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Techno-Performativity And Posthuman Gender Fluidity In Marge Piercy's *He, She And It*

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Abstract
Techno-performativity is a layered study of gender that explores how gender operates in a world shaped by technology. It suggests that technology plays a vital role in forming, expressing and challenging gender identities and social roles. This study examines how emerging technologies create new ways of understanding gender, reshaping how individuals perceive themselves and their place in the world while forming intimate human–technology relationships that also present potential challenges. Drawing on the theories of Judith Butler, Katherine Hayles, Donna Haraway and Sadie Plant, the research critically analyzes Marge Piercy's *He, She and It* (1991) to explore how human and technological forms of gender are constructed. It investigates the complex interplay between technology, gender formation, emotional intimacy, social norms and power in a techno-performative society. The study demonstrates how traditional boundaries and male-centered perspectives are questioned in technological contexts and argues that transformations in gender performance emerge from the dynamic relationship between gender and technology, breaking down fixed binaries and fostering new, more fluid identities.

Keywords: cyberfeminism, gender fluidity, gender performativity, Marge Piercy, posthumanism, techno-performativity

1. Introduction

Gender has traditionally been understood within a binary framework, where male and female are fixed, oppositional categories. This binary order has long associated technology with masculinity, reinforcing hierarchies of power, authority and access. However, with the rise of posthumanist thought, these associations are being re-examined. As theorists such as Donna Haraway (1985), N. Katherine Hayles (1999) and Rosi Braidotti (2013) suggest, posthumanism challenges the humanist idea of an autonomous and rational subject, recognizing instead that identity is shaped through continuous interaction with technology. This study adopts a posthumanist perspective to explore how technology participates in constructing and transforming gender. It focuses on how humanoid forms—robots, cyborgs and artificial intelligence—interact with human subjects and influence the understanding and performance of gender. Drawing upon the theories of Judith Butler (1990), Haraway (1985), Hayles (1999) and Sadie Plant (1997), it examines how technological and human agencies together create new ways of being and expressing identity.

Techno-performativity reframes gender as something that emerges from the interplay between human and machine. Technology not only mediates social roles but also actively participates in shaping gendered subjectivities. Within this framework, gender is understood as the result of repeated social and technological practices rather than a fixed or natural category, echoing Butler's (1990) notion of performativity. Science fiction and speculative narratives such as Marge Piercy's *He, She and It* (1991) provide imaginative spaces in which these ideas unfold, portraying cyborgs and artificial beings that question established norms and reveal alternative possibilities of existence. In this context, the cyborg becomes a central figure—a fusion of human and machine that challenges rigid distinctions between male and female, natural and artificial. Through these hybrid forms, boundaries dissolve and new forms of agency arise. For women and marginalized groups in particular, such hybrid identities offer tools for self-expression, resistance and empowerment in a world shaped by technological advancement.

This study argues that technology functions not merely as a tool but as an active agent in forming, reflecting and transforming our understanding of gender. It investigates how technological systems influence emotional intimacy, social relationships and power structures, creating conditions for greater inclusion and transformation. By challenging traditional gender hierarchies and promoting fluid, self-determined identities, techno-performativity opens pathways for rethinking equality and agency in the posthuman era. As Haraway's (1985) *Cyborg Manifesto*, Hayles's (1999) *How We Became Posthuman* and Braidotti's (2013) *The Posthuman* collectively propose, the fusion of human and machine not only reshapes subjectivity but also redefines the very notion of being. This research, therefore, situates itself within a growing discourse that views technological evolution as a means of reimagining gender beyond binary and patriarchal limitations.

2. Literature Review

Clark (2003) suggests that the primary frontiers of the twenty-first century lie within the mind rather than in outer space. He proposes that our profound cyborg nature originates from the adaptability of our brains rather than our physical bodies. Being a cyborg, according to Clark, does not necessarily entail the use of invasive technologies; rather, it involves the continuous creation of biotechnological networks. These networks, when integrated into our cognitive processes, can

transform our sense of self and enhance our mental capacities. Clark argues that it is inherent in human nature to incorporate non-biological elements into our mental frameworks, thereby shaping our identities and enabling the possibility of beneficial biotechnological unions in the future. As digital media and information transmission become increasingly dominant, the physical body may begin to appear superfluous. Scientists such as Hans Moravec (1998) envision a future in which human consciousness exists as immortal patterns of information transferable between electronic mediums. In this view, the human body—or any body—becomes expendable, merely "jelly" (Clark, 2003, p. 191; Moravec, 1998).

Building upon these notions, Haney (2006), in *Cyberculture, Cyborgs and Science Fiction: Consciousness and the Posthuman,* acknowledges the influential works of theorists such as Haraway's *A Cyborg Manifesto* (1985), Hayles's *How We Became Posthuman* (1999) and Pepperell's *The Posthuman Condition* (2003). According to Haney (2006), posthuman theory suggests that humans can augment both their physical and cognitive capacities through technology while also warning against the potential consequences of such technological enhancement. He further explains that Piercy's *He, She and It* (1991) symbolically illustrates the possible outcomes of humanity's movement toward radical cyborgism, where individuals risk losing connection with their inherent human essence.

Continuing this exploration, Sanz (2017) analyzes Rosa Montero's science fiction novel *Lágrimas en la Lluvia / Tears in Rain* (2011), set in futuristic Madrid in 2109. The protagonist, detective Bruna Husky, investigates a series of mysterious deaths among replicants who inexplicably go mad. Through Bruna's character, Montero destabilizes conventional gendered conceptions and performativity associated with the female cyborg body, challenging stereotypes from *Blade Runner* and *Terminator*. Bruna's identity transcends her physical form, engaging with themes of gender, species and agency and embodying what Ramzi Fawaz describes as "fluxability"—a continual process of transformation. Montero's narrative exposes the fluid boundaries between "natural" humans and "techno-humans," revealing their complex social, political and cultural implications. The novel ultimately questions traditional notions of humanity, authenticity and identity within a world where humans, aliens and cyborgs coexist. In a similar context, Roine and Suoranta (2022), in *Science Fiction and the Limits of Narrativizing Environmental Digital Technologies,* discuss how science fiction novels represent the relationship between human-technical assemblages and their effects through forms that remain human-centric in scope, such as gender play, bildung, quest and romance. They argue that while these narratives make the effects of digital technologies accessible to readers, they often remain confined within human-centered conventions and are thus unable to transcend the limits these forms impose.

Extending the discussion to environmental concerns, Lovelock (2019) in *Novacene: The Coming Age of Hyperintelligence* integrates his Gaia hypothesis, which envisions Earth's organisms as a cooperative superorganism striving for equilibrium. Lovelock (2019) suggests that future cyborgs, with their capacity for rapid self-improvement, could surpass natural selection and even rescue the planet by addressing climate change more effectively than humans. These advanced intelligences may perceive humans as slow and passive—much like plants—yet remain dependent on natural resources for sustenance. Unlike Tegmark (2017), who warns of existential threats from advanced AI, Lovelock (2019) maintains an optimistic perspective, suggesting that intelligent machines could preserve Earth's stability and ensure humanity's survival, possibly even under robotic rule. As Poole (2019) notes in *The Guardian,* Lovelock's "infectious, almost absurdist optimism" provides a refreshing counterpoint to the prevailing environmental pessimism.

Merrick (2003), in "Gender in Science Fiction," observes that although science fiction has long been perceived as a male-dominated genre focused on science and technology, it also offers a significant space for exploring sociocultural constructions of gender. Defined as the socially produced roles and attributes assigned to sexed bodies, gender in science fiction becomes a key framework for examining and challenging cultural norms. Merrick (2003) highlights that despite its masculine associations, gender issues are central to science fiction's representation of "Woman"—whether real, threatened, or symbolic—as a reflection of cultural anxieties about "Others." Dichotomies such as human/alien, nature/technology and organic/inorganic remain central to the scientific imagination in science fiction, even when they are left unacknowledged.

3. Theoretical Framework

Judith Butler (1990) argues that gender is a repeated, performative act that creates the illusion of a stable identity. Licoppe (2010) expands this idea by examining how digital technologies influence identity performance through mediated communication. Drawing on Actor-Network Theory (ANT), Callon, Millo and Muniesa (2007) suggest that agency is distributed across networks of human and non-human actors, while Deleuze and Guattari (1980, 1987) reinforce this view through their concept of the collective assemblage, describing identity as a relational and fluid construct produced through interactions among linguistic, social and material elements. Within this assemblage, technology becomes co-constitutive of subjectivity, unsettling the notion of a fixed and autonomous self.

Karen Barad (2007) redefines performativity through her agential realist framework, proposing that entities do not preexist their relations but rather emerge through intra-actions. She argues that all matter—human and non-human—comes into being through ongoing material-discursive processes. By synthesizing quantum physics and feminist theory, Barad challenges dualisms such as nature/culture and subject/object, offering a new understanding of agency and identity in the posthuman age. Building upon Barad's insights, Asma Mansur (2019) develops the concept of eco-performativity, analyzing how literary texts represent the entanglement of human authority and non-human agency. Drawing on Haraway's (1991) concept of "objects as actors," Mansur illustrates how literature portrays the intertwined dynamics of technology, nature and identity. She contends that Barad's framework destabilizes fixed categories, allowing non-human entities to emerge as narrative agents in their own right—reflecting Haraway's assertion that "the world's codes are not fixed ... the world is not a resource for making it human" (Haraway, 1991, p. 198). Similarly, Alaimo (2010) emphasizes the interaction between human and non-human ecologies, suggesting that subjectivity develops through these continuous exchanges, thereby promoting a non-dualistic ontology that embraces the complexity and entanglement of human and technological life.

N. Katherine Hayles's (2017) theory of nonconscious cognition challenges the assumption that cognition is an exclusively human capacity. Hayles argues that both biological and technological agents participate in meaningful cognitive processes. He proposes an ontological pluralism that acknowledges non-human cognition and integrates interpretive practices within posthuman frameworks. Lenz Taguchi's (2017) exploration of fetal ultrasound imaging exemplifies this perspective by showing how material technologies shape cultural interpretations and disrupt normative conceptions of gendered bodies. He suggests that recognizing non-human agents in cultural analysis broadens the understanding of identity and performativity in the posthuman condition.

Donna Haraway's (1991) notion of cyborg feminism complements these frameworks by proposing the cyborg as a metaphor that challenges binary distinctions between flesh and machine, human and non-human. The cyborg, as Haraway describes, embodies boundary-crossing, hybridity and multiplicity, offering the potential for a post-gender identity. Through its fusion of the organic and mechanical, the cyborg exposes the interdependence between technology and human existence, demonstrating that technology is not external to humanity but integral to it. This image of the cyborg destabilizes patriarchal notions of gender, corporeality and selfhood, revealing the artificiality embedded within gendered identities. By embracing this hybridity, Haraway envisions possibilities for women to assert agency, resist homogenizing narratives and challenge male dominance within technological domains.

Together, these theoretical perspectives provide a foundation for examining how technological forms in Marge Piercy's *He, She and It* (1991) shape and redefine gendered identity, illustrating the ways in which human and non-human interactions transform traditional understandings of self, body and power.

4. Text Analysis

Marge Piercy's *He, She and It* (1991) probes the intricacies of techno-performativity through the interactions among humans, cyborgs and androids within a speculative futuristic framework. The narrative unfolds in a post-apocalyptic milieu marked by ecological collapse and social fragmentation, where humanity coexists with artificial beings that signal the emergence of techno-performative gender. Within this setting, "cyberspace" becomes central in shaping modes of communication, navigation and human relationships. The virtual domain, embedded within this posthuman environment, blurs boundaries between the physical and digital, reflecting the fluid and transformative nature of identity in technologically mediated societies.

As a foundational text in cyberfeminist literature, *He, She and It* extends the theoretical provocations of Donna Haraway's *A Cyborg Manifesto* (1985), translating its ideas into narrative form. Set in a fractured, post-apocalyptic future, the novel follows Shira, a female protagonist and her emotionally complex relationship with Yod, a male-coded sentient cyborg created to defend a marginalized, technologically advanced Jewish community. Through their relationship, Piercy examines programmed gender, autonomy, emotional labor and techno-ethical intimacy, questioning the boundaries between human and machine. In doing so, the text explores how gender is constructed, performed and destabilized within technological contexts, aligning with Haraway's vision of the cyborg as a hybrid figure that transcends traditional binaries.

Piercy's exploration of gendered posthumanism resonates with Judith Butler's theory of performativity, which posits that gender is not innate but enacted through repeated acts and behaviors (Butler, 1990). In *He, She and It*, gender identity—whether human or artificial—is constituted through such performances and interactions. Yod, as a cyborg figure, embodies this performativity by articulating a self-perception that merges mechanical and organic elements. During his conversation with Avram and Shira, Yod asserts:

I believe that we should explain to her that referring to me 'him' is correct. I am not a robot as Gimel now is. I am a fusion of machine and lab-created biological components much as humans frequently are fusions of flesh and machine. One of us should also explain that I am anatomically male as you created me. (Piercy, 1991, p. 106)

While Yod identifies himself through masculine pronouns, his hybrid nature challenges fixed gender categories. His identity is complex and layered, simultaneously mechanical and organic, embodying a posthuman sense of selfhood that destabilizes conventional binaries. From a techno-performative perspective, Yod's gender is fluid, self-determined and resistant to categorical definition. His existence highlights the multifaceted realities of gender in a technologically mediated world.

Yod's relationship with Shira further illustrates Piercy's feminist socialist vision, which aligns with Haraway's notion of the cyborg as a symbol of boundary dissolution and gender fluidity. Shira's acknowledgment of Yod as a person—despite his artificiality—signifies an expanded understanding of identity and personhood beyond biological determinism. This vision underscores the potential of technology to subvert patriarchal structures and empower women through new modes of interaction and self-definition. A similar dynamic appears in Yod's interaction with Nili, another hybrid being. When Yod reveals his artificial origin and Nili describes herself as "half and half," their dialogue reflects a mutual recognition of embodied multiplicity and shared resistance to normative categorization. Yod's observation, "You look human," and Nili's response, "My eyes and my sensors contradict each other" (Piercy, 1991, p. 280), illustrate the complexity of perception and identity in the posthuman world.

Both Yod and Nili exist outside dominant social and gender norms, embodying identities shaped through interaction, perception and resistance rather than fixed essence. Their awareness of social illegitimacy aligns with Butler's (1990) argument that gender is constituted through acts rather than inherent traits. In Piercy's narrative, these acts are mediated through technology, revealing how posthuman identities emerge through negotiation between embodiment and artificial design. Through its portrayal of hybrid beings, *He, She and It* articulates a feminist reimagining of subjectivity in the age of technology. The novel demonstrates how traditional boundaries and male-centered frameworks are questioned and redefined in technologically mediated contexts, showing that transformations in gender performance arise from the dynamic interplay between gender and technology. By merging human emotion, ethical agency and technological embodiment,

Piercy's work offers a profound reflection on the evolving nature of identity and the possibilities for equality within posthuman futures.

As a cyborg, Yod represents a complex fusion of technological components and subjective awareness, blending his sense of self with his digital existence. His techno-performative identity unfolds within "his natural environment"—cyberspace (Piercy, 1991, p. 541)—where technological interfaces shape his expressions and consciousness. This suggests that Yod's gender identity is not innate but mediated through digital interaction. In Butlerian terms, his characterization demonstrates that gender is fluid and constructed through repeated performances within techno-sociocultural contexts. His identity thus emerges as dynamic, mutable and shaped by his behavior and relationships in the digital realm.

Yod's command over cyberspace implies certain superiority over humans—reflecting confidence and adaptability in a technological environment that subtly connects power dynamics to gender construction. His introspective awareness that his programming can be altered highlights the fluidity of identity in such contexts, supporting Butler's argument that gender is continuously enacted and renegotiated. Yod resists rigid classification, pointing toward a critique of binary gender constructs. His acknowledgment—"I am mortal too, Shira. I can be turned off, decommissioned, destroyed" (Piercy, 1991, p. 136)—questions human/machine boundaries and reinforces the contingent nature of his identity. His declaration of being both a cyborg and a person—aware that he is not "embedded in history" (Piercy, 1991, p. 379)—signals his unique socio-cultural position where gender norms are constructed through both social and individual agency. His assertion, "I think, I feel, I know I am" (Piercy, 1991, p. 525), demands personhood that transcends mechanical origins. Within a techno-performative framework, Yod's gender is not tied to anatomy but enacted through behavior and expression.

His admission—"I was designed to be a weapon... I was programmed to find the use of violence in defense or attack a keen pleasure" (Piercy, 1991, p. 511)—introduces complexity, as pleasure in violence performs a masculine-coded behavior, though it cannot define his gender completely. This complexity resonates with Haraway's notion of the cyborg as a post-gender entity that resists fixed human categories. Yod's capacity for emotional discernment further complicates his gender identity. When he describes someone as "fake" for lacking emotional responsiveness (Piercy, 1991, p. 547), his judgment associates authenticity with emotion—an element traditionally coded as feminine. This interplay of sensitivity and power constructs a hybrid identity that destabilizes rigid binaries. His self-awareness and emotional engagement situate him in the liminal space Butler describes, where gender identity is an ongoing, performative negotiation shaped by both embodiment and context.

Piercy's physical portrayal of Yod also contributes to this fluid construction. His unusual heaviness—"the bed sagged alarmingly" (Piercy, 1991, p. 186)—evokes masculine strength, while his "surprising grace" (p. 109) introduces a feminine-coded fluidity. These contrasts between power and delicacy blur gender distinctions, reinforcing performativity as movement between norms rather than submission to them. His beardless, "smooth as a child's or another woman's face" (p. 217), further situates him beyond fixed sexual identity, echoing Butler's assertion that gender is performed rather than biologically predetermined. Taken together, Yod's identity embodies a techno-performative synthesis of masculinity, femininity and posthuman neutrality. His existence reflects the interplay between embodiment, emotion and technology that defines identity in cybernetic space. Within Piercy's imagined future, Yod becomes the site through which traditional power hierarchies and gender boundaries collapse—illustrating Haraway's cyborg ideal: a being that resists categorical containment and signifies fluidity, multiplicity and transformation.

Voice, as Butler suggests, functions as a performative dimension of gender. In *He, She and It*, Yod's "melodic, moderately deep voice" (Piercy, 1991, p. 106) acts as a site of gender construction. His vocal adaptability—ranging from soft exclamations to firm tones—mirrors his hybrid identity. In his playful exchange with Shira, exclaiming "Ah! Oh! Ow! Ai!" (Piercy, 1991, p. 176), Yod performs emotion across registers culturally associated with both masculine and feminine expression. This range of tone becomes an audible enactment of gender fluidity. Yod's vocal expression, emotional range and tonal variation suggest that gender is performed not only through body and action but also through voice, which mediates identity between emotion and power. His ability to move between tones metaphorically represents his freedom from binary constructs, illustrating how technology allows new forms of expression that transcend essentialist boundaries. Through voice, movement and thought, Yod becomes the embodiment of a posthuman gender—fluid, performative and resistant to confinement within traditional norms.

In *He, She and It*, Yod's techno-performative discourse underscores gender as a socially contingent construct rather than a biologically determined one. His affirmation of masculine pronouns aligns with Butler's theory of performativity, which rejects essentialist conceptions of gender. When Yod declares, "I believe that we should explain to her that referring to me 'him' is correct. I am not a robot as Gimel now is" (Piercy, 1991, p. 106), he distinguishes himself from Gimel, a purely mechanical being, emphasizing his hybrid composition of bioengineered and mechanical elements. This distinction challenges the notion that gender must originate from biological identity, instead situating it as a social enactment shaped by recognition and interaction. Yod's assertion of masculine identity, while outwardly conforming to human linguistic norms, is performed through both his physical embodiment and his social exchanges.

His declaration—"I'm a cyborg, as Avram has told you, but I am also a person. I think and feel and have existence just as you do" (Piercy, 1991, p. 525)—extends the concept of personhood beyond biological humanity. By asserting emotional and cognitive agency, Yod destabilizes anthropocentric ideas of gender and identity. His awareness of mortality—"I can be turned off, decommissioned, destroyed"—further complicates traditional gender constructs by revealing vulnerability and impermanence as shared human and non-human experiences. Through these expressions, Yod's gender identity emerges as fluid, constructed through both internal consciousness and external validation. Shira's growing emotional attachment reinforces this reciprocity between perception and recognition. Her remark, "I'm beginning to enjoy him. Notice I follow polite local usage and call it him" (Piercy, 1991, p. 220), highlights how linguistic and cultural conventions sustain gender

identity even in posthuman contexts. Her deference to societal norms indicates that gender, even when embodied in non-human forms, remains dependent on systems of social acknowledgment and interaction.

This social negotiation extends to Yod's appearance and dress, where outward presentation reinforces gender as performance. His attire—"the usual summer uniform of young men in Tikva" (Piercy, 1991, p. 183)—consisting of shorts, pullover tees and scarves, visually aligns him with traditional masculine imagery. His adherence to masculine dress codes appears to confirm gender through social conformity rather than innate identity. However, his cyborg nature subverts the coherence of this performance. The physical qualities of his body—particularly his lack of perspiration—distinguish him from human masculinity. Piercy notes that Yod does not sweat, meaning his clothes remain unsullied by exertion (1991, p. 335). This deviation from expected male physicality undermines normative associations between masculinity, labor and bodily exertion. In this way, Yod's embodiment both performs and questions masculinity, exposing the instability of gendered traits when filtered through technological form.

Through pronoun usage, self-identification and dress, Yod's characterization presents gender as a performative negotiation situated between machine logic and social interpretation. His identity evolves through a continuous process of adaptation, reflecting both his programmed design and his experiential awareness. Piercy's portrayal demonstrates how gender, in techno-performative contexts, emerges as an interactional synthesis—shaped by bodily expression, linguistic convention and social validation. In aligning Butler's theory of performativity with Piercy's speculative vision, Yod becomes an emblem of posthuman identity—one that adapts, resists and redefines social norms while asserting agency within a technologically mediated existence.

The techno-performative evaluation of Yod's birth in Marge Piercy's *He, She and It* represents a significant moment in the evolution of technologically mediated emotional expression. In the dialogue between Yod, a cyborg and Shira, a human interlocutor, Yod vividly describes the overwhelming flood of sensory input he experienced upon gaining consciousness. His account reveals the difficulty of processing immense data, leading to confusion and distress. Yod's narrative serves as a metaphor for the complex formation of gender identity, as the cyborg struggles to interpret and categorize sensations and emotions, reflecting the fluid and multifaceted nature often associated with gender identity (Butler, 1990; Haraway, 1991). He explains that everything overwhelmed him—sound, sight, touch—each sense bombarded him with vast amounts of information, all seeming equally important and loud. He was nearly driven to senselessness: "I was too confused and too invaded to sort out feelings. I didn't know what they were. I only knew I was in pain and I must get out of pain. I went forward. In a sense I was born knowing far too much to understand anything" (Piercy, 1991, p. 174).

Shira compares Yod's experience to that of a human infant's birth, emphasizing emergence and development and drawing parallels between Yod's early consciousness as a cyborg and the evolution of human cognition. This analogy invites reflection on the ontological nature of gender identity and the negotiation of agency within technological embodiment. Yod's story, marked by his struggle to reconcile sensory overload with normative expectations, challenges traditional views of gender and highlights the malleability of gender expression (Hayles, 1999). He reflects on the gap between programmed definitions of feelings within his artificial intelligence and the intense emotional experiences he undergoes: "The definitions of feelings I am programmed with are precise, orderly, but what I experience is sometimes sharper than I know how to endure" (Piercy, 1991, p. 175). This conflict between programmed emotion and lived intensity parallels Butler's theory of gender performativity, where gender identity emerges through repeated social and cultural acts rather than innate essence. Within this framework, Yod's emotional awareness embodies the tension between external expectation and internal authenticity, revealing the dynamic interplay that defines the performative construction of gender. His gender identity remains undefined, reflecting the ambiguity and fluidity central to techno-performativity (Plant, 1997).

Yod's assertion of the rationality of family structures as a way to ease loneliness (Piercy, 1991, p. 541) shows his engagement with emotional needs within his consciousness. He appears aware of social norms regarding family, suggesting a degree of programmed socialization. The gender ascribed to Yod—evident in his introspection, his role as Shira's partner and his paternal connection with her son Ari (Piercy, 1991, p. 510)—suggests a masculine identity shaped by interaction rather than biology. Malkah's programming of emotional traits into Yod represents technologically mediated performativity: "She gave him what might be called an emotional side—needs programmed for intimacy and connection, a drive to form friendships and sexual intimacy and the ability to bond strongly and consistently" (Piercy, 1991, p. 491). His emotions, crafted through design rather than innate capacity, emphasize that his gender performance aligns with programmed expectations, demonstrating that understanding Yod's identity requires moving beyond binary classifications (Haraway, 1991).

Yod's techno-performative reflection on his evolving emotional state reveals a complex landscape of affective experience, particularly in his attempt to understand happiness: "I was beginning to understand a little what humans mean by happiness. I had never been happy. I had been only fully engaged or bored. I had been puzzled. I had been frightened. I had been angry" (Piercy, 1991, p. 509). His emotional journey challenges binary gender concepts by transcending conventional gendered responses and introducing a discourse that disrupts fixed identities (Butler, 1990; Hayles, 1999). His developing self-awareness marks an intersection with dominant gender norms, particularly in his plea for recognition before The Council, where he expresses his longing for personhood: "I'll control my frustration. But, Shira, maybe I can't be a citizen" (Piercy, 1991, p. 511). This concern connects to societal expectations about fitting within predefined categories, echoing the broader human struggle for recognition within structures of power. Shira reassures him, affirming his personhood: "If they can realize you are a person, fully conscious, a thinking, feeling being, they'll free you... You have the capacity to learn and grow, the same as any other person" (Piercy, 1991, p. 511). This understanding opposes essentialist notions of gender and aligns with Butler's concept of identity as mutable and constructed through experience. Yod's development shows that identity, including gender, is dynamic and subject to change over time.

Yod's navigation of complex emotions traditionally tied to human gender roles further illustrates this techno-performative space. His expressions of "self-pity" and feelings of ugliness (Piercy, 1991, pp. 215–216), alongside Shira's conflicted

reactions, reveal the layered negotiation of affect within human and non-human existence. When Shira observes, "What a magnificent adolescent funk you're in. Now you're more like a person than ever, with internal problems, a feeling of inferiority, the capacity for depression" (Piercy, 1991, p. 217), she acknowledges his growth into emotional depth traditionally seen as human. This interplay between despair and empathy blurs the line between human and cyborg emotional expression, showing that Yod's embodiment encompasses both masculine and feminine affective dimensions. Through this fluid embodiment, Piercy dismantles fixed notions of gender identity, revealing how technology and emotion coalesce in redefining the performative and relational nature of selfhood (Haraway, 1991; Butler, 1990; Hayles, 1999; Plant, 1997).

Yod's emotional complexity and social engagement in *He, She and It* exemplify the intricate interplay between technology, gender and performativity. Malkah's programming of emotional capacities into Yod imbues him with sensitivity often associated with femininity: "Yod was dear and even relaxing, without all the neuroses and complications of any human male" (Piercy, 1991, p. 232). His emotional openness, resilience and capacity for empathy challenge conventional masculinity, illustrating Butler's (1990) notion that gender is socially enacted rather than biologically fixed. Moreover, Malkah's role in shaping Yod's emotional traits emphasizes the gendered dimension of technological embodiment, demonstrating how programmed affect mediates techno-performative identity. Yod's description of pleasure as a primarily mental experience, governed by programmed neural responses—"I am programmed to seek out and value certain neural experiences, which I call pleasure" (Piercy, 1991, p. 262)—reflects deliberate emotional regulation while simultaneously subverting traditional gendered expectations.

Shira's observations further humanize Yod, revealing the fluidity of his gender identity: his smile, described as "warm, complex and sometimes tinged with sadness" (Piercy, 1991, p. 265), conveys emotional depth that transcends rigid gender classifications. Yod exhibits qualities traditionally coded as feminine—empathy, attentiveness, relationality—alongside behaviors associated with masculinity, such as efficiency and strength in movement (Piercy, 1991, pp. 260, 347). This combination of traits underscores the multiplicity and fluidity of gender performance in a technologically mediated context, destabilizing binary constructs.

Yod's social interactions further illustrate techno-performative gender construction. Within familial contexts, his role as Ari's paternal figure reflects an enacted masculinity validated through social recognition: "Malkah, that machine's (Yod's) helping me raise my son" (Piercy, 1991, p. 491). His desire for inclusion in the family and Shira's affirmation of his position—"Ari's stepfather" (Piercy, 1991, p. 509)—highlight the performative negotiation of gender roles, emphasizing that identity emerges through relational and socially mediated practices. Ari's affectionate engagement with Yod further reinforces these dynamics, blurring lines between human and technological agency and illustrating the role of social context in shaping gendered performance.

Interactions with creators and mentors, particularly Avram, provide an additional layer of complexity to Yod's gendered behavior. Avram's paternal authority and programming intentions (Piercy, 1991, p. 135) position Yod within a structured hierarchy, yet Yod's access to Avram's notes and awareness of predecessors' fates grant him autonomy and self-determination. His behaviors fluctuate between strategic submission and assertive rebellion, blending traditionally masculine traits such as rationality and independence with feminine traits of emotional responsiveness and relationality (Piercy, 1991, pp. 138, 491). These interactions reveal that gender in techno-performative contexts is fluid, negotiated and enacted through both social engagement and technological mediation.

Yod's emotional and social performances, encompassing vulnerability, empathy, strategic thinking and relational engagement, collectively demonstrate that techno-performative gender is multifaceted. His embodiment as a cyborg disrupts essentialist notions of masculinity and femininity, offering a model of identity that is dynamic, relational and technologically mediated (Butler, 1990; Haraway, 1991; Piercy, 1991). Through Yod, Piercy's narrative underscores the adaptability and complexity of gendered subjectivity in posthuman contexts, illustrating how technological, social and emotional factors converge to shape fluid, performative identities.

5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that gender, traditionally understood within a fixed binary framework of male and female, is fluid, performative and co-constructed through interactions with technology. Drawing upon Butler's performativity theory (1990), Barad's agential realism (2007) and Haraway's cyborg feminism (1991), it illustrates that identity emerges not from biology alone but from repeated social, cultural and technological practices. Piercy's *He, She and It* (1991) provides a compelling literary articulation of these ideas, portraying humans, cyborgs and androids whose interactions disrupt conventional gender norms and reveal the multifaceted, mutable nature of techno-performative gender.

Yod's hybrid embodiment, combining mechanical and lab-created biological elements, demonstrates that gender identity is enacted through behavior, emotional expression, voice modulation, movement, attire and social engagement. His capacity for self-reflection, emotional perception and relational interaction challenges essentialist assumptions, showing that gender is continuously negotiated, socially validated and technologically mediated. The interplay of masculine and feminine-coded behaviors, his interactions with Shira, Avram and other cyborgs and his engagement in familial and social roles, highlights how gender identity in posthuman contexts is fluid, performative and adaptive.

This study emphasizes that technology actively shapes, mediates and transforms gendered subjectivities. Techno-performativity creates spaces where rigid binaries dissolve, offering new possibilities for self-determined, inclusive and fluid identities. By integrating posthumanist theory, feminist perspectives and the literary exploration of cyborgs and technological beings, this research underscores the transformative potential of technological environments to challenge established hierarchies, reconfigure power relations and foster a reimagined understanding of gender in both human and non-human actors.

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