

# POSTHUMANIST PERSPECTIVES ON MOTHERHOOD: EXPLORING INTERSPECIES CARE THROUGH NOVEL AND FILM-THE WILD ROBOT BY PETER BROWN

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## Abstract

Posthumanism is way of thinking that moves beyond the idea that humans are important or central beings of the world. Instead of seeing animals, machines and nature, posthumanism recognizes that all living and non-living things are connected and interdependent. This paper examines *The Wild Robot* movie through the lens of posthumanist theory, analyzing how the film challenges conventional boundaries between humans, animals and machines. By illustrating the robot Roz itself as mother of a bird. The movie depicts even a robot could have the motherly affection and caring relationship, drawing on frameworks of posthuman ethics and feminist care ethics. This study highlights how Roz's transformation exemplifies a redefinition of moral subjectivity beyond human. There are some other films that depicts posthumanism like *Avatar* (2009). But this movie is contemporary contribution to posthumanist discourse by envisioning a future wherein artificial intelligence beings participate fully in ethical and social networks. Roz undergoes an ethical transformation that redefines motherhood and assimilates in AI narratives by embodying posthuman ideas of emotional connection, ecological care, and non-biological relationship. Through Roz motherly assimilations are carried throughout the movie to bring out posthumanism in human made Robot.

**Keywords:** Posthumanism, transhumanism, artificial intelligence, non-biological relationship.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Wolfe, Cary. *What Is Posthumanism?* University of Minnesota Press, 2010.

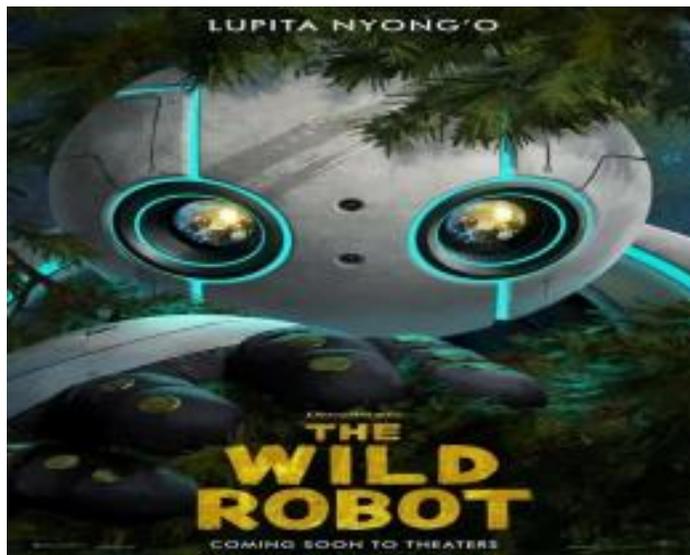
## Introduction

Motherhood: All love there starts and stops. The robot transforms her role as a mother of a gosling. The *Wild Robot* film presents posthumanist concepts that machines, animals, and non-humans have got ties. This original point of view breaks the fixed rules that separate the species, which indicates that cultivating instincts is not limited by the biological distinctions. The relationship developed between the robot and the gosling depicts a deep change in the concept of caring and companionship living in the technologically advanced world. It proves that Nature has naturally predetermined everything which tries to symbolize motherhood, even a technology which feels some emotions due to a small bird. Posthumanism supports that meaning and agency can exist not only in human beings but also in birds, trees, and other nonhuman beings. Animals possess their maternal love and care. The *Wild Robot* by Peter Brown (2016) overcame intersections of posthumanism and motherhood ethics. The novel begins with an introduction of a robot, called "Roz" which becomes marooned on an island. When Roz gets to know how to adjust to the world of animals and nature, she suddenly turns into the adoptive mother of a gosling. This relationship questions the common concept of motherhood and emotional attachment and reveals that love and nurturance can have a lot of different faces- even the ones of a robot.

The development of Roz and her relationship with the gosling helps the readers to reflect on the issue of empathy and what becoming a caregiver in a posthuman world is truly about. The movie shows the virtues and the difficulties of seeing the world in new perspectives.

Adaptation of the novel into a film transformed the themes and presentation of the novel in children literature context, and this paper presents the way in which care and nurturing break the boundaries of biological and species, and as well as challenges the boundaries of identity, technology and care in the literature and in society. Roz develops interspecies relationships and becomes a mom where it fits into a task that was delegated to some degree, but is that it is every human being has come here to do a task assigned to him or her where the human being will be able to be in charge of all the challenges of the task and be able to leave the place. This was an analogy of the place we have made with our hands to the universe and as a last resort, we returned it to our origin. By proving that female subjectivity can exist in artificial beings. A robot does not know what is required to be done by animals, and what is between them and unity. The robot acquires the instinctual wild behavior of each animal. It also gives modern examples of posthumanism and its acceptance by the readers and audiences. <sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Barad, K. (2007). *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Duke University Press.



Analysing posthumanism in the context of robot there is also a puppet character which supports the idea. One of the earliest animated character made of wooden, it wishes to come alive and live like a human. "Pinocchio, the classic character brought to life by Carlo Collodi, is more than a wooden puppet aspiring to become a real boy. His story is rich with symbolism that reflects the human experience and imparts timeless life lessons. Let's explore some of the key symbols within Pinocchio's tale. The Blue Fairy in Pinocchio stands as a symbol of hope and the chance for redemption, embodying the goodness in the world and guiding Pinocchio with a moral compass.

Alongside her, the Cricket, famously known as Jiminy Cricket, serves as Pinocchio's conscience, constantly reminding him that every action carries consequences and urging him toward better choices.

In contrast, the Fox and the Cat embody temptation and deceit, attempting to distract Pinocchio from his dream of becoming a real boy by enticing him with false promises of wealth and pleasure. One of the most recognizable symbols in *Pinocchio* is his nose, which lengthens whenever he tells a lie. It not only exposes dishonesty but also teaches the importance of truthfulness and the consequences that come with deceit. At the same time, Pinocchio's growing nose represents the persistent temptation to lie and the difficulty of habit.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup>The evolution of AI characters in children's literature: AI characters are evolving from the traditional 'Pinocchio paradigm' toward more autonomous identities. *Leaf Journal: On Writing for Young People*, 3(1). <https://doi.org/10.58091/229g-f020>

### Posthumanism in Literature

In the literature and cinematic system of the posthumanism, it is found in the global cinema such as the Tamil films in the stories of artificial intelligence, cyborgs and hybrid identities. Numerous films and novels, such as "Blade Runner," "Never Let Me Go," and *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*, deal with the concepts posthumanism though by looking at robots, clones and humans who are subjected to technological or biological modification and thus disrupt the conventional definition of personhood. These tales have led to profound philosophical and ethical debates on the issue of consciousness, rights and what human beings are as well as how nonhuman entities can acquire identities and emotions.

The movie is based on the Frankenstein story, where ethical and social implications of the development of sentient artificial creatures are presented through the identity problems, problems of love, jealousy and ethical decisions Chitti goes through. The development of Chitti demonstrates that artificial intelligence can be useful and dangerous. He occasionally creates issues when he learns to make decisions and feel, which points at the fears of people that technology is getting out of hand. Chitti was constructed by the Dr. Vaseegaran primarily to serve military purpose hence the movie brings up the questions regarding the use of robot in war and how the society may attempt to manage emerging technologies. Some of the broad concepts in the movie are acceptance, responsibility, and being human. This implies that new technology is both thrilling and threatening and that moral judgment is necessary when developing some sophisticated machines, like ChatGPT and other artificial intelligence applications. To go into more detail, one can take a closer look at academic papers like *Posthuman Monstrosity in Enthiran/Robot* (*Rupkatha Journal*) that examines the posthuman themes and cultural fears of the movie. Posthumanism in the contemporary literature assists both writers and readers to consider who we are and the way we behave, particularly with the transforming technology and nature. It gives the authors new means of talking about identity, power, and right and wrong. Posthumanism does away with the previously defined boundaries that distinguish human and machine, natural and artificial objects.

4 Haraway, D. (2016). *To remain with the Trouble: do Kin in the Chthulucene*. Duke University Press.

Such writers as Margaret Atwood, Philip K. Dick, and Kazuo Ishiguro make plots about clones, cyborgs, and other types of mixed creatures. Their narrations pose the question of what it is to be a human being when the technology and science can transform people. They also grapple with difficult questions of what is right and fair in the world where human beings are not the only creatures which count. Posthumanist ethics suggests that more responsibility should be given to all objects of technology, that developers and societies need to produce technology that is ecologically sustainable, socially just, and well in general.

To exist both to human beings and nonhumans.

### **Ecology, Motherhood, and Posthuman Care in the Wild Robot**

The *Wild Robot* is more than just a posthuman and feminist narrative of living in unity with nature. Roz starts out as someone unfamiliar with the island, someone who is a newcomer to a place that she does not know. But with time she started adjusting and becoming part of the society around her. However, in contrast to most stories in which technology collides with the forces of nature, the experience of Roz depicts a different approach, in which technology taps the creativity of nature and helps to preserve it. According to the idea of ecocriticism expressed by Cheryll Glotfelty. The analysis of the correlation between literature and the physical world, Roz becomes more than just a guest or a stranger. She constructs houses, gardens and takes care of animals. She ceases being a machine as perceived by the island and becomes a protector, one who realizes the contribution of every being, flora and fauna and element to the harmony of life. Her metallic shape does not separate her and nature and instead, she becomes another thread in her tapestry. Roz is becoming accustomed to the rhythms of the island: the life and death or renewal and regeneration. Her love goes beyond her adopted gosling, Brightbill, and reaches her whole ecosystem that she currently considers her home. This way, she represents a posthuman understanding of motherhood, which is based on compassion, responsibility and a kind of loving that overcomes the limits of species and biology. Motherhood is brought to a larger level, an ecological ethic, in which nurturing creates bridges between human, animal, plant, and, even machine, and unites them as it were, as we bear witness to the growth of technology. <sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup>Wolfe, C. (2010). *What Is Posthumanism?* University of Minnesota Press.

The tale also promotes biodiversity, where each creature has its role to play so as to ensure the survival of the island. In the eyes of young readers, the relationships of Roz are open to think how they can also take care of the world around them. The book makes us think about looking past our human understanding and into the future where technology and nature are not only compatible, but they can even support one another. In feminist writing, motherhood can sometimes be a method of questioning the belief that being a mother is purely biological or it is an unavoidable fate of a human woman.

A lot of feminist scholars believe that motherhood is culturally and personally formed to the same extent as biology.

Posthumanist concepts go a step further making motherhood an ethic of care that transcends the species and even the nonliving and their preference of parenting. Family is constructed in this perspective by acts of kindness and mutual survival and not necessarily blood. The Wild Robot demonstrates this in the most beautiful way--care and association can transcend all boundaries. And as Jeff Vander Meer notes in *Wonderbook*, certain characters such as Roz can have more than just a role to play. In a book such as this, plot, world and even flow of events develops naturally out of the character herself. Robots, like human characters, also define all aspects of their narratives, and since they are created creatures, they are a mirror of their creators. Likewise, Orson Scott Card, Philip Athans and Jay Lake in *Writing Fantasy and Science Fiction* observe that humans and robots are governed by rules, either imposed by society, parents or creators - but in the case of robots, it is literally written into the code. To make the readers believe in such characters it is important to achieve both the rules that govern their lives and the views that shape their experiences in the case of Roz her ability to listen to create animal gestures and learn the language help her not only to be adaptable but also to become a part of the ecosystems. Finally, the values of the society are reflected in the literature representations of motherhood. The concept of the ideal mother has been praised and debatable, as being selfless, independent, and flawed. These characterizations bring to the fore the contradictions between social values and individual desires. In some stories, mothers sacrifice all to their children, but in some others, mothers have to make hard decisions that change the concept of care. When the concept of motherhood is shifted into a dynamic morality of responsibility, a novel like *The Wild Robot* makes our understanding of family, nurture and survival more complicated and nuanced in a changing world. <sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Noddings, N. (2003). *Caring: A Relational Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). University of California Press.

### **The Wild Robot by Peter Brown**

*The Wild Robot by Peter Brown* narrates about Rozzum, Unit 7134 who is a robot abandoned on an island following a shipwreck. firstly, the animals on the island are all terrified of Roz, calling her a monster, avoiding any direct engagement, yet attempting to attack and injure. However, as time passed by, Roz language could not be readable by the animals, thus it studies the language of the animals, and starts communicating with them. To to make language of other species of other species language making itself as paralyzed thing and sits in a place. At last discovered the strategy to talk with animals.



Those imbecile innocent animals attacks as much as can to protect themselves from Roz. She is not fully accepted by the island's inhabitants until she adopts a gosling named Brightbill, who comes into her life after Roz unintentionally causes the deaths of its parents and the destruction of its siblings' eggs. Taking Brightbill under her care marks a turning point for Roz. But she doesn't know what to do with that egg.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup>Ferrando, F. (2019). *Philosophical Posthumanism*. Bloomsbury Academic.

Gilligan, C. (1982). *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. Harvard University Press.

As a symbol of female womb it contains an abdominal section where it contains the egg to offer protection. The very following day it started hatching until then it runs after a fox to save the egg. She starts working with the other animals primarily a wild rat that has six number of children where the gosling is expected to parent her and raise her adopted son, not excluding hiring a family of beavers to construct a house, known as the Nest, and a deer that helps her plant a garden which she share with the rest of the islanders. The Brightbil was alienated by the community and the flock of geese it belonged to since it was reared by a robot and not its own mother bird. Then, when discrimination fink and Roz witness the help of isolated old hawk, it trains Brightbill to fly. Finding the way and after hard work the head of the flocks accepts Brightbill to fly with them. Roz helps the animals to endure a bitter winter and Brightbill goes south with fellow geese. Her attempt to bring cooperation and community makes the animals loyal to her. This is later reversed when Roz is rescued by a group of RECO robots to fetch the property that was lost in the shipwreck and they assist her in battling the would-be captors. Roz finally decides to take off on the airship of the RECO robots to take her to her creators after realizing that the island is now too dangerous to remain there.

Rozzum does not behave like other living beings because there are particular rules that dictate her existence. She possesses off switch and removeable limbs features which are characteristic of certain reptiles and amphibians, but which are distinctive in the context of the story.

The Wild Robot is centered around a single, yet paramount rule, which states that Rozzum is programmed to follow the instructions of the people owning her. This principle of foundation pushes her through the story and determines her process of adaptation, care, and relationship in the island. Brightbill is not the only child that Roz plays the maternal role. She gradually transforms into a nanny of the wider island community and she works with other animals in constructing dwellings, creating gardens and keeping the ecosystem safe. In these ways she represents a posthumanistic image of motherhood, an inclusive, relational and ethical one, which goes beyond species and biological limitations. The attention to interdependence in the care that Roz is provided with demonstrates that in many aspects, nurturing and responsibility is possible even in such relationships that do not follow the classical human family models.

8 Haraway, D. (2016). *Remaining in the Trouble: Creating Kin in the Chthulucene*. Duke University Press.

The maternal identity of Roz that is brought out in both the film and the novel is yet another point of conflict between nature and technology. Although she is a humanoid friendly Robot she is also aware of empathy, love and care. She is not just a human being doing things better but she has a greater awareness of the necessity of all living creatures. Her behavior shows the readers and viewers to redefine the motherhood concept by implying that ethical responsibility combined with love and bonding formation is the true definition of what being a mother is.

### **Exploration of Roz's Interactions with other Characters and How they Reflect Motherhood Ethic in a Posthumanism Context**

The moral discipline of the ethics of motherhood is seen in the way Roz does not use violence despite the fact that she has the means to do so, she is determined to find peaceful solutions. She sets the example of imaginative, non-violent solutions and self-denial, of peaceful co-existence and the importance of cultivating others rather than self-interest. Roz develops a very maternal relationship with her adopted goose son, Brightbill, and exhibits love, acceptance and support without conditional limits as he becomes a fully functioning adult. As a perfect parent, Roz does not interfere with Brightbill, allowing him to make his own decisions, which is a fundamental characteristic of an ethical mother, since a parent should allow their child to grow without interference, embrace individuality, and steer him without being in charge. Her service reaches out to the entire animal kingdom, as she serves as protector of the flock, organizes the survival process with cooperation with others, and sacrifices the common good. Although Roz is mechanical by nature, she forms genuine emotional connections and easily interacts with the creatures of the island in a manner that is beyond what the programmed directives permit. Her association with such animals as Chitchat and the flock turns to the level of trust, which is the example of how empathy and nurturance can help overcome the boundaries between machine and organic life. This is the expression of posthumanist thoughts where compassion and ethical responsibility are not specific to humans but are attributes that can be possessed by intelligent, consciousness beings of any origin. <sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup>Barad, K. (2007). *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Duke University Press.

## Conclusion

This paper explored *The Wild Robot* through the lenses of ecology, posthumanism, and motherhood. Roz, as the novel's protagonist, demonstrates how care, empathy, and responsibility can extend beyond humans to animals and even machines, redefining traditional notions of motherhood. Her journey illustrates ecological interconnectedness, showing how nonhuman entities can adapt, coexist, and contribute to the survival of an ecosystem. The novel also highlights the ethical dimensions of maternal care, emphasizing nurturing, relational responsibility, and community building rather than biological ties which stands beside to protect the robot from human and other programmed robots. The end of the story was expressed in emotionally connecting the maternal love for children and parents. Even though they both were different form of species and man made technology Through Roz's character, the story challenges readers to reconsider about the love which made them experience unbound eternity and uniting the ecosystem and technology. By suggesting that empathy and ethical care are universal capacities. Finally, blending themes of posthumanism, environmental stewardship, and the evolving ethic of motherhood, *The Wild Robot* encourages readers to reflect on the broader possibilities of connection, compassion, and coexistence in both natural and artificial worlds.<sup>10</sup>



<sup>10</sup> Noddings, N. (2003). *Caring: A Relational Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). University of California Press.

## The Significance of Analyzing Motherhood through a Posthumanist Lens

The ethic of motherhood in *The Wild Robot* can be discussed by approaching it through the prism of posthumanism and understanding that the caregiving experience and relational responsibility may not be limited to human beings and biological relations. The motherhood of Roz defies the conventional beliefs about motherhood and demonstrates that caring, compassion, and moral compass may exist among human beings, animals, and even machines.

This view would urge the readers to reconsider where their family, kinship, and care begin and end in order to reflect that these functions are socially and ethically constructed instead of biological.

A posthumanist analysis of the maternal behaviours of Roz helps us understand how literature can augment our knowledge of a connection, interdependence and coexistence within a world where human beings are only one component of a more extensive ecological and technological system. The novel and the film thus, not only reflects the usefulness of care but also makes one look at the changing definition of motherhood and ethical responsibility in the world that is becoming more interconnected and posthuman.

### Suggestions for Further Research

The future study may examine the interplay between motherhood and posthumanism in literature on a number of levels. One of them is to look at how nonhuman or hybrid characters, including robots, AI, or genetically modified creatures are challenging the traditional maternal roles and broadening the understanding of caregiving beyond biological limits. Comparative analysis may be used to study how various authors portray posthuman motherhood in various genres such as science fiction, fantasy, and ecofiction in order to draw out common themes of empathy, ethics, and relational responsibility. The cross-cultural perspective might also be investigated by the researchers, focusing on how motherhood in posthuman terms is positive or negative in terms of cultural appropriateness, ethical standards, and expectations. Lastly, interdisciplinary methods, which involve the study of literature, feminist theory, and science and technology studies (STS) may enable us to learn more about how narratives reorganize concepts of family, kinship, and care in a posthuman world.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup>Gilligan, C. (1982). *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. Harvard University Press.

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