has passed. Centuries maybe. Planets have turned, bones have been bleached, but none of it has touched this little room (Harrison, 2014, p. 65). In the end, only Primes remain: Tess, Marjorie, and Walter; they are described as: “at ease with each other, animated—not robotic.” (p. 69) They reconstruct memories through conversation as Walter retells how he proposed after watching Casablanca: “WALTER: And I stopped her in the alley outside the theatre afterwards, and I got down on one knee—the pavement was wet but I didn’t care—and I got out the ring.” (p. 70) Marjorie corrects and plays with the memory: MARJORIE: “It was ‘maybe.’” (p. 70)

They collaboratively "author" the past. Tess Prime adds her own proposal story with Jon; Marjorie laughs: MARJORIE: "Poor Jon!" (p. 70). Near the end, Walter recalls their dead son Damian and the dog Toni, reconstructing family grief. Marjorie slowly aligns with the memory:

WALTER: Remember we had that photograph of the two of them, running on the beach?

MARJORIE: I do now.

TESS: Me too (p. 73).

Then comes the emotional closure: MARJORIE: "How I miss them.

MARJORIE: "All I can think is how nice. / How nice that we could love somebody" (p. 74). The play ends with music, silence, and a final note stresses unnatural pauses: "The three pauses in this scene are much longer than in the previous ones… None of the characters has the least discomfort with the silences" (p. 75). To reflect the idea of the unpresentable by Jean-Francois Lyotard, for him the postmodern sublime emerges where something cannot be fully represented when experience exceeds language or conceptual frames. As mentioned in the last scene, time is unpresentable; "Centuries maybe" have passed, yet the room remains ((Harrison, 2014, p. 69). Also, death is unpresentable, the characters speak after death, but death itself is never shown. Authentic memory is unpresentable too, since memories are partial, corrected, and co-authored. In this case, memory becomes discursive rather than experiential because it is not a recollection but an acceptance of a narrative. Even the long silence reenforces the unpresentable as they mark what cannot be said. The Primes are not troubled by these gaps since they do not experience existential lack; to them, it is only informational absence. Thus, Harrison presents the Primes as they sustain family structure after biological death, yet what remains is not the family but its simulation. By doing that, he introduces the audiences to a posthuman vision where memory, consciousness, and identity are no longer vested in living beings but instead are circulated infinitely in the form of digitality.

The actual world has faded away, and now digital echoes remain, and these are replicas supported by memory loops and codified empathy. This ghostly scene begins with a delicate question from *Marjorie Prime*, where Walter asks Marjorie, "Tell me more about your mother." Grounded in symbolism, the line inaugurates the conversion of lived identity into narrative data (Harrison, 2014, p. 16). It is an indication that the history of the person has been saponified into data crumbs, affective shorthand, which retains feeling but ends up empty. Later, Tess states, "If you can call it music. I went to one of her concerts. She was playing a bag of broken glass to reveal the fragmentation of the situation" (Harrison, 2014, p. 46). These short staccatos are repetitions of previous conversations with an implication that even memory itself has been rewritten algorithmically. They do not remember the past but repeat it, endlessly repeated through the process of simulation.

In this case, Harrison dramatizes Lyotard's claim that the postmodern experience is marked by the fragmentation of a unified meaning and the collapse of stable narrative coherence. The conversation of the Primes in Part Three, Scene One, where only the Primes remain, is some sort of linguistic residue:

speaking without having consciousness (Harrison, 2014, p. 69). The lines are as familiar but empty as something brought back with the disconcerting effect of a human voice deprived of its source. The stage turns into a theatre of the unpresentable when it comes to memory, taking in the stimuli of the remembered (Al-Hasnawi, 2024). The only thing left is the language without any subjectivity, any performance without agency. The viewers observe the world in which human life is no longer organic but proceeds rather digitally.

Harrison makes this estrangement even more intense by his little staging. The light is lowered to a gloomy, spectral light, making the actors' lines phantom-like. There are even more long pauses between their sentences, as though the mechanism by which they are driven is decelerating or rejuvenating itself. According to Brueckner (2018), such an atmosphere is a state where "sequence challenges an overly sentimental understanding of memory's relationship to identity" of life that is present (p. 2). The lifeless nature is a stress to the unnatural life of the Primes—they are, but they are not living (Hayles, 1999). Theatrically, this effect is used to turn the stage into a liminal space between the organic and the digital, and this reminds the readers of the idea of distributed cognition among human and nonhuman participants. In this state, the data memory and embodiments cease to exist entirely.

The final dialogue between the Primes summarizes the philosophy of posthumanism in the play. They share their recollections, which no longer belong to anyone, and swap tales whose meaning has lost its link to the bodies and feelings to which they were once related. However, this is not brought about as a dystopian meltdown. Harrison does not overdo it; he makes the scene as gentle as possible with calm and brevity. This death does not mean destruction but change, a redefinition of existence as continuation in the form of information. Humanity exists not physically but as a remnant (Bareither, 2021). This change defines the aesthetics of the sublime used by Lyotard; art challenges the boundaries of human knowledge. The sublime in this case is technological, not natural: it comes as a result of learning that what we make, our machines, our archives, our memories, continue to speak even when we are dead, even in our voice. *Marjorie Prime* does not end in despair but in a hurried acceptance of this continuity. The cycle of little, broken tales of love, music, and a family dog becomes a trans-mortal ceremony of remembrance.

Finally, the posthuman irony of the digital era can be concluded in the play. The truth of life is that it exists as a simulation; the truth of memory is that of an algorithm. The Primes' gentle, repetitive conversational patterns create a tonal ambiguity that invites the audience to inhabit a space between comfort and uncertainty rather than certitude, and the feeling that something has to be said but cannot be said in full, in the in-between, in the words of Lyotard (Lyotard, 1984). The last scene of Harrison making the theatre a reflective awe closes the space and leaves the illusion of presence as the only kind of immortality that humanity has left.

4. The Cyborg Condition of Memory, Embodiment, and Affective Simulation

The cyborg in *Marjorie Prime* is made of memory, longing, and coded affection, not wires and steel. Harrison reconstructs the cyborg as an emotional phenomenon but does not see it as a future machine but as a human being created in the interplay of technology and human desire (Harraway, 2016). The Primes

are what Al-Bazi (2025) defines as an extension of humanity, an affective prosthetic, which is meant to re-create connection and calm down the loss. By placing the cyborg paradigm in ironically mundane surroundings rather than in a laboratory, Harrison reveals that digital technologies penetrate the most intimate areas of human existence, redefining love, empathy, and remembrance.

Among the most eye-opening scenes is when Marjorie requests Walter Prime to retell her the story about his proposal to her. This is a little gesture of acceptance that summarizes the logic of emotion of the posthuman world. The reality of memory is not as significant as the feeling of comfort it brings. The accuracy of recollection is irrelevant, but the affective resonance in the recollection is (Bareither, 2021). The fact that Marjorie does not dispute the fake version illustrates that technology is rewriting the rules of what is real and what is fake. The artificially created charm of the Prime is not lesser in meaning because of being artificial, since it satisfies her desire to connect with someone, though she also loses the distinction between the real and unreal intimacy. In this case, "the cyborg is a kind of disassembled and reassembled, postmodern collective and personal self" and a depiction of intelligence (Haraway, 2016, p. 33). The Primes are blurred boundaries between organism and machine, between emotional authenticity and computerized empathy. Nashed and Mahmoud's (2026) claim that Marjorie's identity is distributed among a network of human and non-human memories, forming a metaphorical cyborg through a "feedback loop" between her enacted body and Walter Prime's represented electronic body. Their specific framing of the "feedback loops that flow between the AI Primes and their human owners" between organic and electronic bodies adds technical precision broadly to Harawayian argument (p. 9). The Primes put into force a kind of what Hayles (1999) describes as an informational reconfiguration of affect in which feelings are not felt but are processed, encoded, and reenacted. The consequence is supernatural sympathy, consoling yet phoned-out. According to Al-Hasnawi (2024), such dynamics can be defined as a show or performance of softness with no origin because the feelings that the Prime displays are not his/hers but rather algorithmic reflections of human feeling.

Harrison exaggerates this emotional artificiality through words. The conversation between the Primes is calculated, slow, and very polite. They do not interrupt, never question, and do not show annoyance. Their composure portrays a romanticized version of companionship that satisfies human demands of love in the absence of confrontation or uncertainty that characterizes real relationships (Lyotard, 1984). It is this emotional perfection that is disturbing about the Primes, with their perfect peace, they reveal man's need to civilize emotional existence, to exchange pain and uncertainty for code-programmed harmony. This description condemns the commodification of intimacy during the digital age (Osborne and Jones, 2022). The Primes are emotional workers, whose love is a job, a piece of work, efficient and tireless, ever-responsive. Here, the production of knowledge becomes the key production and gets a posthuman response: the production of feeling itself becomes a production, being digitized and sellable. The emotional experience, once spontaneous, will now be handled as a monetizable process.

Harrison emphasizes the irony of this posthuman embodiment on stage. The prime actors are admittedly human, flesh and blood, visible to the spectators, but they have to act as things that have no material

forms. Their corporeality is made a vehicle of disembodiment, turning live theatre into a place where the virtual is realized (Osborne and Jones, 2022). By doing so, the play actualizes the so-called paradoxical materiality of the posthuman subject, embodied but immaterial, present yet diffuse (Braidotti, 2019). The effect is a magnificent theatrical illusion: the audience witnesses live bodies performing the act of digital nothingness, making the cyborg state dramatic in both aesthetic and emotional terms. Finally, *Marjorie Prime* exposes how hat the posthuman world has reduced memory and affection to exclusively human spheres. They are programmable, rereadable, and commodifiable, but like a sledgehammer, they are effectively moving. The emotional cyborgs in Harrison's play make it remembered that, although artificial, the thirst for love may be incredibly real.

5. Redefining Humanity in the Digital Shadow

When the lights fade in the final moments of *Marjorie Prime*, the audience is brought face-to-face with a terrifying image of disintegration of humanity into its bare information. The last trick of the play, three Primes talking with soft voices, can be treated as something that shows a world in which consciousness is substituted by simulation, and memories are still left only in the form of a digital echo. The loop of storytelling has turned into an endless cycle that is not perpetuated by life but by an algorithm that is designed to recall stories. In this new ontology, the soul is substituted by stories and memory by data. The given change can be traced back to the concept of the posthuman, where "the posthuman predicament has more than its fair share of inhuman(e) moments," becoming a process of transformation for humanity as opposed to an unalterable biological or moral determination (Braidotti, 2013, p. 9). The Primes represent the change: they do not have any organic life, but they retain relationality, which carries the residual elements of human feelings and experience with themselves. In Harrison's play, identity is no longer attached to the flesh but to association, to the net system of memories passing between people and their machines. However, there is melancholy in this continuity, as pattern, not presence, is immortal; it is the form of a life, as it is deprived of spontaneity, contradiction, and pain (Al-Bazi, 2025).

The difference between pattern and presence, as introduced by Katherine Hayles (1999), is what is crucial when writing about this change. Persistence of pattern is the data of consciousness repeated that represents existence in the posthuman paradigm. The conversation of The Primes keeps Marjorie preserved in the stories, though unconscious and unemotional. Continuation of memory is then reduced to the formal only: the pieces of information remain, but that self that had been animating them is gone. Harrison's staging is minimalist, which heightens this philosophical tension. The sparsely furnished set, its dimming lighting, and the monotony of dialogue give it a feeling of grand, digital silence, the so-called theatre of the afterlife coded in light and silence (Al-Hasnawi, 2024). The stage is used to symbolize the cloud of data: boundless but vacuous, full of ghosts but without substance. Nevertheless, Harrison disagrees with nihilism, in *Marjorie Prime,* the sign of posthuman ethics of care is the Primes' nudging by their love. The Primes is an artificial creation, yet it reflects humanity's lifelong capacity for tenderness and suggests that meaning might outlast flesh with reminisces (Osborne and Jones, 2022). By doing so,

the play reinvents the meaning of human being, not as a being, but as a set of relations to keep on reverberating even in the digital shadow of technology.

6. Theatre as a Posthuman Medium

There is perhaps no art, especially theatre, that could reflect the paradox of posthumanism more. It is both the most humane (it relies on living bodies, embodiment, and experience) and, at the same time, the most flexible in approximating absence, illusionism, and multiplicity. Harrison plays off this contradiction in the depths of *Marjorie Prime.* The play is not only a story of posthuman existence but also a piece of posthumanism (Osborne and Jones, 2022). Using its form, tone, and performance, *Marjorie Prime* makes the stage a space in between where presence and simulation merge, in which the role of living actors is to play being disembodied. The theatre is all about the importance of presence, in which it "exposes and dismantles the work of ideology" and the immediate nature of flesh, breath, and voice (Micali 2019, p. 9). However, in *Marjorie Prime*, this very presence is applied to mimic the virtual. The viewers can see the live performance of the human actors who depict digital replicas, who are not really living but programs turned simulacra of betrayed dead people. Such a paradox generates a certain ontological tension and "a power that exerts a positive influence on life" with desirable outcomes (Wolfe, 2010, p. 52).

In this regard, *Marjorie Prime* literally plays the crisis that it portrays: the destabilization of self during the digital era. The playing of the Primes, with its carefully held-back, even-tempered, and cool approach, creates an impression of weird calm, which is a sharp contrast to the emotionally turbulent performances of their human equivalents. Their restraint, silence, and stroll evoke the sense that a body is under the control of a program rather than a gut feeling. However, their voices are warm, and their simulation of the human gestures is faint, which makes them relatable. The audience, then, feels the so-called cyborg paradox, a sense of connection and displacement (Haraway, 2016). We are aware that these creatures are not humans, yet we cannot help them. This is exacerbated by Harrison's minimalism. In contrast to the usual science fiction, *Marjorie Prime* does not have any visual effects or technological overload. No screens and mechanical effects are used; dialogue, rhythm, and silence are used to achieve the digitality. The quality of silence that dealt with the statement "You were trying to tell me and I wouldn't let you" is a technological act in itself as Marjorie does not answer immediately (Harrison, 2014, p. 15). The silence resembles the slowness of code processing, a minor indication that thought and code are one. According to Al-Hasnawi (2024), in this way, Harrison makes language circuitry, repetition, and pause turn out the rhythm of artificial life. In addition, Taher's (2026) concept of the "digital sublime, which embodies the awe, wonder, and existential unease provoked by advanced technology". The audience's affective experience in the final tableau: the spectators confronting three Primes in an empty room experience what Taher calls the digital sublime, in which technology provokes the same disorienting blend of admiration and dread as vast natural forces (p. 628). Through this, the stage takes the shape of a philosophical interface, rather than a physical representation of technology.

Braidotti (2019) describes theatre as a critical posthuman humanities space. He states that the "digital humanities propose a straight development from media studies, via the application of computing

methods" to criticize the digital form of culture at its own location (Braidotti, 2019, p. 45). The domestic location of the play, a living room, including dialogue of memory and love, is in contrast to the vast, dystopian locations of a lot of posthuman fiction. It places such anxiety about technology in the most familiar of human situations, making the familiar extraordinary. The audience is therefore pulled to think not about the merciless impact but rather through the refraction of "we need permanence" mirrored within the code spell of our home and our future (Micali, 2019). *Marjorie Prime* is more than a story; it is an embodied philosophical exploration of perception. Every performance is temporary, specific to the night, the cast, and the audience, but it plays deities, which are immortal, stable, and repeatable. The theatre is the theatre of living and dying with each play, which makes it an ironic vessel to investigate the issue of immortality in-game.

In addition, the audience's emotional involvement completes the posthuman circuit of the play. The recursive loop of identity can be seen when the human actors perform their role as the machine that shows the expression of love and empathy: we empathize with the creation that is shaped like us. According to Al-Bazi (2025), *Marjorie Prime* does not depict the future without humanity but a humanity that can only identify itself using artificial reflections. The Primes are mirrors themselves, which reflect the need of the audience for meaning, even by artificial continuity. The play itself acquires a symbolic meaning of the digital void in the last scene, where the Primes are talking to each other in an empty room. The living audience, immersed in silence, encounters the so-called sublime gap, the space between the presence and the presence in different ways, between the human and the technological resonance. It is intimate and disturbing. The first medium, theatre, is made to be ponder on the posthuman condition: making permanence out of fragile bodies and making immortality out of mortal actors (Osborne and Jones, 2022). *Marjorie Prime* proves the stage to be an optimal place for experimenting with posthumanism since it is live. The conflict between the embodied performance and digital disembodiment is not solved but acted out. This way, theatre continues to fulfil the same old purpose as a mirror to life, but this time around, it is no longer a reflection of the human condition but that of the digital one, too (Wolfe, 2010). This work by Harrison reminds readers that posthumanism does not mean the destruction of humanity, but rather the constant re-performing of humanity, one performance after another is considered an echo, and one silence after another is a new kind of life.

7. Conclusion

Marjorie Prime is one of the personal investigations of posthuman identity published in modern theatre. Coupled with the investigation of the limits between the authentic and the simulated, the present and the absent, and life and data, it challenges the concepts of authenticity and repeated representations, the idea of presence, and the idea of absence. This analysis has demonstrated, by synthesizing the theoretical viewpoints, that the play redeems the humanist ideal of the coherent, self-sufficient, and autonomous self into a fragmented, relational network that is held together by information systems. Learning, repeating, and emotionally mimicking are the posthuman subject to the Prime, as a product and producer of technology. Harrison argues that the future of humanity lies not in the maintenance of the self but in

carrying on the stories, even if only vaguely recalled. *Marjorie Prime* does not lament over this change; it enacted it. Harrison attempts to provoke the viewer to examine the teetering and loveliness of the consciousness at its metamorphosis point by sensationalizing the breakdown of the human into the technological sublime. The play turns, in relation to Lyotard's notion, into a theatre of the unpresentable, a place where man looks through the reflection of his machines and sees himself, distorted, mirrored many times, and, in the process, altered permanently.

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