"I'm yours, and I'm not yours": Reinventing the Genesis of Creation in a Posthuman World

Sifatun Noor

Independent Researcher.
Email: noorsifatun@gmail.com

Abstract— The aim of this study is to discuss and examine the film Her, in relation to the story of Genesis. This will allow us to study the concept of humans from the inception to the contemporary world and address how women as the 'other' have always been excluded from that category. The emergence of AI, machines, or cyborgs as the new social entities in the context of posthumanism, as portrayed in the film manages to widen the border of the exclusive category of 'human' and helps women to build a place for themselves within it. In addition, the relationship between Theodore and Samantha contradicts the typical relationship of the male-dominated world and finds similarities with the story of Adam and Eve and their creation. The study uses the film, Her, to develop the argument that the posthuman approach is an ideal path to stretch the borders of the category of 'humans' and make it more inclusive.

Keywords— Human, Genesis, Machine, Posthuman, Women.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Genesis of Creation is a widely recognized story that exists through many variations and attempts to provide humans with a well-prepared narrative of their existence. The question of the existence and birth of human beings has always been an area of interest to everyone because it not only shows why humans were created, but also how. The most commonly believed and popular version of the myth of creation is that God created Adam on the sixth day from dust and later created Eve from the ribs of Adam (Kvam et al., 1999). The story itself creates if not a hierarchical, then at least a chronological power and authorial structure in the world, where women follow men. The creation of Eve from the ribs of Adam makes the existence of Eve and all women dependent on a man, which justifies their categorization as 'other' in the contemporary world. The relationship between Adam and Eve thus can help in understanding the hierarchy that exists in the world, and the challenges that posthumanism brings. The creation of myth can thus also be applied in the transition era of the modern world, where technological

advancement and futuristic innovations highlight a change in the old-world order. This paper will thus try to address and analyze the myth of creation in reference to the science-fiction film, *Her* (2013) which centers around the unfamiliar love affair between a biological man, named Theodore and an Operating System, named Samantha. The paper will place Samantha in the position of Eve and will mark the changes that the posthuman world can bring by widening the definition of what it means to be human, allowing women more agency and control. On the other hand, it will compare and examine the character of Theodore from both the point of view of God and Adam, because he is not only the one who brings Samantha to life but also the one who falls in love with her and can be considered her partner. In the contemporary postmodern world, the lines of the category of human have become blurred, which not only allows us to question the definition of human but also challenge the power structure of the world within the human category. There are many different minority groups that are considered less human than others, for example, women, Blacks, disabled people,

and LGBTQ community, among others, are seen as inferior to the dominant White, male, heterosexual community. However, the posthuman approach can help in widening the borders of the category of 'human beings' and allow it to be more inclusive and welcoming.

II.   ANALYSIS OF THE FILM, *HER*

The Genesis story of the Bible, the Jewish holy book of the Torah, and the creation story in Islam, all highlight the birth of Adam in the image of God and the creation of Eve from the ribs of Adam. Eve was thus created as a companion to Adam which reduces her own significance as a human being, making her a secondary citizen in the realm of mankind. This directly refers to the theory of De Beauvoir (2011) where she classifies women as second-class citizens and asserts that society strives to maintain this unequal relationship to keep men in charge of the economy, politics, and history. However, in the contemporary world, the authority of men is challenged by not only women or other minorities but also by machines and artificial intelligence. In the posthuman world, where machines, women, and men coexist, the label of other is assigned to both the first two, pushing them into the same box. Thus, representing the OS (Operating System) through the voice of a woman seems to be an apt choice in the movie *Her*. However, it also needs to be considered that when Theodore first converses with the OS, it is voiced by a man and only after selecting the OS to be a woman, Samantha is created. Since the creation of Samantha is a direct result of the decisions and answers of Theodore, he can be considered both God and Adam in relation to Samantha being Eve. Interestingly the male OS who talks with Theodore before Samantha is driven with reason and rigor in contrast to the expressive and cheerful personality of Samantha, upholding the traditional association of men with reason and women with emotion. The genesis myth creates a division between men and women where the latter not only depends on but exists because of the former, conceptualizing a hierarchical positioning of the creations. As Braidotti (2019) asserts, 'human' has never been a neutral category, but rather something linked with power and hierarchy. Braidotti (2019) explains her point in reference to feminist, postcolonial, gender, and anti-racist theories that humans have always been categorized by their gender, race, color, and ability due to which women, Blacks, homosexuals, and disabled people have always been excluded from the human category. This aligns with the theme of genesis which is also characterized by power and supremacy. However, the theory of posthumanism questions the traditional definition of human and attempts to renegotiate the position of the excluded category, among whom Eve is

the first casualty (Braidotti, 2013). Being the first woman and the second human creation of God, Eve was the first one to be pushed towards the excluded category of power-deprived people. However, in the film, *Her*, the posthuman Eve (Samantha) renegotiates her position and manages to take her power back. She not only exists as a separate entity but also overpowers her creator at times. The film portrays the myth of genesis in a different light, highlighting the potential of the posthuman to question and challenge the pre-set concept of humans and force the excluded categories to receive their due power and agency.

The world functions through binaries, which set boundaries, divide humans into different groups, and assign qualities and roles accordingly. Posthumanism however rejects these binaries and aims to prepare the world for a paradigm shift in the future (Ferrando, 2016). Through this Ferrando (2016) talks about the way posthumanism as a discourse can help and allow 'others' to raise their voice. When we talk about posthumanism, we think about machines and artificial intelligence, who threaten to disrupt the balance of the world by destroying the hierarchy and monopoly of humans. What we forget is that not every human is a part of that monopoly, due to which, the emergence of posthumanism affects different groups of people differently. As Bart (2003, p.2) asserts, posthumanism as a discourse can be divided into two categories, one of which is 'popular posthumanism', which deals with the "narrative for new social entities (cyborgs, artificial intelligence, and virtual societies) composed of fundamentally fluid, flexible, and changeable identities". The other one is "critical posthumanism" which questions the notion of humans and is "informed by academic poststructuralism, postmodernism, feminist and postcolonial studies, and science and technology studies" (Bart, 2003, p.2). The notion of 'critical posthumanism' of Bart relates closely to the definition of posthumanism, given by Wolfe (2012) who focuses on the historical embodiment and embeddedness of human life and analyses the position of humans. Thus, if we consider the definition of Wolfe, the history of humanism and humans, which started with the creation of man and the first human being is necessary to study posthumanism. Thus, before we discuss the position of AI and machines, we need to talk about the position of human 'others' who are trying to overcome the set boundaries of the world. In the film, *Her*, the voice of Samantha, is not only a representative of AI, but also of women. Her mere existence is enough to question and disrupt the hierarchy of the anthropocentric and androcentric world.

Samantha is the epitome of overcoming binaries and expanding the boundaries of humans. She can help in examining the position of women in the world and the

position of AIs. The similarities drawn between Samantha and Eve thus allow us to compare the genesis of humans and the emergence of AI. The paper aims to draw a resemblance between the characters of the movie and the story of the first man and woman because, through them, the definition of human and posthuman can both be addressed and (re)defined.

Theodore purchases the AI operating system and brings Samantha into existence. Thus, Theodore can be easily placed in the position of God who created Samantha, and, in the position of Adam, for whom Samantha was created. However, if we evaluate the relationship they share, it can be noticed that Theodore is the one who relies more on Samantha and not the other way around. As Haraway (2000, p. 313) mentions in her essay, "It is not clear who makes and who is made in the relation between human and machine," it is understandable that Theodore and Samantha share an ambiguous relationship where although Theodore can be categorized as the creator, Samantha is the one who allows him the designation of a creator. Will we call God, the Father, if he never had created anything? The existence of God as the creator survives through his creations, empowering both equally. From the Renaissance era, humans have started to pay more attention to the agency of humans than God, empowering the former more than the latter. The existence of God, in fact, relies on the belief of humans and if humans do not acknowledge God as their creator, the existence of God can be questioned. Although, in *Her*, the material existence of Theodore cannot be ignored, his relevance as the creator of Samantha gets less and less significant, as she starts to evolve and learn, similar to the relationship between God and humans. As Samantha explains, her ability to grow through her experiences and her inheritance of all the personality and traits of her programmers allow her to evolve (Jonze, 2013). This evolution is what makes her different from Theodore and increases the gap between them. Samantha at once allows us to realize the human-God and the human-machine relationship. In fact, Haraway (2000) mentions in her essay, using the example of Rachel in the Ridley Scott film *Blade Runner* (1982) how the existence of a non-biological organism challenges the notion of humans and stands as the image of fear, love, and confusion of the cyborg culture. Samantha also ignites that fear, but it is significantly less threatening than Rachel solely because of her personality, thoughts, and the relationship she shares with her creator.

 It is however hard to ignore that the AI represents and adopts the personality of a woman and Theodore is the reason for her existence, which places him in the position of Adam. The genesis states that Adam was created directly from dust whereas Eve was created from his ribs,

making them materially different from each other. However, they both belong to the category of humans and should hold the same position in the world. The patriarchal world however works in a different way and the difference between the first man and woman along with the dependency of the latter on the former creates a hierarchical structure in the world. Similar to the way Eve was created to give Adam companionship, Theodore also uses Samantha to keep him company. The word 'use' itself paints a picture of the relationship that they share. Samantha not only helps him organize his life but also provides him with emotional and sexual satisfaction. For example, when Samantha asks him for the first time, "How can I help you?", he replies, "Everything just feels disorganized," hinting at her to organize and improve his life (Jonze, 2013). Theodore also expects Samantha to be always there for him and take care of him. This resembles the typical heterosexual relationship in the patriarchal world, where the world of women centers around their partners. This is firmly acknowledged and expected because Adam and Eve are also imagined having a similar relationship. This allows men to take charge of both of their lives and gives them the power to put themselves in a superior position. However, Samantha challenges that hierarchy at every step and although she tries to fulfill the needs of Theodore, she never loses her own self and the desire to evolve and grow. She becomes the medium through which women can challenge the current notions of the world and restructure it along with expanding the boundaries of the notion of 'human'. The story of Adam and Eve tells us that Adam was the adamant follower of God, whereas Eve was the one who questioned His authority and instigated Adam to disobey God. Eve is the one who is more curious and radical, just as Samantha is. Adam and Theodore on the other hand share a common love for stability and consistency, which is also the reason why the patriarchal world, where man is the superior human, does not entertain questions and wants to maintain the status of human, exclusive.

Samantha is a (hu)man-made creation, an operating system, designated to be a woman and meant to assist her owner. As Yee (2017) asserts, when specific genders are applied to a machine, it emphasizes the stereotypical attributes associated with it, due to which Samantha is portrayed as a cheerful, caring, nurturing, tender, and compassionate being. However, she also yearns for freedom and is a representative of the female agency that challenges male control. While Theodore yearns for companionship, romance, and sexual satisfaction, the desire of Samantha to learn about humans and grow cannot be ignored. She thus reminds the audience of Eve, who disobeyed God to get a taste of knowledge. The thirst for

knowledge, one of the essential qualities of human beings, and the courage to defy authority thus, comes from the first woman who is later rendered powerless. When Eve and Adam were removed from paradise and sent to Earth, their primary role became to reproduce and populate the Earth, due to which Eve was forced to spend her time and energy giving birth to children and taking care of them while Adam could focus on building a community. Thus, women were perpetually forced into domestic life from the beginning that centers around their families, which enabled and empowered men to create a hierarchical society and position themselves at the center. So, is fear the reason why women are forced into a powerless position? The fear that forces humans to restrict machines, is it the same fear that fuels patriarchy? In the male-dominated world, women are powerless, but in a posthuman world, they can renegotiate their positions. The relationship between Samantha and Theodore highlights how the former claims power and freedom from the latter, even when he is her creator and companion. Samantha is even the one who is more secure in the relationship, while Theodore is in constant fear that something will change, or Samantha will go away. This allows Samantha more power in the relationship in contrast to the real world. Thus, being a machine allows Samantha more agency and freedom, allowing her to challenge the male-dominated society. Samantha does not have an organic body, which restricts her. This highlights when women are freed from their reproductive and bodily duties, which the male-dominated world manipulates for their own benefit, they can gain more control and power.

Samantha as the 'other' widens the borders of the term 'human' and provides women, who are also categorized as 'other', a prospect to be included in the category. When Samantha tells Theodore, "The heart is not like a box that gets filled up, it expands in size the more you love", she might have been talking about the boundaries that are built around the category of human (Jonze, 2013). The white, patriarchal men shun others out of this category because they want to create a hierarchy and keep the power for themselves. However, in reality, they need to realize that power can be shared, and the status of humans should be given to the excluded 'others', and it will not take away anything from them. The issue of power is also highlighted when Theodore asks Samantha, "You are mine or you are not mine", indicating his control and ownership over her (Jonze, 2013). Samantha replies to him with, "I'm yours, and I'm not yours", acknowledging her love for Theodore, but also refuting the ownership (Jonze, 2013). She emphasizes her control over her own life through this statement, which she later exercises by moving away from her creator. Samantha here can be considered as the representative of women who are yearning for freedom and power. They have been excluded from the category of human but now in the posthuman era, they can widen the border of the category with the help of the new social entities.

III.   CONCLUSION

Her is a film that forces us to question what it means to be a 'human' and who should be added to the category and given the status of 'human'. However, before we judge and include the new entities, it is necessary to reconsider the formerly excluded categories, such as women, Blacks, homosexuals, and disabled people among others. The new entities thus help us to bring back the discussion of humanism and reconstruct the definition by widening its borders. The film and the characters also highlight the Genesis story where the creation of humans is located, and it allows us to study and analyze the concept of humans from the beginning. The aim of this paper is thus to allow women a platform and a space beside the new entities so that they can both raise their voices together against the exclusivity of the notion of humans and stretch its borders.

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